

## Business Rules

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As I reported in my last column, the Business Rules Team (BRT) had announced that it was putting its Semantics of Business Vocabulary and Business Rules (SBVR) proposal forward for an adoption vote at the Athens Technical Meeting of the OMG on April 11. As it turned out, this announcement of an intended vote precipitated a flurry of last minute reviews and comments from OMG members, resulting in a delay of the expected vote until September 12 to address the comments.

Most of the comments that were received concerned "alignment" of SBVR with the OMG's Ontology Definition Metamodel (ODM) proposal, which is under development concurrently with SBVR. Others were concerned the nature of SBVR's formal grounding in logic. All parties view the compatibility of SBVR and ODM as very desirable, so that models based on these two emerging standards can be interchanged as much as possible. They also agree that there should be a more explicit grounding of SBVR in formal logic to assure greater compatibility of different implementations of the specification, as well as to strengthen consistency with ODM as that specification evolves.

After several email exchanges and teleconferences leading up to the Athens meeting, the BRT decided not to press for an adoption vote in Athens. Since Athens, the BRT has worked with the ODM team and the ISO Common Logic team to gain a common understanding of the way forward on the main issues. It has been determined that the crux of both the ODM alignment issue and the logical grounding issue is compatibility with ISO's emerging Common Logic standard, which is now to be referenced in both ODM and SBVR. The Business Rules Team now plans to request a revised submission date of August 22 to give them time to refine the logic sections of the proposal so the proposal can be considered at the September 12 Technical Meeting, to be held in Atlanta. The consensus is that this was the right move. It appears to have strengthened the support base for the SBVR proposal in the OMG, and has resulted in active involvement by some of the ODM submitters and supporters who are working with the Business Rules Team to resolve the logic issues.

The good news is that the comments about SBVR from OMG reviewers were generally favorable and encouraging, that the basic intent of the proposal – to separate business expressions from a logical description of the meaning of each expression, and to provide for capture of formal vocabularies and rules in different natural languages – is sound. We are hopeful that this concerted effort during May will result in a polished specification that can be adopted in Boston.

The Athens meeting also focused on the scope of the proposed Business Rules Management Request for Proposal, planned for this issue this fall. One conclusion was that the RFP should be re-scoped to include management of business vocabulary as well as management of business rules, and should be renamed the Business Vocabulary and Business Rules Management RFP (BVRM).

There has been considerable discussion in previous OMG meetings about what constitutes management of business rules, and various business rule management functions, and what features people would like to see in business rule management tools and systems. The discussion in Athens focused on what



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the OMG should attempt to standardize with respect to business rule management. The clear consensus of the meeting was that the most useful contribution of the OMG would be to specify standard metadata about individual vocabulary entries and individual business rules that would make them manageable, as opposed to specifying standards for business vocabulary and business rule management systems. This metadata would include both attributive data of vocabulary and rule entries, and relationships of an entry to other things, particularly implementations.

It is now expected that the BVRM RFP will describe several rule management scenarios, and will ask submitters to propose metadata solutions that will promote development of interoperable business vocabulary and business rule management tools and systems. Scenarios discussed included identifying rules and rule ownership, tracing rule specifications to rule implementations, and managing changes and effectivities of business vocabularies and business rules. Consistent with the OMG's philosophy, the BVRM RFP will call for reuse of appropriate existing metadata standards as much as possible, so as not to cover the same ground again with new proposals.

The OMG has an open Request for Information about Business Rule Management. Input is invited about business vocabulary and business rule management scenarios that should be considered for inclusion in the list of supported functions in a future BVRM RFP. If you know of functions that should be considered for inclusion, please respond by sending your comments to the OMG, or to me at [stan@hendryxassoc.com](mailto:stan@hendryxassoc.com).

