

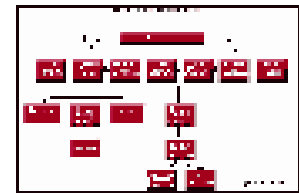
About Business Process Management

Business processes represent the flow of materials, information and business commitments. Processes are long lived, are supported by distributed computer systems and are both transactional and collaborative. Processes are composed of both automated and manual activities.

Business process management is the capability to discover, design, deploy, execute, operate, optimise and analyse end-to-end processes at the level of business design, not technical implementation. Business process management is concerned with both the reliable completion of discrete business transactions as well as complex sequences that may continue for weeks, months or even years.

Business process management systems are an IT solution that enables businesses to conduct business process management. Some vendors call process management the fourth layer of IT architecture. Others refer to new composite applications, the next generation of workflow, the new platform for applications or simply smarter middleware. However we define it, the key element of a process management system is the process virtual machine: a single, unified modelling and execution environment applied to the support of any business process.

Business process modelling languages provide the foundation for process management systems. Of particular interest is Business Process Modelling Language (BPML). BPML is a meta-language for the modelling of business processes, just as XML is a meta-language for the modelling of business data. It provides an abstracted execution model for collaborative and transactional business processes based on the concept of a transactional finite-state machine. BPML processes span multiple applications and business partners, behind the firewall and over the Internet, across multiple verticals. Participants in the process can be back-office systems (such as a database management system), software components (such as a J2EE component), users (such as a purchase manager), and partners (such as a supplier or customer). The transactions defined by the process are both business transactions (such as the exchange of a purchase order), and system transactions (such as a transactions processed on a database table). Business transactions usually involve two or more partners (e-business), while system transactions can involve multiple back-office systems (a distributed transaction). The unification of the dual notions of business process and technical process play a major role in the definition of BPML, which is based on theories of process calculus.



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