



## BPM: A Global View

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### Whose BPM is it anyway?

Many organizations interested in implementing process improvement have long discussions about whether the business team or IT team should lead the BPM initiative. Some argue the business manager should lead it because they are responsible for delivering business results and they know best the ins and outs of the process. Others argue IT is the rightful owner because IT people are more adept at modeling the process and have more experience at developing clear and crisp requirements necessary for automation and integration. This reminds me of the age old debate over the right way to grow a company. Is it more important to grow revenue or to grow profit? In my view, both of these questions are based on the false premise that there is a single right answer.

For enduring success, a business must grow both revenue and profit. Likewise, to drive sustained savings and ROI from process improvement, a BPM initiative must have the commitment of both business and IT leaders. Most people incorrectly think of BPM as being all about automation. Beyond automation, BPM also promotes and relies on inter-departmental and inter-personal relationships. In fact, teamwork is a key element to any successful BPM initiative. Whenever an organization embarks on a project to deploy BPM technology, it needs the buy-in and participation from many groups. This includes the management team, IT, business analysts, and the workforce at large, each with their own needs. BPM impels these teams to work together to build a framework. BPM is not for IT or for managers; it is for all the stakeholders collectively which includes managers, business analysts, IT and the workforce.

The absence of a team approach to BPM will alienate or underutilize some stakeholders which can ultimately lead to a failed BPM initiative.

#### BPM for the Workforce

In the modern global knowledge economy, workers are one of the main stakeholders in BPM. After all it is the improvement in the productivity of knowledge workers that is one of the key benefits of BPM. In large enterprises, many different groups of users with varying skills and needs participate in people-centric processes. Some are power users who demand advanced features and the ability to configure the interface themselves. Others are computer novices who simply need the most basic interface to enable them to do their jobs as quickly as possible and want nothing else. Regardless of the aptitude of the user, they all need an interface that enables them to work in an organized fashion within the context of their individual role.

Ultimately, workers will only buy into a BPM system if it makes their job easier. In human-centric business processes, tasks are performed by people who work together to make decisions and move work forward. For many jobs, it is important to consult, confer and interact with others while performing these tasks. Human-centric BPM must support this natural and important interaction between people and the organization, as the lack of collaboration can result in a loss of productivity. However, it's also important that the technology be adaptable. After all, nailing down every possible rule or exception before BPM implementation isn't practical. Organizations need

the ability to adapt rules dynamically as they are discovered in the natural course of doing business. For the workforce, a BPM solution must provide the following capability:

- i. Ability to work using a variety of interfaces such as portals, thin clients, rich clients and mobile devices.
- ii. Ability to collaborate using features such as assigning, conferring and sharing tasks on an ad hoc basis.
- iii. Ability to search, organize and prioritize their tasks.
- iv. Ability to work in parallel with each other with no loss of functionality
- v. Ability to check the status of work.

Ultimately, the best BPM systems are those that empower workers rather than box them in to rigid workflows.

### **BPM for Business Analysts**

Business analysts play a lead role in BPM projects, as they have insight into business processes and workflows and can offer strong ideas on how to improve upon them. They provide input on modifying and optimizing processes, and help to identify prime business process candidates for automation. The role of the analysts is the bridge between the business owners and IT. Therefore BPM solutions have to provide a set of tools for business analysts to play their role effectively. Ideally these tools should include the following:

- i. BPA (Business Process Analysis tools) for modeling, documenting and optimizing business processes. Modern BPA tools include capabilities for round-trip optimization that enables the generation of scenarios for optimization based on live process data.
- ii. Tools for changing and documenting business rules without recourse to IT/programming so that processes can be changed quickly to cope with changes in the business.
- iii. BI/reporting tools for in-depth analysis of process metrics and bottlenecks. These tools enable the analyst to recommend optimization and resource allocation decisions.

### **BPM for IT**

The role of IT is to own and manage the technology that is vital for BPM and to isolate the other stakeholders from the complexities of the technology. BPM relies heavily on integrations, databases, SOA, Web services, directories and other key services that are managed by IT. This makes the role of IT critical to the success of BPM.

BPM systems need to provide the tools necessary for IT to play their role, such as system administration, directory integration, integration with other systems through SOA or traditional point-integration, etc. The key requirement is that IT should be able to play its role in concert with the other stakeholders without creating friction. These tools include the following:

- i. BPM system administration and maintenance
- ii. Collaborative process development environment with strong versioning capabilities
- iii. Organization Charts linked to directories

- iv. User license administration and provisioning.

### **BPM for Managers**

Managers own business processes. They are responsible for ensuring that the processes are efficient and meeting the organizational objectives of the company. They also are users of BPM but in ways different than other stakeholders. A BPM solution has to provide tools and capabilities for managers to determine if their processes are running effectively and make resource allocations to optimize processes in real-time. Managers relate with processes at a macro level that is best represented by Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). They should not be burdened by the arcane details of processes such as complex rules and detailed metrics (which are the domain of the business analysts) or integrations and data models (which belong to IT). A BPM system needs to provide a high level of insight and vision to managers in order to be effective and truly make an impact on an organization.

Some of the tools needed by management are:

- i. Business Alerts which provide proactive notifications to managers when key thresholds are exceeded. Coupled with detailed reports, these alerts can warn managers proactively when they have to take actions.
- ii. Business Activity Monitoring (BAM) which provides managers a digital dashboard of KPIs so that managers are aware of the activity and service levels represented by the processes they own. Advanced BAM solutions provide “feedback” capability that enables managers to change the flow or resources allocated to the process by simple graphical artifacts on their desktop. This empowers managers to change and optimize the process based on the KPIs and their judgment.
- iii. Reports that supplement BAM and Business Alerts by providing the managers more detailed insight into what is going on inside the processes so that they can drill-down and make decisions with more knowledge.

### **Conclusion**

BPM is more than workflow and integration. It needs to be supported and leveraged by management, implemented by IT, optimized by the business analyst and utilized by the workforce at large. Only by enabling each stakeholder to play their role effectively in different aspects of a BPM environment can a business achieve agility while keeping all parties motivated and frictionless. When looking at BPM technologies, organizations need to assess the ability of the solution to support distributing responsibilities across a team with skills that range from IT/developers to business analysts to business sponsors. Organizations that operate under this shared model have seen tremendous benefits, such as reduced development backlog, faster, lower-risk deployments and improved operational processes that generate real business value and impact the bottom line.