# *Questioning BPM?* Why a Process Architecture?

## Paul Harmon and Roger Tregear

*Earlier this year 33 leading BPM thought leaders responded to a call from Roger Tregear and Paul Harmon to offer their thoughts about 15 questions about Business Process Management.  This article, like others we have published, provides an overview about how some of the authors responded to one of the questions.*

## WHY A PROCESS ARCHITECTURE?

Architecture is an important concept in contemporary management. There are many forms and definitions of architectural constructs: enterprise, business systems, process, capabilities, information, application rules, services, organization, and resources, to name a few. Various architectural models give different prominence to process architecture—from low levels of importance to primacy.

How do you see the position of process architecture in the overall architecture of architectures? In what way do you suggest that a process architecture be best used?

## OVERVIEW

There is no disagreement among our authors that a process architecture is a fundamental component of BPM. It is the touchstone for all BPM-related activity. The many pitfalls of building and using a process architecture are noted, but its considerable practical value as both a strategic and tactical tool is strongly endorsed.

In contrast to shared aspiration among the authors for a process architecture to provide a shared vocabulary, a lingua franca of business management, is their differing descriptions of what a process architecture actually is, and of the details of its content and context. Business approaches divided by a common language?

The place of process architecture in a larger context of business or enterprise architecture is thoroughly canvassed. While most authors support the idea of the primacy of process, it is noted that the most successful 'architectures' are related to IT assets. Process architecture is the odd one out in this context, as it demands strong and sustained business involvement, an involvement for which additional IT effort is no substitute. Process architecture is only useful if the business says it is, and it can only become useful if the business builds and sustains it.

**TALAL A. ALSUBAIE**
**Managing Director, Modprex**

Process modeling is a time-intensive task, and most organizations do not gain significant benefit from this effort—often because they lack a process architecture.

**JIM BOOTS**
**Owner, Global Process Innovation**

Perhaps the biggest benefit of a dynamically updated process architecture is the message of 'pride of work' that is conveyed when employees see that management considers the work of every employee important enough to be thoughtfully represented. Furthermore, by involving employees in the creation and vetting of the process architecture, everyone comes away with a deeper understanding of their roles and how they contribute to the organization's mission.

**ROGER BURLTON**
**President, Process Renewal Group**

Without processes, there is no architectural connectivity—and there is no traceability to business performance and the strategy of the value chain.

The process architecture is essential to defining the business. It is what we do, and how we do it. It informs and connects all the other aspects of business capability.

**ANDREAS HAVLIZA**
**Consulting Principal, Team Leader, Leonardo Consulting**
**INDRAJIT DATTA CHAUDHURI**
**Senior Consultant, Leonardo Consulting**
**CLEMENT HURPIN**
**Consultant, Leonardo Consulting**

A business process architecture (BPA) is the key element in a Business Process Management (BPM) framework! It should be the starting point of every BPM program or project, as it clearly defines the organization's process landscape.

**MATTHEW J. MORGAN**
**Head of Process & Metrics Excellence, Bridgewater Assoc.**

I have heard of controversy about the difference between a capabilities and process architecture. If capabilities are organized into value chains, then I don't see much practical difference between the two.

**GILLES MORIN**
**Founder, BPMPlus Inc.**

When you see your CEO running around with the process architecture under

his arm, or when you see investment committees referring to the business architecture as a key decision support tool, then you know that the process architecture is a valid business architecture piece!

## CHRIS POTTS
## Corporate Strategist, Dominic Barrow

Most of an enterprise's 'internal processes' are fragments of external processes. Those external processes would probably happen whether the enterprise existed or not, and are largely beyond the enterprise's control. Each touchpoint is when an internal process impacts the enterprise's value to a stakeholder. It is, therefore, better to design internal processes from touchpoints-inwards, rather than let the internal process drive the design of the touchpoints.

## ALAN RAMIAS
## Partner, Performance Design Lab

But is a BPA the highest-level view one could have of an organization? It probably shouldn't be. It should be part of a larger view that encompasses all aspects of an organization. That is, an 'enterprise architecture' would make sense as the top-level view, the 'architecture-of-architectures'. So, I do subscribe to the notion of EA. But I've never seen a good one.

## PHIL SHORT
## IT Director, Mars Canada

The problem with the enterprise architecture (EA), in my opinion, is that it is so complex that explaining it to senior business leaders to get buy-in for any initiative is almost impossible, and that any business case to introduce EA must consist of a team of enterprise architects that cost money with no obvious return. That being said, use of EA in the IT arena can make a lot of sense to connect the different layers of the organization together in a cohesive IT solution. The one thing it must have, though, is a business process layer, and one that the business leaders understand and can relate to—not one that resonates only with the IT function. So, this leaves me with the view that BPA is king.

## ANDREW SPANYI
## Founder and Managing Director, Spanyi International

You know that the development of process architecture has been fruitful when:
• Members of the SLT ask questions about the timeliness and quality of process performance
• There is an increase in the frequency and efficacy of cross-departmental teams
• People can concisely describe the process they work within and understand what happens before and after their involvement in the process flow.

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