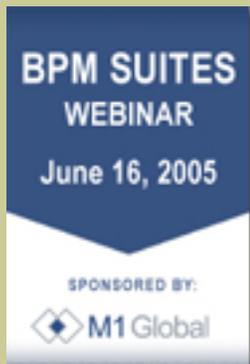


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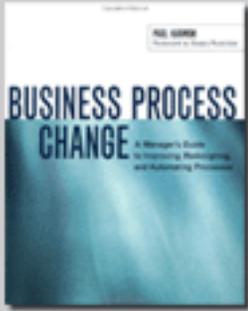
BPM Systems

We go to a wide variety of conferences and meetings to keep track of what's happening in Business Process Management. It's become obvious to us that there are two different communities, both using the term "BPM." One constituency uses the term to refer to changing the way processes are designed, managed and measured. The other uses the term "BPM" to refer to **IT** efforts to create and install **BPM** systems, including the development of rule-based systems, automated process monitoring systems, and software standards.

APQC (American Productivity and Quality Center) recently undertook a major benchmarking study to determine BPM Best Practices and we attended the meeting where the survey results were presented. The companies participating in the study were all focused on improving process management and refining their Six Sigma efforts - there was no mention of software implementations. Similarly, if you attend a SCC (Supply Chain Council) meeting you meet supply chain managers who are focused on how to redesign, manage and measure the performance of their supply chain processes. There is little or no discussion of IT. Most of the companies use software systems to support their supply chain efforts, but regard IT and software as an implementation issue.

On the other hand, if you attend a DCI BPM Conference or a Brainstorm BPM Conference you will hear a lot about the use of BPM software. The show floors are filled with BPM suite and modeling tool vendors. In a similar way, if you attend a Business Process Management Initiative (BPMI) meeting or an OMG DEIDTF meeting the discussion is entirely about software standards.

When Smith and Finger wrote *The Third Wave*, they postulated that BPM software suites would be so easy to use that, in most cases, business managers could model and modify processes. It may happen someday, but it hasn't happened yet, and it probably won't happen with this generation's BPM suites. Most are too technical for business managers to use. Indeed, most



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are probably too technical for most business analysts. Increasingly it is clear that the interest in BPM suites is dominated by IT analysts and developers.

There's nothing wrong with IT developing a new generation of software tools that make it easier for IT to align its applications and databases with business processes. We are strong supporters of BPM software products and think they have the potential to significantly improve a company's performance. Moreover, we believe that efforts to organize IT developments in ways that align and support business processes is a major step forward in managing IT.

We are even more concerned, however, with getting business organizations to embrace a process-centric approach to management. We believe that companies that organize around processes will achieve major improvements in the years ahead. But to be a process-centric company, an organization will have to master and integrate all of the process elements. In essence, they will have to overcome the gap that lies between those interested in the human aspects of process change and those interested in the automation of processes.

If your corporate Six Sigma community defines and refines one set of processes and your IT organization defines and automates another set of processes and neither group sits down to see how the two sets of processes align, you have a problem. Similarly, if your Balanced Scorecard effort claims that it is basing its managerial evaluations on some analysis of corporate processes and your Supply Chain managers are working to link your company's processes to your partners' processes, you have other disconnects.

Roger Burlton has a slide he often uses when he kicks off the DCI BPM Conference, which he chairs. It reads:

Lessons Learned. . .

*Faddish zeal and unrealistic expectations always are killers.
Simplistic, one dimensional approaches do not work.
Technology, Hope and Hype is not a strategy.*

Everyone involved in BPM has a vested interest in assuring that SCOR, Balanced Scorecard, Six Sigma and BPM Software tools aren't perceived as fads or as one dimensional approaches to business process improvement.

If your company is to become process-centric you need to

develop a central business process architecture that ties corporate strategy to both human and IT implementation. Senior managers need to invest the time in developing the business process architecture, they need to monitor the performance of the processes defined in the architecture and they need to set priorities and manage the processes and the people engaged in all levels of process change. When this occurs you will have built business process right into the fabric of your organization, assuring that your company's people and processes are aligned to optimize organizational performance.

The alternative narrow definitions of BPM and the many separate niche approaches that launch uncoordinated attacks on process problems will enjoy a period of attention and then go into decline as the next hot fad comes along to grab the attention of executives.

All of us interested in reaping the many proven benefits of a process centric approach to business process change ought to reach out to others and define BPM as broadly as possible. To assure this happens we need to work toward a broad understanding that assures that BPM embraces all possible process change efforts.

'Til next time,

Paul Harmon

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