

# Advantages of Agile BPM

**Keith D. Swenson, Fujitsu America Inc., USA**

Agile BPM represents the next generation of business process management—designed to flexibly address all types of processes to support all forms of work. It combines traditional Business Process Management (BPM) style predefined processes, along with Adaptive Case Management (ACM) style dynamic work support.

## INTRODUCTION

Agile BPM is designed to flexibly address all types of processes used to conduct business: structured, unstructured, and hybrid process types to support all forms of work.

In recent years many organizations have come to the understanding that their business processes are proprietary business assets that can yield competitive differentiation and advantage. This recognition has led to the adoption of first-generation BPM technologies to automate fixed, repetitive processes for efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

But the next generation of BPM, Agile BPM, will incorporate product capabilities that extend well beyond the system integration and fixed process automation initiatives that characterized first-generation BPM.

Three essential areas constitute Agile BPM:

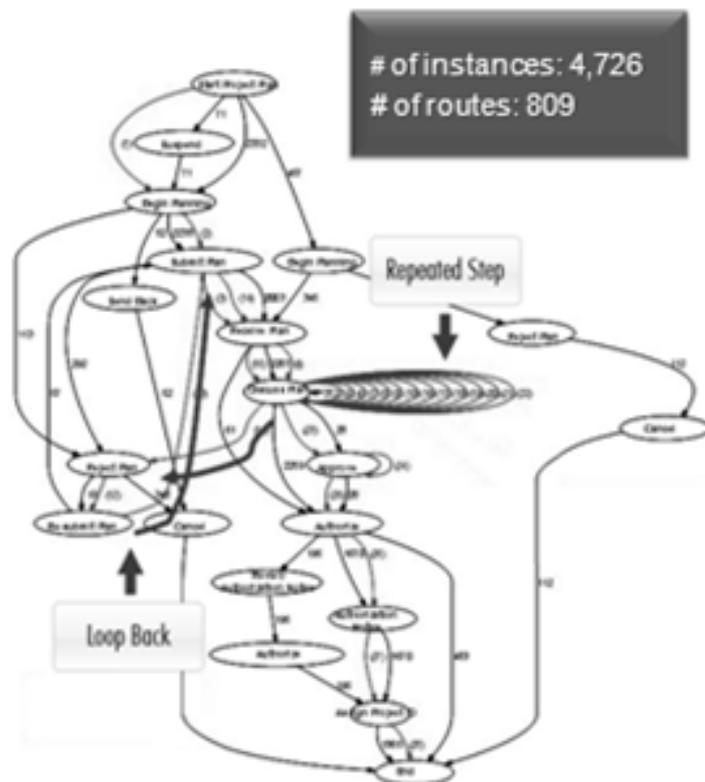
- Continuous Process Optimization
- Collaboration and Social Networking
- Extending Enterprise Ecosystems

## CONTINUOUS PROCESS OPTIMIZATION

An issue that lies at the heart of process automation is the lack of agility in many BPM implementations and technologies, putting process automation initiatives and technologies out of synch with the dynamically changing business conditions they are supposed to reflect and support. There exists a critical need for continuous process visibility and analysis to ensure that key business processes are performing effectively to support the business as its practices and requirements evolve.

But process discovery and visualization are challenging for most organizations. In fact, industry research has stated that in the conventional BPM cycle of Discover-Model-Simulate-Automate-Optimize, the Discovery phase consumes over 40 percent of the time and effort to implement BPM. This is because discovery of existing processes is largely a manual, time-consuming exercise conducted through meetings and human interactions. Most workers lack a holistic view of processes, even processes they are involved in. Typically they know the immediate previous and subsequent step of any process in which they are participants. As a result, identifying and modeling existing processes is, at best, anecdotal and inefficient, and at worst, highly inaccurate. The consequence of this is that most organizations that have automated business processes do not perform continuous visualization, analysis, and optimization of existing key business processes that may be out-of-date.

What is needed is evidence-based process detection and verification that provides insight to both IT and the business side of how well or poorly existing business processes are delivering efficiency and business advantage. Process Mining, also known as Automated Process Discovery (APD), performs off-production analysis of existing business processes—uncovering typical flows, repetitions, and loopbacks to highlight process inefficiencies and bottlenecks where they exist and identifying the right processes for improvement and continuous optimization.



**Figure 1: Automated Process Discovery visualizes actual process paths, identifying the most critical processes for improvement.**

With system-based evidence on the true “as it really is” state of existing business processes, IT and business management can collaboratively identify and prioritize the key processes for improvement. Armed with actionable process insight, processes can then be optimized and automated. Where too many or overlapping processes exist, APD can help rationalize them and create lean process profiles.

APD highlights the most commonly traversed process paths, the least common paths, repeated steps, loopbacks, and the cost of each process. By identifying the most common business process patterns, it provides end users with the opportunity to standardize on existing common processes that are effective.

This process mining works in combination with traditional BPM to identify the critical process intersections and stages that affect business performance. Once identified, the traditional BPM can use analytics techniques to

set performance thresholds and monitor these Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for any potential deviations in process that could degrade business performance.

Process owners and business executives require this management view on process latencies or redundancies. The system can monitor process performance and issues alerts corresponding to business conditions requiring corrective action. This delivers real-time business intelligence for continuous process performance and optimization.



**Figure 2: sets performance thresholds and monitors Key Performance Indicators for any potential deviations.**

### COLLABORATIVE AND SOCIAL

The next capability of Agile BPM is accommodating and managing semi- and completely unpredictable business processes that involve collaboration among teams.

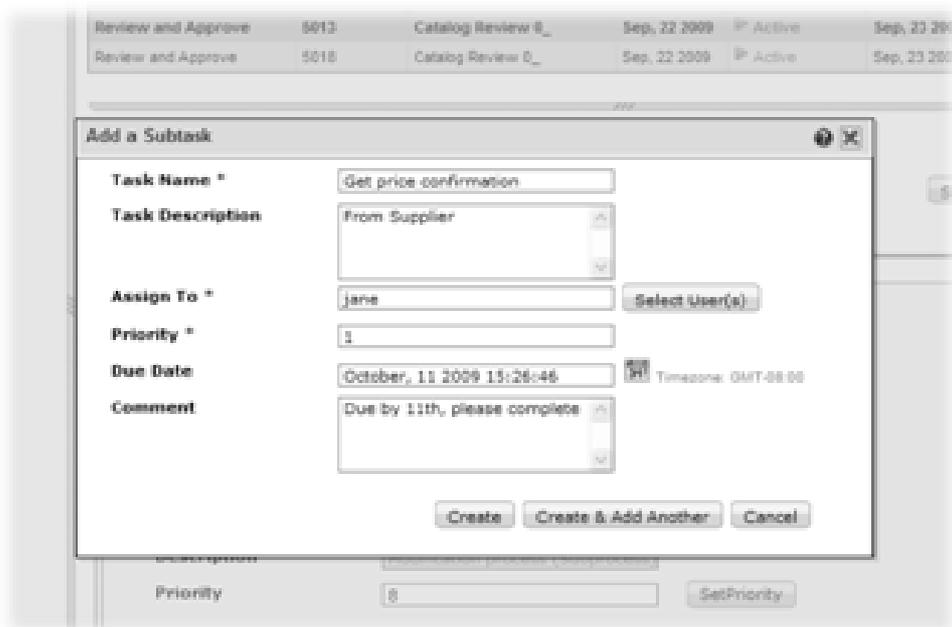
The first generation of BPM technologies has been traditionally applied to manage routine, repeatable business processes within a company. These processes—such as invoicing or order processing—typically follow exact steps that are normally repeated without exception. But there is another area of work—*knowledge work*—that is conducted in nearly all forms of business. This type of work involves judgment, can involve team collaboration, and almost never follows predictable, identical, repeated patterns.

Knowledge work and collaborative work represents the most valuable and differentiated work performed in an organization and as such, it tends to involve the highest value business initiatives and most expensive and highly trained workers in the company. Yet this work is not immune from inefficiency. The challenge has been how to provide system automation to track, measure, monitor, and manage processes and steps that cannot be defined in advance.

Agile BPM includes capabilities to address these ad hoc process flows necessary for knowledge-work, allowing process participants to punch out of structured processes and to task others for additional insight, input and ap-

provals. Or they can instantiate a process outside of a defined process model, one whose course will proceed along dynamic, unpredictable steps to completion. Interstage BPM provides dynamic routing, workload balancing, and creation of processes on the fly. And it addresses the hybrid process scenarios where a structured process can spawn the need for collaboration or where a dynamic process can invoke structured process fragments.

When using Agile BPM, users can easily veer from previously defined, structured processes to respond to business change by extending existing processes dynamically with new tasks or by creating new processes from scratch to address these situations. Business users create completely new processes by simply creating a list of activities – a process outline – and Interstage automatically converts it into a sequence of tasks. In this way, business team members implicitly participate together in defining processes based on actual work.



**Figure 3: dynamic tasking lets users address and manage all forms of work, including ad hoc tasks and activities.**

In this way, one can support collaborative, unstructured, and dynamic business processes needed for knowledge work. This is also known as case management in specific industries such as legal, healthcare, and insurance. Addressing individual business situations and work types that are unique, case management is now a relevant and commonly occurring work pattern in numerous other pursuits including mergers and acquisitions, financial portfolio management, and customer exception handling scenarios.

Dynamic process support allows users to model and manage a process where the starting point is known but the end point is not. It also lets users modify processes at runtime to accommodate necessary changes in process to support the work objective. It even lets people retroactively start processes for the case that work got started before the case manager realized that a process would be needed.

Collaborative work models and social media are teaching us that self-direction for teams and individuals are superior to the old “command and control” work models in nearly all situations involving knowledge work. Controls are moving downward in organizations. The world is moving too fast for centralized control. Decisions need to be made at ever more autonomous points, involving information exchanges and consultations in unforeseen, unplanned, and impromptu ways.

Increasingly, social interaction is figuring prominently in the development of a participatory culture for collaboratively producing work. The concepts of online communities where team members can contribute ideas, share information, and obtain information are central to next-generation Agile BPM. It includes social, collaborative capabilities for decentralized communication and immediate information updates to keep broad-based teams current and in possession of all of the facts related to a process-based work initiative.

Business processes involve numerous people, tasks, and decisions. Users need to be able to collaborate with each other via instant messaging, exchange knowledge through wikis to help complete tasks, and even sign up for RSS feeds so that they remain up-to-date on the status of tasks.

Users need a workplace that forms a dynamic, Web-based community framework for collaboration. They need tools for organizing people and information assets involved in work projects and provides information about the status of Workplace members and their tasks. And users should be able to leverage the process wikis and outlining capabilities to enable better collaboration and sharing of process knowledge.

### EXTENDING ENTERPRISE ECOSYSTEMS

Today’s business processes are not exclusively native to one entity. Now they span corporate boundaries to connect multiple, different audiences including customers, suppliers, partners, and other constituent parties. These extended corporate ecosystems increasingly involve shared business processes and as such need the capability to streamline, monitor, measure, and manage workflows that cross individual company and organizational boundaries.



**Figure 4: supporting social interactions – sharing knowledge, insight, and best practices to accomplish work more effectively.**

An Agile BPM approach is ideal for linking process participants across these boundaries. Because it is Web-based, deployments can easily link to any process participants, regardless of where they are situated. The benefits of this approach include reduced capital costs, the ability to design and run processes from anywhere, and the capacity to easily extend processes to and among varied constituent parties.

### CONCLUSION

A fact that is sometimes overlooked is that the point of Business Process Management is to improve the way that people perform and complete their work. Users demand capabilities to make it easy to have a pulse on business or project-based work performance. Unified dashboards present real-time access and detail of all tasks, processes, reports, KPIs, and alerts. Team leaders can quickly drill down into the specifics of an issue, compare team members' performances, identify the right person to assign to a task based on past performance, and even examine potential workload scenarios for particular team members before reshuffling assignments to get work done optimally. Empowered to quickly and flexibly sub-task work to different team members in response to dynamic conditions, managers are able to optimize all forms of process – structured, unstructured, hybrid – in support of accomplishing work and overall business performance.

Next-generation Agile BPM is designed to address all of the requirements of managing work in today's enterprise: from streamlining routine, repeated business processes to managing dynamically evolving business cases involving teamwork, collaboration, and judgment across and among diverse sets of process participants.

### ABOUT FUJITSU AMERICA

Fujitsu America, Inc. is a leading ICT solutions provider for organizations in the U.S., Canada and the Caribbean. Fujitsu enables clients to meet their business objectives through integrated offerings including consulting, systems integration, managed services and outsourcing for enterprise applications, data center and field services operations, based on server, software, storage and mobile technologies. Interstage BPM is Fujitsu's leading edge product that presents powerful Agile BPM capabilities, combining both traditional BPM and ACM capabilities into a single unified approach. Fujitsu provides industry-oriented solutions for manufacturing, retail, healthcare, government, education, financial services and communications sectors. For more information, please visit: <http://solutions.us.fujitsu.com/>