

Comparing Graham Process Mapping Software and Visio¹

- Graham Process Mapping software was developed for one purpose only -- to draw Graham Process Maps.
- Visio is a multi-purpose diagramming package intended to allow users to create free form diagrams.
- Graham Process Mapping software supports a proven method that has been used to document and improve information processes for over sixty years.
- Visio doesn't support any specific process mapping method other than providing symbols.

Few drawing packages do support a specific method. The Graham chart symbol set is included in many drawing packages -- Smartdraw, RFFlow, iGrafx, PDQ Lite²... Even Visio includes the basic symbols (In the TQM stencil). But these are just symbols. These packages are flexible and therefore require discipline to conform to any specific method. With Visio it is easy to add symbols, chart vertically and in other ways stray from the method. Graham software is structured to support consistency in method (Not just the symbol shapes, but how they are connected). The method is powerful and timeless as long as it is not changed.

- The first thing to notice in the Graham Process Mapping software is that the mapping workspace is seemingly endless (the length limit is close to 150 feet). Graham object size is determined at printing so that the chart can be scaled to whatever paper size is available.
- The first task in Visio is to select a workspace (page size) - Visio objects are a fixed size relative to the page size.
- With Graham Process Mapping software, charts flow left to right. The software does not allow the charter to chart vertically...this is consistent with the method.
- With Visio, the user can draw flows in any direction. While this may be a feature in freehand diagramming, for structured process charting it is only an invitation to stray from the method.
- Alternatives, Brackets and Effects (ways that symbols are connected) stretch vertically when rows are inserted.
- These would have to be individually stretched or contracted with Visio.
- Lines draw automatically.
- This can be worked out in Visio, but it is difficult.
- Broken lines are replaced with a single click.
- This isn't considered in Visio.
- Graham software automatically updates a Summary Key in the upper left corner of the chart whenever a symbol is added or removed.
- This isn't considered in Visio.

¹ Visio is a trademark of Microsoft Corporation.

² Smartdraw, RFFlow, iGrafx & PDQ Lite are Trademarks of their respective organizations.

- Graham software provides the capability to associate a person and location at any step. The person and location carry forward through every step until they are changed...then the change is carried forward. Charts display the person and location whenever they change (and wherever it adds clarity).
- [This isn't considered in Visio.](#)
- Graham Process Mapping software provides the capability to convert charts to written procedures and to calculate processing times for any segment of a chart.
- [This isn't considered in Visio.](#)

The Graham Process mapping method was developed in the 1940s and the symbol set was incorporated into the ANSI and ASME standard for Process Charting. Graham charts are distinguished from other flowcharting methods by their detail. It is the ONLY method that provides detailed visibility of each item (document, form, file, system...) in a process.

Visio is a good tool for free form drawing, but is not well-suited for adhering to a structured method of process flowcharting.

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