BPM Basics for Dummies

Kiran Garimella, Michael Lees, and Bruce Williams
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Reviewed by Paul Harmon

As everyone who has read them knows, the "Dummies" books are often very serious books. They follow a formula that guarantees readers a systematic introduction to a topic. They are often the best way to quickly learn what you want to learn about a new subject. I have reviewed several in the past couple of years. First, I reviewed *SAP NetWeaver for Dummies* by Dan Woods and Jeffrey Word. It provided a great introduction to a complex subject, and I still recommend it as the place to start if you are trying to understand NetWeaver. This past year I reviewed *Six Sigma for Dummies* by Craig Gygi, Neil DeCarlo and Bruce Williams, and then *Lean for Dummies* by Natalie J. Sayer and Bruce Williams. Both provide excellent introductions to their respective technologies.

One of the co-authors of both the *Six Sigma for Dummies* and the *Lean for Dummies*, Bruce Williams, is now the Senior VP and General Manager of BPM Solutions at Software AG. Before that, he was a founder of Savvi, a Lean Six Sigma consulting firm. Apparently Williams enjoyed working in the "Dummies" format and engaged two colleagues at Software AG to join him in *BPM Basics for Dummies*. Kiran Garimella is known to BPTrends readers for articles he published that derived from his "business novel" *The Power of Process*. In his novel, Garimella allowed us to look over the shoulder of a consultant as he worked through an engagement. Garimella is the VP for BPM Solutions as Software AG. The third member of the team, Michael Lees, is the Director of BPM Product Marketing at Software AG, and held the same position with webMethods prior to its 2007 acquisition by Software AG.

I've written a number of books, including two editions of *Business Process Change*. The second edition of *Business Process Change* is 548 pages long, and even at that length I'm well aware of coverage I omitted that, if included, would have provided a more comprehensive overview of the subject. I make this observation simply to say that paring a subject down and describing its essence is very difficult. That's why the "Dummies" books – when they succeed – are so valuable. They provide the high level overview of an important topic that a busy manager can read quickly to determine if it is worth reading a more in-depth coverage of the subject. *BPM Basics for Dummies* succeeds very well in this regard.

It's divided into eight chapters, as follows:

1. Defining Business Process Management (BPM)
2. The Business Drivers of BPM
3. The Functional Goals of BPM
4. The Business, Process, and Management Architectures of BPM
5. The Technology Architecture of BPM
6. Getting There from Here

7. Ten Best Practices of BPM
8. Ten BPM Pitfalls to Avoid

Readers of BPTrends know that we argue that the term "BPM" should be used broadly to refer to all the activities that companies undertake as they try to improve and manage their processes. Thus, in our view, BPM applies to companies that appoint managers to oversee processes, companies that develop process architectures, companies that use process redesign methodologies to improve their operations, or rely on Lean and Six Sigma methods to improve their processes. And it applies as well to companies that use software products to automate processes or the management of processes – using a BPMS suite. We were happy to see that the authors of *BPM Basics for Dummies* took the same position. Many BPMS vendors – and Software AG is certainly a major BPMS vendor – have tended to confuse BPMS products and the broader BPM movement. Garimella, Lees and Williams avoid that pitfall, and, instead, reflect the richness and the complexity of BPM as it is being used in companies throughout the world. In our opinion, they are a bit too quick to assume that anyone who begins with process performance measurement or process improvement will quickly and naturally move on to using BPMS tools. Authors working for a BPMS vendor, however, probably have to be forgiven for this kind of assumption.

Garimella, Lees and Williams begin, appropriately, by defining BPM and then go on to building the business case for its use. They proceed to enrich their description of BPM by considering the various facets of the whole, including architecture, process redesign and improvement and project management issues. The authors' knowledge of Six Sigma pays off, and they do a nice job of explaining the relationship between various improvement methodologies and BPM. They recognize that BPMS is very important to many companies investigating BPM, and they delve deeper into that technology, describing how BPMS products can support BPM work, and how SOA and other IT technologies are used to facilitate BPMS.

Having drilled down a little, they return to the more general and consider where a company might want to begin and discuss what's involved in achieving a return on an investment in BPM. As we suggested earlier, this book provides a business manager with a succinct overview of a very complex subject. The authors simplify, but not too much. They tell the manager what he or she needs to know to understand what all the articles and webinars are about, and to decide if it's worth exploring BPM further.

If you want a short introduction to BPM and BPMS, either for yourself or for that manager who has just asked you what "is all this talk about 'BPM" all about," this book would serve admirably. Or, you could pass out copies to a team, ask them to read it, and then convene a meeting to discuss what role BPM ought to be playing at your company.

BPM Basics for Dummies is not for sale. To obtain complimentary copies of *BPM Basics for Dummies* go to **http://www.SoftwareAG.com/BPMforDummies**.

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