

Code Red and the Mess Hall

Or, the Difference between Explicit and Tacit BPM

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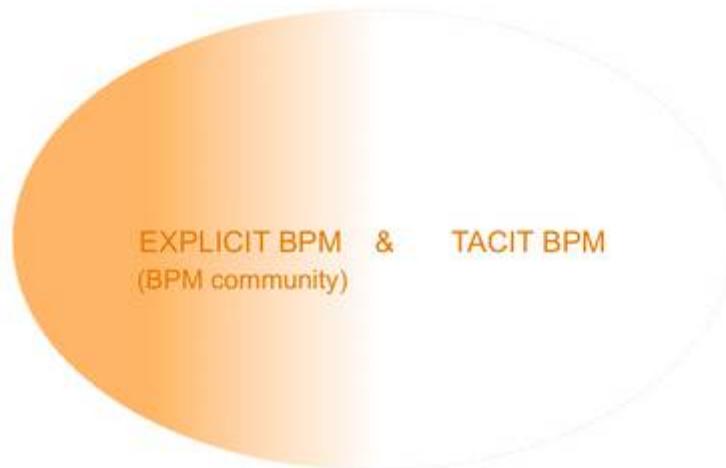
Almost everybody who remembers the 1992 film, *A Few Good Men*, will remember the great courtroom scene where Jack Nicholson admitted to Tom Cruise that he ordered “Code Red.” Great acting. A couple of moments before in the same scene is a dialogue with Kevin Bacon and Tom Cruise questioning a marine about the Marine Code of Conduct, Code Red and the mess hall: Bacon asked “Where is Code Red in the book” and argues that “as Code Red is not in the book, it does not exist.” Cruise asks the same marine to turn to the page where the “mess hall” is. It is not in the book, but he still gets “three squares a day by just following the crowd at chow time.”

Now we can ask, “Where is Code Red written in the BPM manual?” The movie scene came to mind when reading the report on “IT-Enabled Leadership” prepared by Europe’s leading business university, Insead, and CIONET. It presents an overview of 15 leading CIOs out of which the “European CIO of the year” was selected. The awards were presented by the European Commission Vice President, Ms. Neelie Kroes, last April in Brussels. The report recognizes three types of CIOs: technology, client, and business process driven. It is interesting to read that by 2014 almost 50% of the CIOs expect to be a process-driven CIO.

Coming from the BPM community, I can imagine a large number of BPM vendors (e.g., Gartner’s MQ players) taking out their order books. I can hear them thinking: “50% of the CIOs have a process focus, so we will have all these new business processes to map, model and automate with our methods and tools!” But, hold on, if you read the report carefully it tells of CIOs and their teams talking about collaboration between the IT and non-IT executives or, integrating traditionally independent departments using social media (e.g., Twitter as a BPM tool!) for knowledge management, crowdsourcing and culture change. And, being the only one with a holistic view of the organization, the CIO is also driving innovation and new business models. In short, the business process-driven CIO is viewed as serving a Business Change Function. Although technology is still used, the focus is on the soft side, getting people to work together and changing the way an organization thinks and works.

The winner of the Business Process CIO award, by the way, was Pieter Schoehuijs, CIO of AkzoNobel, the largest paints and performance coating company worldwide. AkzoNobel started a transition from separate business units to a matrix organization 8 years ago. ICT was considered fundamental to this transition and will lead to the reduction of 183 ERP systems to just 6 by process harmonization on a global scale. Schoehuijs and his team have made AkzoNobel € 500M more profitable by optimizing key business processes, integrating the supply chain with customers and suppliers and, providing secure crowd-sourcing for research and development.

Now, returning to *A Few Good Men*, in my view Kevin Bacon talks about the Code Red as the BPM community traditionally talks about the Business Process—it has to be written down. If not, it does not exist and we cannot model and automate it. In other words the BPM community wants the process to be *explicit*. For a very long time that is how we talked about BPM. Tom Cruise makes it clear that the unwritten rules like crowdsourcing are also part of being a Marine. That is how Marines find the mess hall. Crowdsourcing may be insignificant for a given job function, but it is something essential in daily operations and is something that will not be written down in the manual—just like the examples in the Insead/CIONET report. We can sense that attitude, change and collaboration is part of BPM, but we cannot see it. I would like to call this *Tacit BPM*.



Two examples of Tacit BPM are Bayer MaterialSciences who are aiming to tag skills and competencies into one social media system. According to CIO Kurt De Ruwe. “If you want to find a user, for instance, that knows about transportation in Melbourne, you would simply type in transportation and Melbourne. You would then get a few people that know about it. For the first time all knowledge in the company will be identified in one system. With a few clicks people will be able to find the person that may have the answer to their questions.” Finding the right people will kick start the right process. And, “a successful transformation program means comprehensive buy-in by employees and management. That includes extensive employee training” says Pierre Gressier, CIO Group 3 Suisse International. *Tacit BPM* is furthermore about implementing Strategy, innovation and training. Finally, Tacit BPM is also about the service with a smile of the receptionist when greeting people at the front desk.

For every organization and business process to function in an optimal manner, it requires a combination of the Explicit Business Process and the Tacit Business Process—just like any Marine has his or her code of conduct but also the unwritten Code Red and the way to find the mess hall which together make for a real Marine.

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I would like to thank Peter Fingar, Andrew Spanyi and Jorge Coelho for their valuable input to this article.

The scene from *A Few Good Men* can be found via:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KL6st9vUgEM>.

The report ‘IT enabled Leadership’ is available via <http://blog.cionet.com/2012/04/19/2012-it-enabled-leadership-report/>

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