

enterprise integrity



By DAVID MCGOVERAN

BPMS Concepts, Part 6

Having discussed the goals, tasks, benefits, and components of a Business Process Management System (BPMS) earlier in this series, it's time to bring it all together. Besides summarizing the high-level organization of a BPMS, we'll consider the necessary methodologies and the acquisition of a BPMS.

The many desirable components of a BPMS (see my last three columns) can be understood conceptually as belonging to four groups. In summary, these are:

- **Process management facilities** — process engine, distributed process coordinator, resource manager, scheduler, audit manager, error manager, security and policy manager, repository, and system manager
- **Business console facilities** — business process modeler, business process simulator, business metrics modeler, business process and metrics monitor/manager, business transaction modeler, business process manager, business process analyzer, and report generator
- **External resource management facilities** — interface manager, activity manager, and integration component interfaces
- **Process-oriented development tools (optional)** — an integrated design and development environment.

You should augment these software components with three important methodologies:

- **BPMS implementation methodology** — Few users can be expected to understand how best to implement and use a BPMS, especially at the enterprise level. The choices — top-down, bottom-up, or hybrid approach — raise many questions. You may supplement the methodology with standard business process models specific to an industry (e.g., insurance) or common business activity (e.g., generic billing).
- **Enterprise Application Integration (EAI) methodology** — Proprietary and informal EAI methodologies abound, but few have been designed to enable BPM. Users need an EAI methodology that treats the technical aspects of integration as subservient to business goals. EAI without business process and metrics is just another technological quagmire.
- **BPMS design and development methodology** — Designing components and applications that externalize business processes and rules, while respecting the appropriate encapsulation of business objects requires a new perspective. Developers also need some new skills. It's fundamentally different from, but compatible with, object-oriented methodologies.

So how does a company acquire a functional BPMS? That's a difficult question, given that BPMS technology is still evol-


ing. No BPMS product has packaged all the components described in this series, but several companies have compatible product roadmaps (see the list at www.alternativetech.com). You and your organization can use the information in this series as a high-level guide to evaluating BPMS product maturity and the maturity of the vendor's BPMS vision.

Until you can find mature BPMS products, you may need to purchase multiple products and use them in a semi-integrated fashion. For example, off-the-shelf process management facilities with acceptable utility exist today, but may not yet be tightly integrated with business console facilities or with external resource management facilities. A combination of import/export of repository information, disciplined methodology, and custom integration will permit users to implement their own BPMS and begin reaping the many rewards. If you pursue this path, keep in mind that the analysis and simulation are only as accurate as the model used. Tight integration of business console facilities and process management facilities requires, among other things, that process simulation be finely tuned to match the target process engine.

One important caution: Don't use a workflow management system as if it were a BPMS. That's not to say that a workflow engine cannot form the foundation for a process engine, only that the modifications required are complex and often expensive. Of the vendors that have augmented their EAI products with workflow management systems, some present the unaltered workflow engine as if it were a process engine. Others understand the BPMS vision and are actively working on deep modifications and enhancements. Be skeptical — insist that the vendor explain how their engine will meet BPMS business requirements.

Once you have a suite of BPMS components, you'll need to establish an implementation methodology and a specific deployment plan. Roughly speaking, BPMS deployment plans can be classified as top-down, bottom-up, dispersive, or accretion approaches. The deployment plan dictates which:

- Business goals can be met first
- Components should be deployed first
- Portions of the organization will be affected most directly.

Next month, we'll explore these approaches to BPMS deployment and the pursuit of business goals. As we'll see, enterprise integrity lies not in what one can do, but rather in knowing what not to do. 

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