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AI has dominated popular culture for some time now, and it can be a game-changer for businesses, promising to overhaul operations across various industries.

From improving customer experiences to optimising internal processes, AI offers immense potential. However, to reap the full benefits of AI, businesses must approach its integration strategically and with human-centred planning.

Right now, AI is like a Ferrari – exciting technology for sure, but you still have to know how to drive it.

The internet has given you the keys, we're giving you the user manual.

Follow these steps - written by humans for humans - to ensure your business is AI ready. Vroom vroom!

If you see this icon next to a checklist item, you'll find a resource to help you at the end of the checklist. They're all out of our Picture This! Book, get your copy at **redvespa.com/picture-this**

☐ DEFINE CLEAR OBJECTIVES

The big question: where are you and what might you do?

How to start answering it: bring key players in your business together to create a Business Context Diagram and consider your environment and potential organisation-wide impact. Take a critical look at your business processes and use Process Maps to see ways to optimise them.

Set precise goals - even if they're simple or high level - and align them with your strategic vision. Whether it's boosting efficiency, increasing revenue, enhancing customer satisfaction, or just evaluating possibilities, clear objectives ensure that AI efforts remain focused and purpose-driven.

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☐ UNDERSTAND YOUR DATA 

The big question: where does your data come from, where is it stored, where is it used?

How to start answering it: understand your data better by creating a high level Data Model to understand what you have and who has responsibility for it, and a Data Flow Diagram that follows your processes for a broader understanding of how data flows throughout your business' engine.

Data quality is paramount for AI success, and this means establishing robust data governance frameworks to ensure your data is (and remains) clean, relevant, well-formatted, and legally-acquired and stored. Ultimately, it's ok to use public data like ChatGPT, as you long as you recognise this and the consequences.

☐ PICK YOUR TECH 

The big question: which tech systems are right for where your business is at right now?

How to start answering it: definitely don't start with that slick pitch the new tech salesperson delivered. Instead, capture your needs or specific problem and run through a smart vendor/system selection process. A System Context Diagram is useful to see where this technology should fit in your organisation's constellation. Defining requirements can take a day or it can take six months, and it's worth doing - you'll get what you ask for, so it pays to know what you want or need.

Invest in scalable computing resources, cloud platforms, and suitable AI tools. Choosing the right tech that is fit for the proposed AI-driven transformation requires careful consideration of business needs, scale, budget, and objectives.

☐ ESTABLISH ETHICAL GUIDELINES

The big question: in your business, who's accountable for the ethics of AI and who should be responsible for it?

How to start answering it: the ethical risks of AI can only be overcome with knowledge and awareness. Build a RACI matrix and give people clear, practical roles across the AI lifecycle. Someone in your organisation is ultimately responsible for what your AI says or does, similar to the responsibility managers have for their, human, direct reports.

Organisations must prioritise ethical considerations and establish ethical guidelines, conduct audits, and monitor ethical risks throughout the AI lifecycle. Being aware of and addressing bias, transparency, and accountability in AI systems is vital.

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☐ UPSKILL YOUR WORKFORCE 

The big question: how are you bringing your people with you on the AI journey?

How to start answering it: communicate how you've got to this point, and then look at how you can bring others along on the ride. There's no point buying Ferraris if everyone just wants to drive Toyotas. There are plenty of tools you can use to plan your comms - a Timeline can help show how you've got to where you are now, and where you plan to go.

Successful AI implementation benefits from a skilled and informed workforce which can understand its strengths and limitations. Companies will increasingly be investing in upskilling existing employees and attracting new talent with expertise in data science and AI.

☐ PILOT PROJECTS AND ITERATE 

The big question: you're ready to hit go, what's your first project?

How to start answering it: you've worked your way from problem to ethics and you've covered some hard yards. You understand your data, you've picked your tech, you've got your guidelines, and your people are with you. Reflect back on your original goals and define your first project: a Strategy Map can help you here.

Start with small-scale pilot projects to test concepts and feasibility before scaling up. An iterative approach allows for refinement based on real-world performance and feedback, minimising risks.

☐ ESTABLISH PERFORMANCE METRICS 

The big question: how do you know if all this worked?

How to start answering it: you took a punt on a few things to get here, starting with defining your goals and considering your impact. To see how well it worked, go back to the start: are your goals still the right goals? Have you achieved them? What does your Business Context Diagram look like now?

To ensure AI initiatives deliver tangible business value, organisations need to define their metrics for evaluating performance and measuring ROI. Tracking key indicators such as cost savings or customer satisfaction enables data-driven decision-making.

Embracing AI can unlock innovation and competitive advantage, but only through thoughtful planning, human expertise, and continuous evaluation can you best prepare your business for the technological future.

If you've followed these steps, you're prepared for the journey ahead, just turn the key.

If you need a co-driver, Redvespa is an ace at bringing people into process, applying our skillset to systems.

We're ready, with our driving gloves on.

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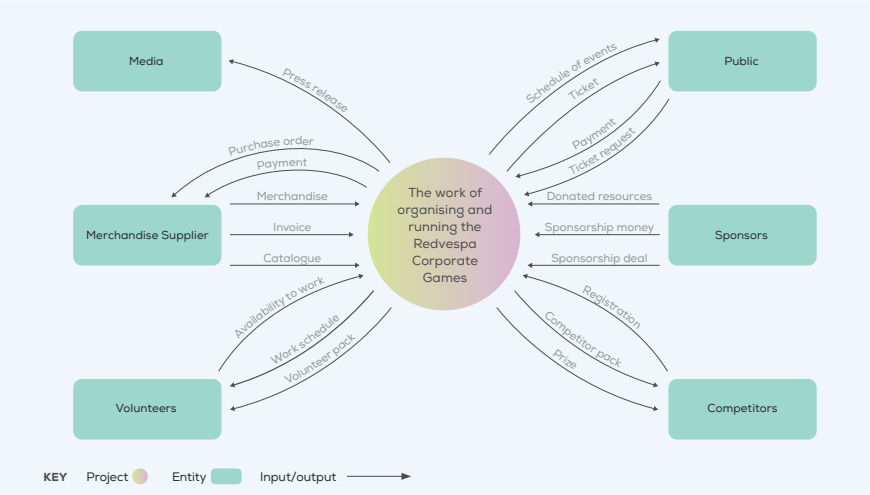
USED IN 'DEFINE CLEAR OBJECTIVES' & 'ESTABLISH PERFORMANCE METRICS'

Business Context Diagram



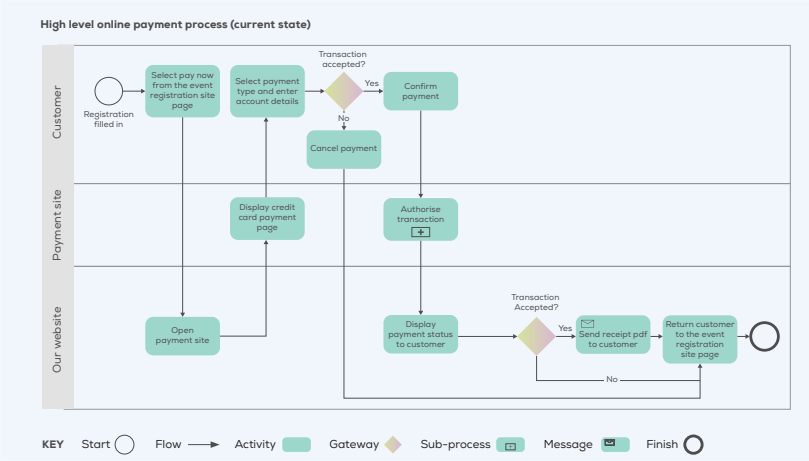
AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

It defines the boundaries of the work and therefore the scope. It also gives a high-level view of interactions with other entities showing the work in a wider context. Typically, these do not include interactions between entities unless those interactions are part of the scope of the project.

WHEN TO USE

Use at the start of a project as a tool to understand the problem domain, establish the boundaries of the work (or scope), and uncover areas that need to be elaborated in the detailed requirements. Use throughout a project to clearly articulate high-level inputs and outputs and as a reference to confirm that the detailed requirements cover the full scope.

Process Maps



AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

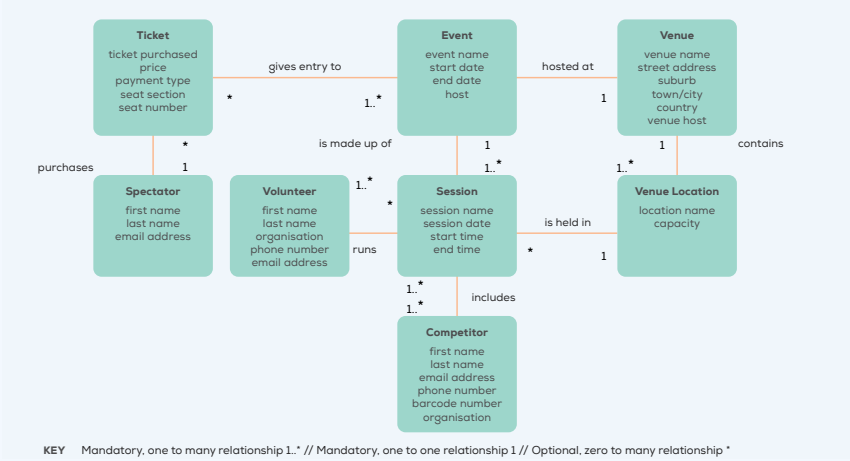
This is one of the most common diagrams that business analysts create and use. It is a very powerful way of explaining a process to stakeholders and can quickly and clearly identify where issues and bottlenecks exist.

WHEN TO USE

Use this to gain a greater (and in-depth)understanding of any process, and provide a basis from which you can make changes to a process. Use it to uncover inefficiencies and bottlenecks within a process, or to explain current processes to stakeholders (who may not yet understand them).

USED IN 'UNDERSTAND YOUR DATA'

Data Model



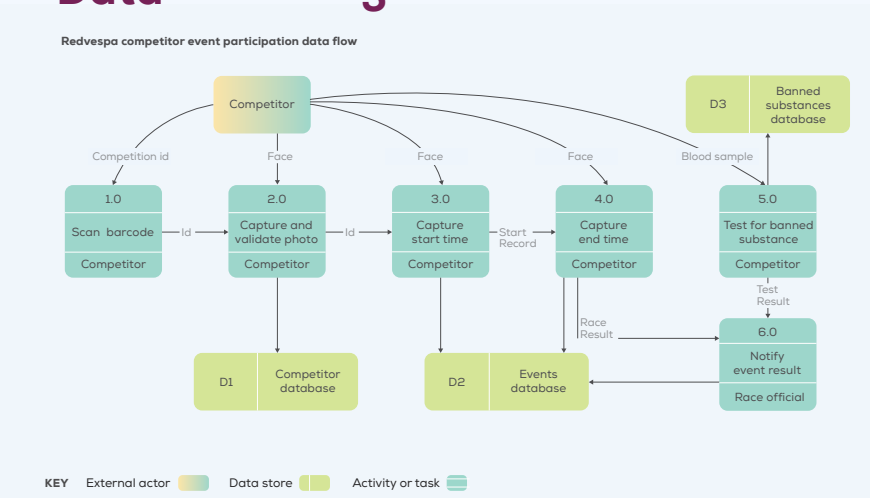
AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

A data model can be used to describe any information structure. Edited visual representation of the business data in entities within a solution and relationships between them. We have used the Class Diagram from the Unified Modelling Language for our example.

WHEN TO USE

To describe the entities and relationships in the business domain. To detail the data requirements for any new system implementation.

Data Flow Diagram



AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

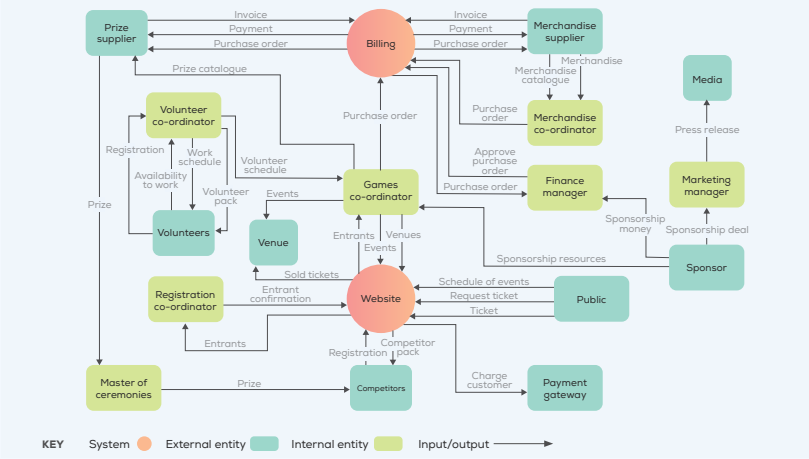
The data flow diagram is used to show how data moves from one process step to another.

WHEN TO USE

Use this when you are developing or verifying a process in detail, particularly when you get to individual steps. It can be a useful tool for process workshops. Sometimes it helps to be prepared with a "straw model" version that can be presented and edited, rather than a completely blank page, depending upon your audience. Using the diagram as a basis for discussion can also reveal business rules that should be captured.

USED IN 'PICK YOUR TECH'

System Context Diagram



AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

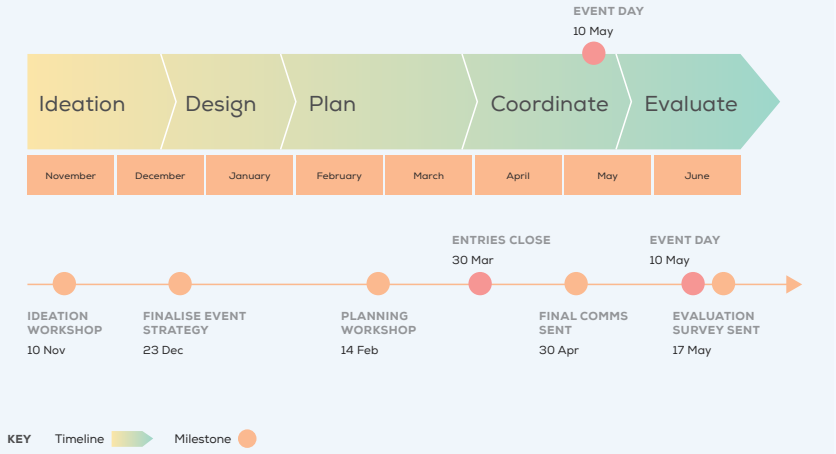
This diagram defines interactions between systems, people, and external organisations. It is often used to model current and future state at a very detailed level.

WHEN TO USE

Use during requirements elicitation to discover the current state and the processes, particularly when dealing with individuals or organisations that have a strong solution focus. Use during solution assessment and validation to clearly articulate impacted systems and as a reference to confirm that the detailed requirements cover the full scope.

USED IN ‘UPSKILL YOUR WORKFORCE’

Timeline



AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

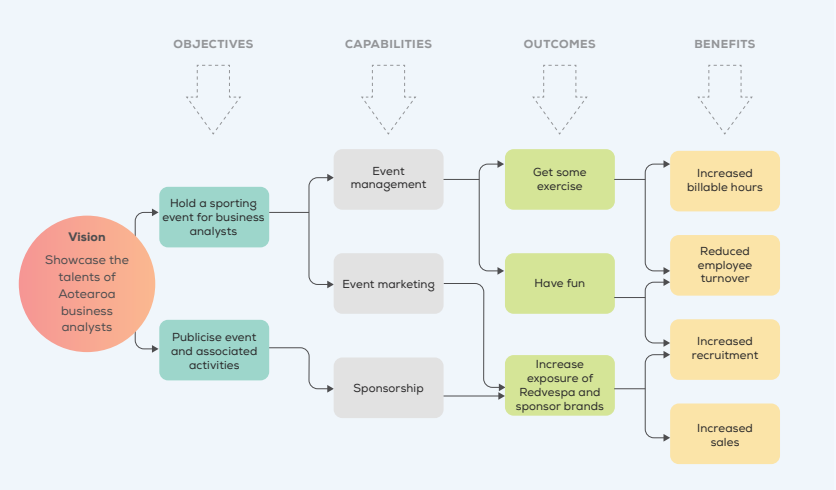
Timelines can be used to depict historical events, e.g. root-causes, planned events, e.g. product roadmap, and occasionally for high-level processes, e.g. project governance milestones.

WHEN TO USE

When communicating something suitably high-level or abstract, such as a program of change or marketing strategy. This provides an easy way to communicate the scope of what will be affected as well as the expected elapsed time.

USED IN ‘PILOT PROJECTS AND ITERATE’

Strategy Map



AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This map shows the links between the project objectives, the capabilities it will develop, the resulting outcomes, and the expected benefits.

WHEN TO USE

Use this in the early stages of a project to help analyse the business case, or when prioritising the objectives for an enterprise. This approach is highly adaptable and can be used for a variety of tasks.