



The Power of Process: Unleashing the Source of Competitive Advantage

Kiran K. Garimella

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Reviewed by Paul Harmon

Kiran Garimella is a vice president of webMethods. Before that he served as the Chief Architect and CIO at a GE company. He holds a Ph.D. in Decision and Information Sciences and is a GE-certified Six Sigma Green belt. In other words, Dr. Garimella has a lot of experience in process change. He is also an excellent writer, as anyone whose read one of his articles on BPTrends can attest.

Unlike any other BPM book I have reviewed, *The Power of Process* is a series of dialogs. There are various characters led by Dr. Jeffrey Sterllings, a BPM consultant, and the various managers at Consolidated Enterprises. In the wrong hands, a dialog can drag and quickly become pedantic. This doesn't happen in *The Power of Process*, and I found myself drawn into the discussions and continued to read to see where Garimella (or Sterllings if you are really into the dialog) was going to take the discussion.

The book is divided into 15 chapters or dialogs. The book begins with a discussion between the CEO and the CIO of Consolidated Enterprises about IT's inability to contribute enough to the firm. Thus, the groundwork is established for the relationship between IT and business and the problems of defining how IT can help the business.

The next chapter introduces Dr. Sterllings and a definition of BPM. Garimella defines BPM as an approach that is broader than automation, but he largely confines his focus to an approach that has BPMS as its main focus. This focus on BPM systems as a technological approach to defining processes and structuring the ongoing management of processes with BPM software sets the tone for the rest of the book. As readers of BPTrends know, I would define BPM more broadly, to include lots of things – like Six Sigma -- that Sterllings considers external to BPM. Thus, in a later chapter, Sterllings discusses the relationship of BPM and Six Sigma and concludes they are complementary. I don't mind this approach – it's a completely logical way to deal with the subject – but readers need to be aware that BPM, in these dialogs, is being used to refer to BPMS. That said, *The Power of Process* describes BPMS and its relationships with a number of other technologies, including Six Sigma, SCOR, XML, BAM and Innovation. At the same time, it defines all the leading elements of BPMS, including XML, workflow, BPMN, BPEL, SOA, EAI, and so forth. Woven throughout all the dialogs are the major themes that all process people believe in – the power of processes, the importance of an end-to-end understanding of how things work, the role that process can play in organizing IT efforts and facilitating business-IT communication, and the ability of process change to effect corporate performance.

The nature of a dialog prevents your making as many fine distinctions or defining terms in quite the detail that a conventional textbook allows. In other words, you can't get too technical. To keep the dialog moving you need to limit the discussion to the kinds of questions and answers that people might really exchange in a meeting or at the water cooler. On the other hand, a discussion format forces the author to stay focused on the actual questions that people are

asking about BPMS and to write answers that someone might actually give in such a discussion. This technique keeps the discussion focused on real concerns and on realistic answers that would help explain BPMS to someone who isn't an expert. It focuses on providing clear, motivating explanations.

I genuinely enjoyed this book and recommend it to anyone who wants a good introduction to BPMS. It could easily be read on a cross-country airplane flight or over a weekend. You wouldn't be ready, after reading it, to analyze and design a BPMS project, but you'd certainly know what BPMS is all about, and you'd have a good idea of why you might want to undertake such a project.

I was compelled to keep reading, so clearly the book can entertain someone who already knows quite a bit about BPMS, but I expect the real audience to be individuals who don't know about BPMS and who need a gentle, fun introduction. This would be a great book to give to a Six Sigma person who was wondering about what BPM is all about, to an IT manager who was interested in an introduction to BPM, or to a manager who had heard the term and wanted a little more information.

We have previously published dialogs by Kiran Garimella on BPTrends, and you can easily find them by doing a search on his name on the website homepage.

Similarly, Kiran Garimella did a webinar on *The Power of Process* for webMethods which can be viewed at www.webMethods.com/bpmbook

If you find the articles or the webinar as enjoyable as I did, however, I suspect you'll want to go ahead and read the book, or, better, buy multiple copies and start handing them out to others who should be reading it.

Paul Harmon is the Executive Editor of Business Process Trends (www.bptrends.com). He is a recognized BPM analyst and the author of *Business Process Change*.