Business Process Management:
Practical Guidelines to Successful Implementations

John Jeston and Johan Nelis
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Reviewed by Paul Harmon

The latest round of interest in business process improvement, and the special interest in Business Process Management software systems (BPMS) began in 2003. There were, of course, books on BPM and BPMS published before that and several have been published since, but only a few of these books have really address business process change in conjunction with the use of BPMS tools. It's taken awhile for companies to experiment and consultants to gain experience in the practicalities of doing process work in conjunction with BPMS tools. Recently, however, there have been several interesting books that attempt to pull together the experience of the past 2-3 years and combine it with what went before. A good example of this trend is the new Business Process Management book by John Jeston and Johan Nelis.

Jeston and Nelis both work for TouchPoint, an Australian firm that does BPM consulting. Before Nelis came to work for TouchPoint, he was a co-founder and vice chairman of the Dutch BPM Forum. Both authors have a long history in both process work and in IT. In addition, special contributors, including Frits Bussemaker, Tonia de Bruin, Brad Power, and Michael Rosemann have contributed. Bussemaker wrote a chapter on how to sell BPM to your organization and de Bruin, Power and Rosemann contributed a chapter on Process Maturity.

Business Process Management provides a broad overview of BPM and why its important to companies, and then proceeds to lay out a systematic methodology (which they call a "framework.") for change processes. Although this book is written by two savvy IT consultants, their methodology is not a narrow methodology for the use of a BPMS tool, but, rather a consideration of all aspects of process change. They discuss BPMS initiatives, but only in the context of a broader perspective.

To maintain the flow, once they get into the methodology, Jeston and Nelis divide their explanation between a general introduction to what needs to happen in each phase, and an appendix that includes a detailed checklist, notes on team structure and activities, and guidelines that would otherwise make the earlier chapters too dense.

The Table of Contents provides a good overview of the contents of their approach:

Part I Frequently asked questions
1. How can we demystify business process management?
2. What is business process management?
3. Why is it important to improve business processes before automating them?
4. When should you do BPM – what are the manage drivers and triggers?
5. Who should be involved in BPM?

6. Why are organizational strategy and process architecture important to BPM implementation?
7. How do you sell BPM technology to the organization?
8. What are the critical success factors in a BPM project?
9. What are the critical implementation aspects for a BPM solution?
10. Why do you need a structured approach to implementing BPM?

Part II The framework
11. Framework overview
12. Guidelines on how to use the framework
13. Organization strategy phase
14. Process architecture phase
15. Launch pad phase
16. Understanding phase
17. Innovate phase
18. People phase
19. Develop phase
20. Implement phase
21. Realize value phase
22. Sustainable performance phase
23. Essentials introduction
24. Project management
25. People change management
26. Leadership

Part III BPM and the organization
27. BPM maturity
28. Embedding BPM within the organization

Part IV Appendices – tools and techniques
A. Organization strategy phase
B. Process architecture phase
C. Launch pad phase
D. Understanding phase
E. Innovate phase
F. Develop phase
G. People phase
H. Implement phase
I. Realize value phase
J. Sustainable performance phase
K. People change management essential
L. Embedding BPM in the organization

This book is well written, comprehensive, and systematic. It isn't light reading, nor will most readers want to read it from cover to cover. Rather, it is a manual that provides an overview and then detailed sections on different types of problems that you will want to turn to as you encounter those problems.

It would be nice if the authors could have provided more examples and a sustained case study, but this book is full as it is, and cases would certainly have made much larger. Similarly, I would like to have seen a bit more on the use of BPMS, and on tools and the problems of using them to maintain processes, but its perhaps a bit early for information on the actual problems that will face those that field and have to maintain large BPMS applications.

If you want a good book on Business Process Management that will introduce you to the topic and then lead you through the all steps that sophisticated BPM consultants go through as they work with clients, this is your book.

In his Foreword, Tom Davenport says: "What's exceptional about the book is its extraordinary common sense." This common sense, combined with the comprehensive, step-by-step walk-through of the BPM process, results in a very valuable book that every BPM practitioner is going to want in his reference library.

Business Process Management was released in the UK and is available there now. It will be available in the US soon. You can buy it now at www.amazon.co.uk

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