Software has become the enabler for business success in many sectors of industry. Examples range from automotive and aero-space industry to financial industry and administration. The state-of-the-practice development processes lack behind these challenges significantly. Activities to improve software processes are necessar, and bear a huge business potential. However, improvement today is mostly based on standard models such as CMMI or SPICE. The question is whether such approaches allone promise the quickest gains and most sustained successes.

This presentation addresses the essentials of process improvement such as measurement and explicit modelling of core competencies. It then suggests a quick ROI path towards improvement based on a combination of standard-based and goal-based approaches. Especially the need for goal-oriented measurement will be motivated.

Examples from work at Fraunhofer IESE as well as the author’s involvement in the SEI’s committee awarding the Process Achievement Award will be used to illustrate sound principles of process improvement.