# Human Processes

## Keith Harrison-Broninski
CTO Role Modellers (www.rolemodellers.com)

khb@rolemodellers.com

# Selling Services

For many organizations, both in the public and the private sector, their products are services that they deliver to customers. Even if the organization also has products that are physical or virtual items, they often supply accompanying services that may be at least as (and often more) valuable in terms of revenue.

Such service-based products are typically grouped into standard packages, which are often tailored for each customer. As a rule the packages themselves are also fluid, in that customer and market demand results in on-going development of new packages as well as re-organization of existing packages into different standard options.

This situation has an inherent irony for many services suppliers. The benefits they deliver may well include improved processes within their customers, who they help to operate more effectively and efficiently. Yet services suppliers themselves often operate in very ineffective and inefficient ways, since standard techniques for continuous improvement – which arose from and were refined by the manufacturing industry - are not applicable to the development, sale and delivery of services.

For example, neither Lean nor Six Sigma is a suitable technique for managing the supply of services. Customers for your services require personalized attention that listens to and adjusts to their specific needs, which may not be readily obvious. The "wasted" time and "variance" from routine in a services delivery may well be the human interactions that deliver the greatest value - as well as generating the repeat business on which most services organizations depend.

As a result, services organizations are usually immature with regard to processes and their improvement. Often there is little consistency or even visibility of working practices across the organization, with serious impacts on the bottom line, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Management problems of services organizations**

| Situation | Resulting Management Problem | Solution | Processes Required |
|---|---|---|---|
| **No standard means to assess what the market will bear and how to deliver solutions to the necessary quality** | Cannot set optimal product sale prices | Manage the market opportunity for products | **Product management processes** for acknowledging and responding to market forces and customer needs |
| **No standard means to make sure that costs charged to a delivery are appropriate and represent value for** | Cannot optimize the resources required to deliver products | Manage internal and external costs | **Sales processes** that demonstrate best practices |

| Situation | Resulting Management Problem | Solution | Processes Required |
|---|---|---|---|
| money | | | |
| **No standard means to forecast resource requirements** | Cannot utilize internal and external staff as fully as possible | Manage resource usage | **Delivery processes** that can be used as a basis for proposals |
| **No standard means to manage capability and capacity** | Cannot guarantee to deliver customer quality | Manage skill and resource requirements | **All the above forms of process** |

## Services Processes Are HIM Processes

This is a process problem, but not one that can be solved using project management, workflow or case management techniques. None of these provide the right combination of real-time response, flexibility and structure.

Flowcharts in particular, although the most common approach used in services organizations for attempting to document processes, are completely inappropriate for the processes listed above. Typically they are not only so complex as to bewilder anyone attempting to decipher them, but prevent people from acting with the flexibility that they need in order to deliver high quality to their internal and external customers.

Rather, what is needed is a simple, business-oriented approach based on the principles of **Human Interaction Management** (HIM).

HIM recognizes that all collaborative human work has specific requirements for success:

1.  Effective teams;
2.  Structured communication;
3.  Creation, maintenance and sharing of knowledge;
4.  Alignment with strategic goals;
5.  Planning during execution.

Based on this understanding, HIM provides a universal process description technique based on Stages, Roles, Activities and Deliverables. Processes can be designed using HIM either via conventional spreadsheets or via a dedicated software tool – a **Human Interaction Management System** (HIMS), which also permits execution of the resulting processes.

Figure 1 shows how the HIMS fits into the general landscape of technologies that support business process improvement:
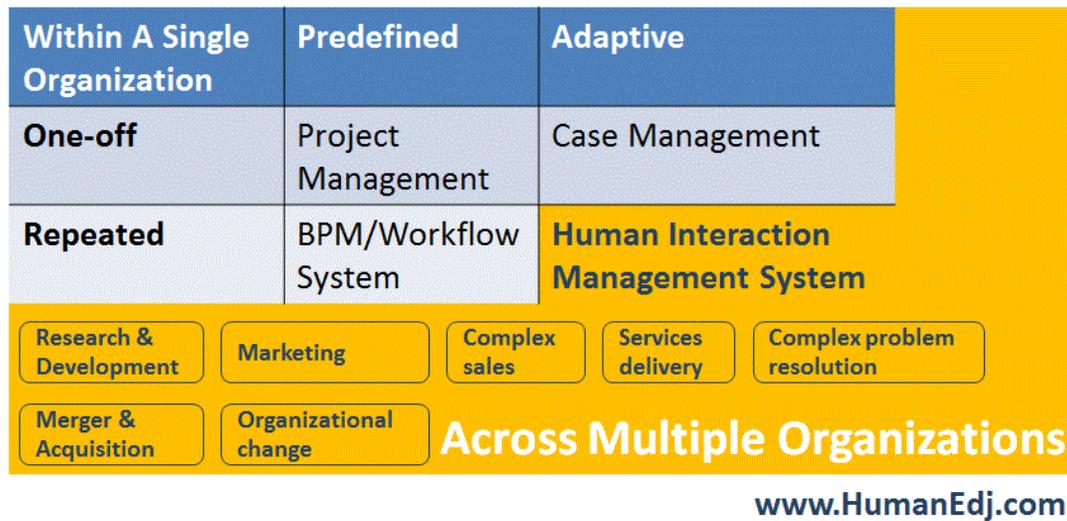
**Figure 1: Technologies supporting business process improvement**

The HIMS is unique in letting organizations manage collaborative work that is either:

1.  **Repeated and adaptive**
    The Stages/Roles/Deliverables model of a HIMS is a more practical means than GANTT charts, cases or flowcharts to describe, carry out and manage such work.

    or

2.  **Cross-boundary**
    A HIMS automatically synchronizes all participants' copies of a process via email, removing the need for all parties to login to the same server.

It will be clear that key business processes in a services organization typically fall into both of the above categories.

Over the years I have helped many services organizations design their processes using HIM. Typically it takes only a few days to design, agree, and improve processes that resisted all previous attempts at capture, let alone implementation – and even without a HIMS to support Web- and email-based execution of HIM processes, productivity is typically doubled thereafter.

A further advantage of using HIM that is specific to services organizations is the opportunity to reduce the cost of supporting the long-term change management activities in customer organizations that result from delivery of services.  Supporting these change management activities can be a burden for services organizations, which do so in order to maintain customer goodwill although contract conditions often specify that fees are capped after a certain level.  HIM offers the opportunity to reduce the manual effort required to support customers in the long-term, by providing them with clearly-defined processes for change management – even, if desired, with use of a HIMS to partially automate these processes.


## The Architecture for Collaboration Tools (ACT) Initiative

The HIM approach to collaborative work is one of many new and transformational approaches emerging in response to a working world that is more connected than ever. In today's rapidly changing business environment all organizations must collaborate both internally and externally

to meet stakeholder needs, make the best use of resources and optimize the benefits they deliver.

This is a challenge, since organizations are aware of the need to develop collaboration strategies but the range of collaboration tools is bewildering. New techniques, methods and technologies emerge continually and hundreds of these tools overlap in functionality.  In short, there is no standard way to identify the right combination of tools for your own needs – the best tools to support your collaboration strategy.

If this challenge resonates with you, then you may be interested to know of a new international research project: the **Architecture for Collaboration Tools (ACT) Initiative**.  The ACT Initiative brings together organizations and individuals with collaboration expertise in order to provide a generic, independent collaboration framework that will enable organizations to develop their future collaboration strategy and identify the most appropriate supporting collaboration methods, techniques and technologies.

As well as myself, the core ACT Team includes **Amanda Crouch**, CEO and founder of the Global Business Partnership Alliance, a research led organization that enables organizations to develop effective business relationships and collaboration, and **Frits Bussemaker**, whose writing will be familiar to BPTrends readers.  Frits is partner with CIOnet, an European Community of over 2500 CIOs and direct reports, and founder/chairman of Dutch BPM-Forum, the Dutch chapter of strategic-alliances.org and a community for Dutch members of parliament.

Organizations already participating in ACT include leading commercial companies, government departments and industry bodies in many different sectors, as well as research organizations, management schools, universities and independent thought leaders in the collaboration field.  If you would like to join them, get involved with ACT and be among the first to use the ACT framework, then the first step is to support our work by taking our survey:

http://bit.ly/act-survey-2011

Your input forms a critical part of our research, and we value it highly.


## Author

Keith Harrison-Broninski has been regarded as an IT and business thought leader since publication of his book "Human Interactions: The Heart And Soul Of Business Process Management" (Meghan-Kiffer Press, 2005 - "a must read for Process Professionals and Systems Analysts alike").  Building on 20 years of research and insights from varied disciplines, his theory of Human Interaction Management (HIM) provides a new way to describe and support collaborative human work.

Conference organizers around the world regularly invite Keith to give keynote lectures to business, IT and academic audiences at national conferences, most recently in Poland, India, the Netherlands, the UK, Finland and Portugal.

Keith is CTO of Role Modellers, whose mission is to develop understanding and support of human-driven processes - the field that Keith has pioneered.  The Role Modellers software product HumanEdj leads the industry in computerized support for innovative, collaborative human work and is free for individual use.

Keith stays active as a change management consultant, via which activity he continues to refine and extend HIM theory and the associated methodology Goal-Oriented Organization Design (GOOD).

More information about Keith and his work is available online (http://keith.harrison-broninski.info).

**BPTrends Linkedin Discussion Group**
We recently created a BPTrends Discussion Group on Linkedin to allow our members, readers and friends to freely exchange ideas on a wide variety of BPM related topics. We encourage you to initiate a new discussion on this publication or on other BPM related topics of interest to you, or to contribute to existing discussions. Go to Linkedin and join the **BPTrends Discussion Group.**

**www.bptrends.com**          5