



Business Rule Solutions

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[Building Business Capability](#)

This month I am departing from my usual focus to talk about a new and exciting event that every BPM professional should know about. It is the [Building Business Capability Conference](#). The BBC is actually three co-located conferences scheduled in Washington, DC, Oct. 17-21, 2010:

- **The 13th Annual International Business Rules Forum.** (LINK) I chair that one. It's the conference of record for business rules and decision analysis. **The 1st Annual Business Analysis Forum**, the official conference of the IIBA (International Institute of Business Analysis), (LINK) co-produced by the IIBA and chaired by Kathleen Barret, president of the IIBA.
- **The 1st Annual Business Process Forum,**(LINK) co produced by BPTrends and chaired by Roger Burlton, Chief Consultant for Business Process Trends Associates.

BBC has been designed to enhance the knowledge of BPM professionals by offering three full tracks of rich content featuring cross-over presentations, keynotes and panels that will provide attendees with the opportunity to hear from thought leaders and practitioners in Business Analysis, Business Rules and Business Process Management as well as networking with attendees across all three disciplines.

As these three disciplines continue to converge it becomes increasingly important that practitioners from each of the three disciplines become familiar with the tools, techniques and methodologies of the others. The BBC is the first conference to create that opportunity and we hope to ensure a common vision and synergy that emphasizes a collaborative rather than competitive approach to solving business problems.

Business Rules and the BPM Professional

For those BPM practitioners not familiar with Business Rules, following is a brief discussion regarding why Business Rules are important to the BPM practitioner.

Any area of organized human activity has rules. We live in a society of laws, parents set rules for their kids, every game you play goes by a rulebook. The same is true for business. The business enters into contracts and agreements, its operations are subject to government and industry regulations, management sets business policies for how things are to be done – all these things represent rules.

If rules are so natural, why aren't they always front and center in the solutions that BPM professionals create for their companies? Many people think they should be. I'm one of them. To me it's just a matter of common sense.

Business rules are the criteria used to make operational business decisions and judgments. For example: *Is a customer gold level or not? Is an account overdrawn? A payment overdue? A claim valid? A candidate acceptable?* Rules are everywhere in business.

And that's part of the problem. Today, the rules are everywhere in general, and nowhere in particular. They're embedded in legacy code, in the heads of experts, in documentation and help screens, in use cases, in process and procedures, and lots of other places. There is seldom any single-sourcing of rules. Consequently, the rules are hard to find, hard to analyze, and hard to change. That's a major impediment today both to daily productivity as well as greater business agility.

It's a proven fact that business rules are effective, often achieving an order-of-magnitude improvement or more. That's *huge*. In each of the past twelve years of the Business Rules Forum Conference, we've had dozens of real-life case studies presented by professionals (and often their business counterparts) recounting how they made business rules and related technologies work in their own organizations.

The key to success with business rules is to make them a first-class citizen of your requirements approach. In modeling business processes, you externalize and unify the business rules. That's a *win-win* – the process becomes smarter, and the business decisions more agile.

The thing to remember is that the business rules live on beyond the point of software deployment. Software release is really just *day one* in the life cycle of business rules. A great many rules are subject to continuing change – that's not going to stop upon or between software releases. So the architecture of your business solutions needs to feature rule management as a new focal point of coordination.

Finally, take a quick look at the *Business Rules Manifesto* (embed this link) (www.businessrulesgroup.org) It's free (no sign-up), only 2 pages long, and is available in over 12 languages. It is a good place to start.

See You at BBC 2010 (LINK)

AT BBC 2010 you will hear directly from the people who have actually applied state-of-the-art techniques in the real world and who have completed successful projects. Learn from their pain and gain. Come as team and plan to cover all eight conference tracks, participate in the facilitated discussions and share notes. I hope to see you there.

Ron Ross

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**.