Use Case vs. Process vs. Workflow
Which is the secret ingredient?

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Introduction
The topic of Workflow has always been one of my favorite as it can ‘make or break’ an eHealth implementation. However, I have realized over the years that the typical eHealth Professional (especially new entrants who have never worked in any clinical environments) does not understand what workflow really refers to.

The common response I get from “Architects” would be that ‘it is the same as Use Cases” and the common response I get from “Analysts” would be “it is the same as Processes”.

Unfortunately, Workflow is not the same as Use Cases or Processes, the three are somehow related but they are definitely not the same (and I am not nick-picking).

Because I travel frequently, I am going to use ‘luggage collection’ as an example of. (I found it difficult to explain workflow using clinical examples because the audiences who don’t understand workflow are those who have never been exposed to any clinical environment!).

Use Case
- A Use Case defines a specific scenario / list of steps, defining interactions between a role (usually known as an ‘actor’) and a system to achieve a goal.
  - The actor can be a human or an external system.
- E.g. Passengers has to clear immigration, proceed to the baggage collection point and wait for their baggage to arrive for pickup.
- Defining use cases at the beginning of a project helps to understand how the system should be modeled, what are the important scenarios of interactions between the components.

Process
- A process is a collection of related, structured activities or tasks that produce a specific service or product (serve a particular goal) for a particular customer or customers.
- It often can be visualized with a flowchart as a sequence of activities with interleaving decision points as a sequence of activities with relevance rules based on the data in the process.
- E.g. A plane must first land, taxi and park into the correct dock, wait for the baggage transportation to arrive, open the cargo bay, unload the baggage onto the baggage transportation, which delivers the baggage to the loading bay where Baggage Handlers place them into the correct baggage collection point (and the correct conveyer belt) in a specific
order (e.g. First come first serve or fragile items first or bulk items first etc. whatever the rules are).

- A process begins with a mission objective and ends with achievement of a specific objective.

**Workflow**

- Workflow is a depiction of the tasks, procedural steps, people, systems, inputs and outputs of information in a business process.

- Workflow is culture and geographical specific; there is no ‘best workflow’, just ‘effective workflow’.
  - ‘Effective Workflow’ is achieved when you utilize the capabilities of your (existing) solutions in your environment, suiting your needs.

To better illustrate what workflow is, let us examine the following examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario One – Ineffective Workflow</th>
<th>Scenario 2 - Effective Workflow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chaotic</td>
<td>Orderly</td>
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</table>
| Passengers are standing in an un-orderly manner, some blocking the view of others who then are unable to see if their baggage are on the conveyor belt, resulting in a ‘mad rush’ to retrieve their baggage when they do finally see it. | Orderly
| Passenger observes at a distance if their baggage is on the conveyor belt, stepping forward to retrieve their baggage only when it is approaching. |
| Fuss-free, smooth and ‘within satisfaction’. |

While each scenario illustrates a different Workflow, both depicts the same tasks, procedural steps, people, systems, inputs and output of the same process, however, scenario two is much more effective that scenario one!
Fundamental Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item of Discussion</th>
<th>Use Case</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Workflow</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus Segment</td>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Operation</td>
<td>Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persona (Utilized by)</td>
<td>Architects (E.g. Enterprise Architects, Information Architects)</td>
<td>Analysts (e.g. Clinical Analyst, Process Analyst)</td>
<td>End-users (E.g. Clinicians, Paramedical, Nurses or even Patients!)</td>
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Importance of Workflow

As mentioned earlier, Workflow can ‘make or break’ an eHealth implementation, this is because;

- Healthcare is a service oriented industry.
- eHealth and the supporting technologies serves only as enablers (eHealth initiatives are not IT projects).

As such, if the eHealth solution implemented does not meet the contextual needs of the relevant end-users, then the eHealth implementation will definitely encounter barriers in change management and adoption.

So how can we ensure that all relevant end-users are satisfied? For starters, one has to find out “How Health Informatics is Different” (http://www.binaryHealthCare.com/NI-Differen)

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