DETAIL PROCESS
CHARTING

SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE
OF PROCESS

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WILEY
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For Tiffany, Ben, Andy, John, Emily,
Mom, and Dad
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During the twentieth century, the United States became the most productive nation in the world. This, in turn, has given us a standard of living that makes us the envy of most of the world. Many factors have combined to generate this prosperity. One of these factors, which has contributed trillions of dollars to our benefit, works behind the scenes unknown to the population that enjoys these benefits. This factor is work improvement tools—tools designed to enable people to study and improve the way they do their work.

This book thoroughly describes what, in my estimation, is the one twentieth-century work improvement tool most appropriate for the twenty-first century. It was specifically developed to chart and improve information processing at a time when the people who were actually doing that type of work made up only an insignificant portion of the labor force. The labor force was then made up mostly of blue-collar employees working in factories.

Times have changed! Today, the two largest categories of the U.S. labor force are professional (first) and clerical (second), and their work is made up almost exclusively of information. Most of us are in the information-processing business.

The earliest uses of this detailed information process charting technique were directed at smoothing out paperwork by studying what people did with their forms and records, step by step. This technique focused on information processes at a time when people were rather oblivious to work processes. We have been living in an information society for close to a quarter of a century, and the general public still knows little and cares less about information processes—except when they find themselves inconvenienced and frustrated by the bureaucratic nonsense that so often permeates the processes. But behind the scenes, a lot of people have become aware of processes, and consider them to be the most important factor in work improvement.

The fact that so much bureaucratic nonsense still exists is indicative of where we stand in the development of the information society. Wherever we have people making excuses for their work (e.g., “I’m sorry but that’s our procedure. We have to do it that way. I know it doesn’t make sense.”), we have another example of