



Business Innovation in the Cloud: Executing on Innovation with Cloud Computing

Jim Stikeleather & Peter Fingar

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Reviewed by Gabrielle Field

Business Innovation in the Cloud is the most recent book from authors Jim Stikeleather and Peter Fingar, who coauthored the widely read *Next Generation Computing: Distributed Objects for Business*. Fingar's areas of expertise are reflected in his ever expanding catalog of publications, including *BPM: The Third Wave*, *Extreme Competition*, and *Enterprise Cloud Computing*. He has continued to further the knowledge of Business Process Management professionals on the topics of BPM, the Cloud, globalization, business innovation and beyond. With his collaboration with Stikeleather, the book brings many of these topics together, building on innovation constructs the two have explored over a number of years, to challenge readers regarding the world of innovation opportunities in the *Cloud*.

The book draws the reader deep into business innovation concepts through 19 compelling chapters. I found myself exploring the chapters' concepts through the videos, articles and lectures cited with tiny URLs and QR Codes, all of which provided further insight into the information presented in each chapter. The book gives a great overview and presents many of the ideas as *multimedia* experiences. For example, from page 143 of the book, watch M.I.T.'s Thomas Malone on crowdsourcing and "The Age of Hyper Specialization."



<http://tinyurl.com/7ankblx>

I must admit, I spent days reading more about these topics, surrounded by the phone, tablet and any other mobile device I could find in order to search the many referenced links and digital images presented in each chapter. The format was engaging, taking the willing reader deeper into the subject matter.

Here are highlights from some of the chapters.

Chapter 3: "Change Itself is Changing." The chapter highlights the current *exponential* speed of change. The charts of exponential growth confirm the rate of change, with so much compressed into the last 50 years. Most of us have lived through it and we all have experienced the impact of these changes. Some readers may recall the days of the "immobile" telephone and life before the

tablet. What is the impact such change has on BPM work and the work of the process professional?

Woven throughout all the sections are the major themes of innovation that BPM professionals know well – the power of process, and the importance of a clear understanding of how things work, end-to-end. This is the basis for planning, prioritizing change, and innovating the way work is executed today. You will find here the process professional's role in developing views of current and future states. This chapter also presents the challenge of how to sustain the *pace of innovation* for the organization. The authors' approach can open channels of collaboration with those who determine the direction and sequence of process changes, prioritizing IT efforts and leveraging business - IT collaboration. Ultimately, process transformation drives corporate performance.

The authors warn that change for the sake of change has left us vivid examples of organizations where pure reliance on "methodology-driven" decision making has eliminated the creative drive essential to find the next big breakthrough. A key message from the authors is that methodology, with a clear process focus, enables transformative change -- *execution* is all in the new world of business innovation.

Chapter 4: "What Exactly is Innovation?" The reader learns that innovation is feasible, forward thinking, and valuable. The book continues to raise the question, what is next? How do we prepare for the next major wave of innovation and change? How can BPM professionals leverage the full potential of the Cloud as we engage in process work in the collaborative Cloud environment?

The message for the process professional is how to utilize new methods to collect and validate process information, enabled by cloud-based solutions. The current toolset is capable of offering real-time decision making by both business and IT professionals. Graphical tools represent the current state and can clearly illustrate the transition to the future state. These collaboration tools can accelerate the pace of change (and innovation) by creating transparency into business processes, enabling real-time decision making by process owners and accelerating the implementation of innovation opportunities selected by the organization. Big Data and the analytics it provides can accelerate the "power of process," and when combined with the intelligent BPMS, can align structured and unstructured process solutions. This approach can deliver extraordinary results.

Chapter 8: "Innovation and Social Networks." Today's organizations need to have seamless integration of processes across multiple divisions for global reach and ever-expanding locations without time constraints. Business can be transacted anywhere with mobile access. Social media will continue to challenge corporations to create opportunities to collaborate beyond traditional boundaries to meet the needs of customers, employees and suppliers. This fundamentally challenges how business processes can deliver new customer experiences that delight, and enhance the experiences of workers across the enterprise.

Chapter 10: "Business Process Innovation in the InterCloud." BPM Systems (BPMS) provide the technology solutions and the collaborative platform to define processes and enable the ongoing management and optimization of processes. BPM technology enables the transparency required for collaboration. The business user can now own the business-facing rules and manage the performance metrics and thresholds. As many readers know, there is more to this evolution of advanced technology that needs to be applied to the work of process management. The hard work of process change remains, along with a number of other disciplines, including Six Sigma, BAM, SOA, and big data' analytics, to achieve innovation. The message from the authors is to understand the imperative to do this hard work and to key in on *execution*.

What does business innovation in the Cloud mean for the process professional?

- This topic challenges the process professional to create more transparency into the work with real-time monitoring of process performance. And the challenge for the process professional? How does the collaboration in the Intercloud support process innovation? How does the ability to have such transparency into business processes translate into fluid innovation?
- In the current generation of BPMS toolsets, the groundwork is established for a closer relationship between IT and business in bringing together the customer-facing components that can be modified by business users without the need for IT intervention. Business rules and exception queues are now available to the business; it is up to process professionals to identify those opportunities and execute on them.

Chapter 11: “Business Innovation: Culture and the Process.” In this chapter, the culture of innovation and the process of innovation are introduced. Understanding that culture is a key ingredient to support and enable innovation is the starting point. Culture is an integral part of the organization, supporting the current state. Both culture and process change rely heavily on practitioners working together in the change environment, bridging the gaps in the existing culture of doing things as they are currently done. Further reading on culture leads the reader to the assumptions around the changing state of traditional organizational models. Gone are the defined roles of the CIO and management structures. The new view of IT is as a service provider. This requires rethinking the very definition of the corporation from command-and-control management to connect-and-collaborate, with *transparency* as the new means of management control.

A framework for innovation is introduced. The innovation framework is discussed as a required element to move forward. As the authors state, innovation without a framework is “just luck.”

- By their very nature, process teams challenge the current culture. As resistance to change has roots in the culture, an innovation process initiative will elevate other cultural drivers to move process to the next level.
- The focus is on providing clear rationales by which the business and IT professionals can work together and collaborate to anticipate “the next great challenge from the next great innovation.”

When organizations understand their processes, manage them as assets, and have a plan for change, transformation happens. This is the key takeaway for the process professional: Provide the understanding and the framework for process change and business innovation. The culture of change will allow for “on-demand innovation.” As the authors note, in the Cloud, technology is about collaboration to enable on-demand innovation.

Considering the takeaways at the end of each chapter of *Business Innovation in the Cloud*, I realized that the book challenges all of us. Building a framework or a reference database of all the organizational options and ideas for innovation is just a starting point to chart the paths that can be taken. This is a necessary read for many audiences, especially the executive sponsor with an interest in learning more about the benefits of a BPMS or a process-centric organization. The book can educate someone who is working on BPM and business innovation initiatives, with all the references to intrigue the student of these topics. It seems the real benefit is for the audience of professionals who are tasked with selecting new paths of innovation, and those who are charged with innovating new products and services to take companies to new levels of growth.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time engaging in the concepts provided by Stikeleather and Fingar. It will be on my suggested reading list for those new to BPM because it opens new doors and even more possibilities. What's next?

Gabrielle Field is the BPM Lead at a Major Utility and former VP of Process Improvement at Raymond James Financial

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