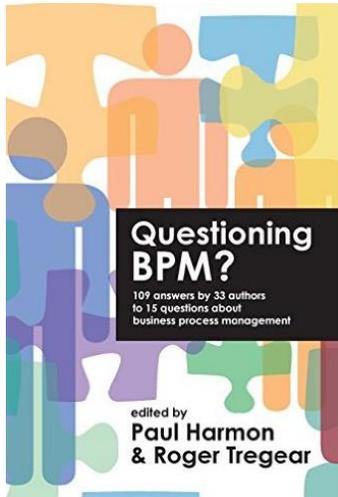**BPTrends ARTICLE**

Questioning BPM?
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Paul Harmon and Roger Tregear

In January of 2016 a group of 33 authors joined us to produce and publish a new book: *Questioning BPM?* The book is organized around 15 questions that were originally suggested Roger and Paul. The authors, respected thought leaders in of the business process movement, each considered the questions and answered the questions they felt most interesting.

Each month this year we will consider one of these questions in a short article on BPTrends. We will not reproduce the entire article, but will describe the question and then reproduce short excerpts from some of the authors who responded to that specific question.

We invite readers, once they have considered the question and some of the responses provided by the book's authors, to join a conversation about the question on the BPTrends Discussion site on LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com/groups/1175137)

This month we will consider the second question posed in the book. Here is the question and the text we wrote to explain it and describe, in general, how the authors responded.

Question 2.
WHO CARES?

There is considerable interest in business processes and in process management. These interests are apparent in many different parts of an organization: in strategy, operations, IT, risk management, HR, and in other areas.

How would you characterize the current interest in BPM? In what ways, if any, do you see organizations benefiting from a BPM approach?

Overview

When you ask about who is interested in BPM, the answer you are given very much depends on who you ask. As you will see when you read the answers below, if you ask someone from IT, they will describe the needs for IT and automation that drive an interest in BPM. If you ask someone who is primarily working with organizations that use Lean or Six Sigma, they will talk about how these practitioners are hoping that BPM can supplement or extend their practices. All respondents, however, agree that there is a growing interest in BPM, driven by the challenges organizations face, and their hope that the management of processes will help them deal with those challenges. Most of our authors emphasized a vertical view of the organization, and stressed that BPM was of interest to senior management as a way of dealing with strategic

initiatives, and of interest to middle managers as a way of providing new insights into how the organization works. It was also seen as a help in integrating new technologies, and as a way to automate new sets of activities. Less common were respondents with a vertical emphasis who pointed out how BPM is spreading from core concerns with improving basic business processes, and was being used by government and even international agencies as a way of defining and standardizing approaches to health, to international development, or responding to emergencies. Whatever you emphasize, our authors suggest that BPM holds out a growing hope to a wide variety of possible users.

Here are some of the specific comments made by the specific authors who responded to this question.

Wasana Bandara, Senior Lecturer, Queensland University of Technology

"BPM can (and should) be applied beyond commercial settings where profit is a focus, to now also address key global challenges, and point to a new area of focus for the BPM discipline: BPM for Development (BPM4Dev)…

Process management is also gaining popularity in humanitarian relief chains to better streamline time consuming processes (i.e. bidding, customs clearance); relief supplies applied through in-kind donations (usually after a disaster occurs – which can congest the relief chain, particularly if unsolicited); and transport capacity management of large shipments. The 'Sahana' (meaning 'relief') project, developed by Sahana Software Foundation of Sri Lanka (now deployed across the globe), is an excellent example of technology-driven improvements in humanitarian relief processes. They develop free and open source software, and provide services that help solve concrete problems and bring efficiencies to disaster response coordination between governments, aid organizations, civil society, and the survivors themselves."

Melissa Doherty, Process and Innovation Manager, Brisbane City Council

"The differing expectations of what BPM can deliver certainly give the practice more areas of impact and influence. The significant areas of interest, certainly in my experience at present, are in the following areas:

- BPM to maximize the value of technology investments
- BPM as a means to deliver automation and innovation
- BPM driving to remove silos, improve collaboration and integration"

Andreas Havliza, Indraj Datta Chaudhuri, and Clement Hurpin, Consultants, Leonardo Consulting

"The process idea has come a long way; it is now widely accepted by management science (as proven by countless papers and dedicated university departments) as well as industry. As mentioned in the *Harvard Business Review*, "the question for top management is no longer whether your organization's processes need to be improved, but rather which ones, how much, and when."

… there are three major drivers for BPM in Western Australia these days:

The First Driver is the need to support cost-cutting exercises…

The Second Driver of Business Process Management is the requirement to document processes (for various reasons), such as compliance demands or the simple need to capture an as-is process in order to optimize it…

The Third Driver of BPM is the need for automation…"

Erik Herness, CTO and Chief Architect (BPM) at IBM

"The current interest in BPM remains diverse and quite widespread across many industries….

…organizations have two general sources of interest in BPM. The first is the IT organization, where they think about process automation and are obviously influenced a lot by technology…

The second source of interest comes from the business strategy and business operations part of an organization. These efforts are focused on understanding and improving the business itself, and processes become a means to that end…"

Gilles Morin, Founder, BPMPlus, Inc.

"I have noticed a major shift in interest over the past three years. Here are examples of the new signals I have from the market:
…
The words transformation, customer experience, digitalization, process, and BPM are used more and more in the same sentence!
…
The word processes is regularly on decision-makers' minds. They ALL face overwhelming challenges and are looking for more efficient and effective ways to take them on."

Michael Rosemann, Head of Information Sciences School, Queensland University of Technology

"The digital economy has empowered citizens with the provision of intuitive personalized and hyper-connected technologies and applications. This has not only enabled the integration of citizens into extended corporate value chains but, even more, allowed citizens to become co-designers, and valuable resource providers (e.g. Airbnb, Uber) in new emerging digital value chains.

As a consequence, organizations increasingly explore how BPM can help them to understand and design such citizen-centered processes. In such processes, the traditional focus of BPM (i.e. having business processes with a number of customer touch-points) is flipped around. Instead, such digitized, citizen-centered processes are capturing end-to-end customer experiences covering multiple providers. Corporate touch-points are activities along this process where companies have an opportunity to enrich such processes."

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Jan vom Brocke, Hitti Chair of BPM, University of Liechtenstein

> "During the past decades, BPM has proven largely supportive of productivity growth and efficiency improvement. However, most of today's organizations are increasingly concerned about keeping up with digital transformation. …
>
> Contemporary BPM combines both perspectives: exploitation aiming for improvement and exploitation aiming for innovation. Given a certainly technological frame, BPM provides an integrated set of methods, tools, and techniques to continuously improve business processes in order to meet business targets (process effectiveness) in the most economical way (process efficiency)."

These brief excerpts from the answers given by the participating authors hardly do justice to their complete articles, but they provide an idea of the range of approaches the various thought leaders bring to bear on the BPM questions raised by this interesting new book.

Once again, we invite readers, once they have considered the question and some of the responses provided by the book's authors, to join a conversation about the question on the BPTrends Discussion site on LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com/groups/1175137)

Authors

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