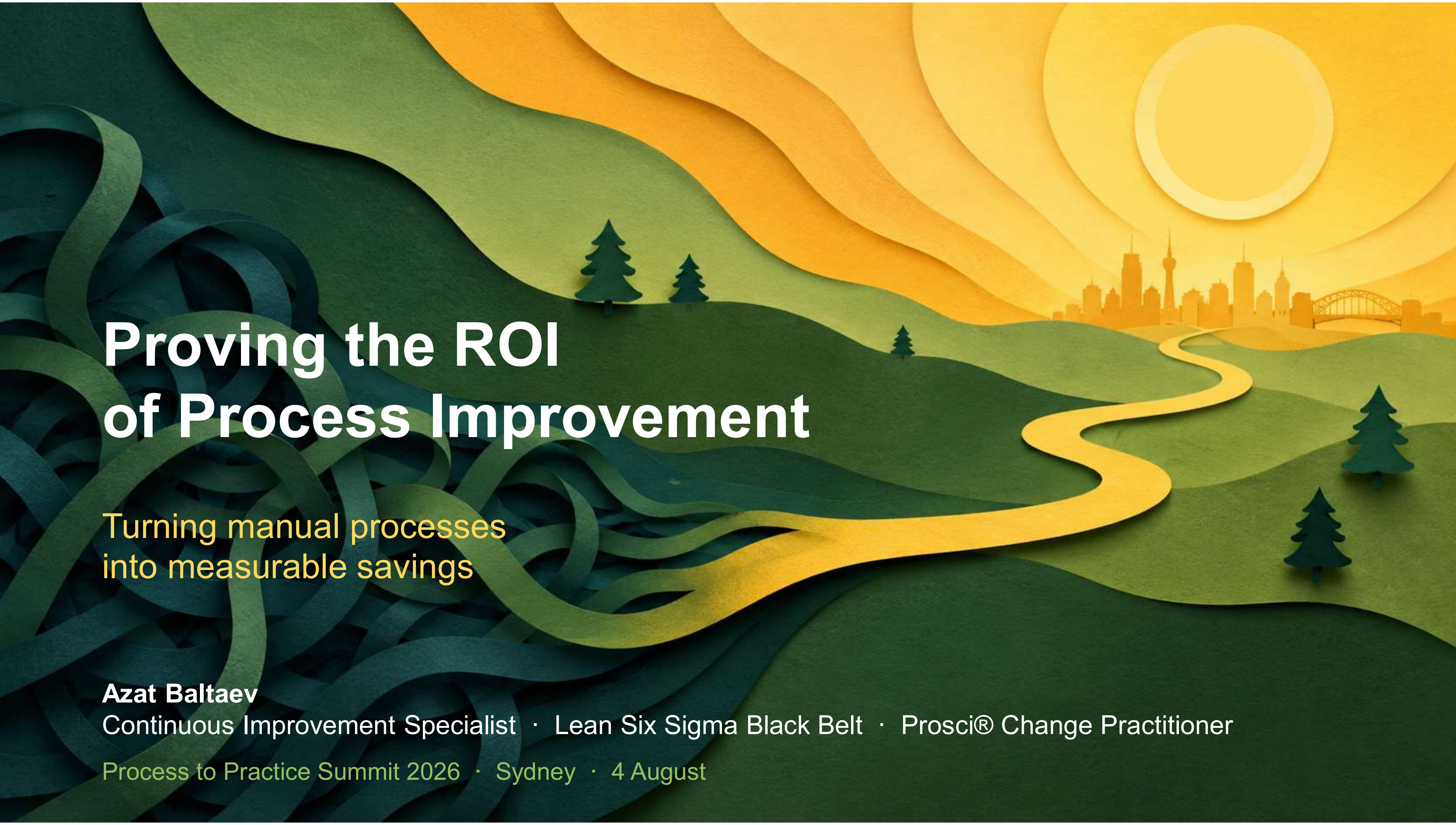
Proving the ROI of Process Improvement

Process to Practice Summit 2026 · Sydney · 4 August



Proving the ROI of Process Improvement

Turning manual processes into measurable savings

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Fifteen years of one question: where’s the measurable value?

Cash, capacity, speed, quality, control, customer outcomes, defined and measured

AUD 270,000

realised annual savings from an IT onboarding redesign, plus 30% higher productivity, both signed off, not projected

Weeks → 3 days

projected approval turnaround after automating one manual process

functional accountability coverage, a separate project, sustained months after launch

None of these numbers came from a slide.
They came from baselines, validation, and adoption tracking, that’s the talk.

Why benefits discipline still matters

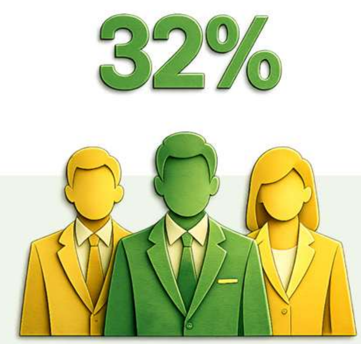
Three different bodies of research point to the same gap

of organisations lack maturity in benefits realisation, PMI's global research finds

PMI, Pulse of the Profession

more likely to achieve change success than projects with poor change management

Prosci, Best Practices in Change Management



of business leaders say their last change effort achieved healthy adoption by employees

Gartner, 2025

Measurement, change management, and adoption are where value is won or lost, not on the slide that announces the project.

The case: one manual approval process

An anonymised approval workflow from a previous role

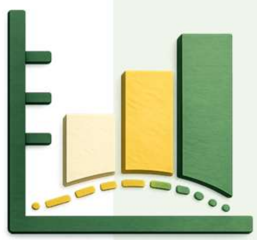
The ‘before’ state

- Every request handled by email, person to person
- Multiple approvers, no visibility of where a request sat
- Turnaround measured in weeks
- No audit trail, no data, no way to improve it
- And stakeholders waited longer than necessary for low-risk decisions

Why this case is useful to you

- Small team, no budget for enterprise tools
- Built entirely on licences already paid for (Microsoft 365)
- Designed around the customer journey, human-centred design, not just internal efficiency
- Every step, baseline, redesign, build, ROI claim, is repeatable in your organisation

Why most ROI claims die in the CFO’s office



No baseline

If you didn’t measure the manual process first, your ‘improvement’ is a guess with a percentage sign.

Soft savings sold as hard

‘Freed-up time’ isn’t money until the capacity is redeployed, reduced, or absorbed growth.

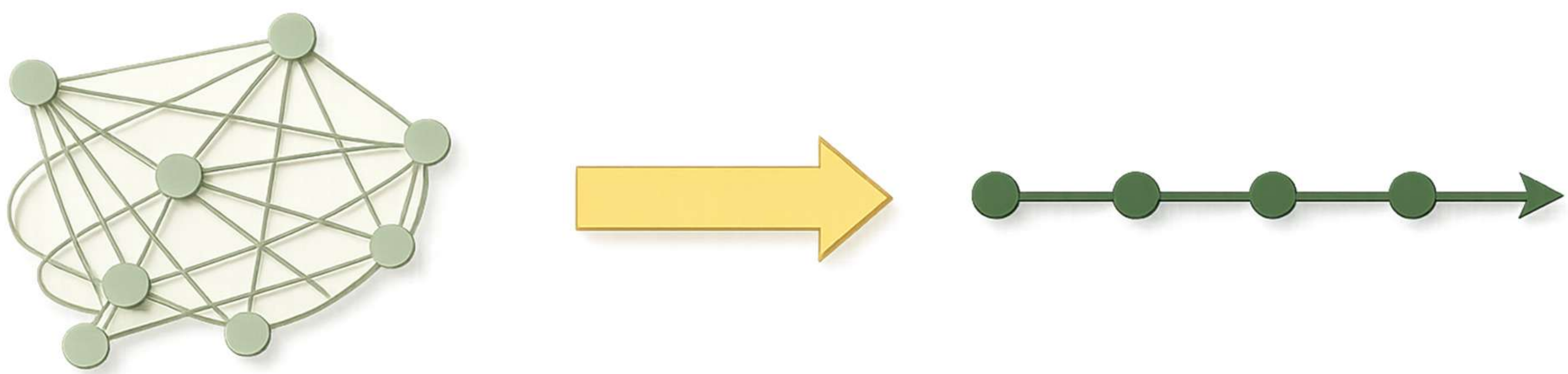
Benefits double-counted

The same saved hour claimed by three projects. Finance notices. Credibility dies.

Automating a broken process

Automation multiplies whatever you feed it, including waste.

Untangle the process before you automate it



Before: a tangled manual process, full of loops, handoffs and rework

After: a streamlined, standardised process worth automating

Automation scales whatever you feed it. Simplify the process first.

Step 1: Baseline before you touch anything

You cannot prove a saving without a credible 'before'

- **Volumes**: requests per month, by type and season
- **Touch time**: minutes of human effort per request, per role
- **Cycle time**: calendar days from request to decision
- **Error and rework rates**: how often it goes around twice

Field rule

Don't ask people to estimate from memory, they're reliably wrong in both directions. Ask them to track actuals for two normal weeks. **Tracked beats remembered, every time.**

In this approval-workflow case, this baseline took two weeks of lightweight tracking, and it's what made every later claim defensible.

Step 2: Eliminate before you automate

Redesign the process first; automate the simplified version

1. Map

End-to-end current state, every handoff and wait

2. Challenge

Why does this approval exist? What risk does it manage?

3. Redesign

Co-designed with end users: what's auto-approved, what needs a human

4. Then automate

The simplified process, not the original mess

Customer journey mapping

Backlog / Kanban redesign board

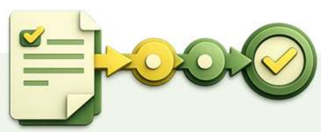
The redesign, not the technology, is what made 60% of requests eligible for automatic approval.

The build: tools already paid for

Microsoft Power Platform: no new licences, no vendors, no capex

MS Forms

Structured intake replaces free-text emails



Power Automate

Automated routing from intake to decision

SharePoint

Single register, full audit trail

Power BI

Executive dashboards on live data

No new licences or vendor costs; the main investment was internal analysis, build and testing time.

The results: how to claim pilot ROI honestly

of requests auto-approved in testing

Weeks → 3 days

projected processing turnaround

audit trail designed and tested, every decision logged

Three honesty rules for pilot numbers:

- Label projections as projections, ‘projected from test data’ builds more trust than a fake certainty
- Use conservative ranges, claim the bottom of the range
- Commit to re-measuring at 3 and 6 months post go-live, and put that date in the business case

Same method at scale: banking

Earlier career: a large, highly regulated international bank

Functional accountability	Post-it workshops, DMAIC, ADKAR	**56% → 91%**
IT onboarding redesign	New starter access time	**8 days → 2 days**
Knowledge hub creation	Information retrieval	**3 days → 2 hours**
Process repository	Process-related inquiries	**-65%**

Real FMEA risk scoring from the banking case

Validation rule that never changed:

if the accountable business owner can't validate the number, it should not be claimed.

The multiplier nobody budgets for: adoption

ROI realised = ROI designed × adoption rate

A practical rule of thumb: designed value is only ever realised through sustained adoption.

- A perfect process used by half the people delivers half the benefit, at best
- Adoption is designed in, not bolted on: end users co-created the approval rules, so they owned them
- Treat change management as a benefit-protection activity, not communications
- **Callback**: the functional accountability project cited earlier held its 56% to 91% coverage, not by mandate, but by structured stakeholder work using ADKAR

Your Monday morning toolkit

The one-page ROI discipline, start to finish

1. Baseline

Two tracked weeks: volumes, touch time, cycle time, rework

2. Redesign

Eliminate, simplify, set auto-approval rules, then automate

3. Build

Use what you already own; build the simplified process with auditability and live data

4. Validate

Classify the value honestly, then have the accountable owner sign the number

5. Protect

Adoption plan with named owners, ROI × adoption

6. Re-measure

3, 6, 12 months post go-live; publish the deltas

Process improvement is compounding interest.

Small, validated gains, measured honestly, adopted fully, reinvested continuously.

Questions?

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