

A BPM FAQ

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Why a BPM FAQ?

As adoption of Business Process Management (BPM) accelerates it is time to focus on putting the theory into the context of existing and future practices. Recognizing that BPM is a distinct discipline, and not just about technology—it must therefore impact organizations, people and working practices. As BPM is applied more widely, it has the potential to significantly change the behavior and business models of user organizations, vendors, consultants and systems integrators. There are few roles that will not be touched by the opportunities created by BPM methods and tools.

What better way to understand the significance of BPM than by asking questions? Recalling recurring themes that we have been asked to comment on as we have worked with our clients, we have collated a list of questions that those advocating BPM and those providing BPM solutions must be prepared to answer. The ability to provide comprehensive answers can be a factor in facilitating the adoption of BPM tools and methods.

The list of questions that has emerged through our work includes topics that may sometimes seem simplistic, too broad, irrelevant and often ... quite different to answer. But they represent *real* questions on the minds of *real* people—people who will ultimately be responsible for the adoption and exploitation of BPM systems within their respective organizations. This is the Why, What, How, When, Where, Who of BPM. Our purpose is to stimulate debate in the BPM community from which practical knowledge will emerge, accelerating assimilation of BPM methods and systems and ensuring effective exploitation.

User organizations can reference the FAQ to stimulate thinking about business/IT convergence; vendors can respond to the FAQ to place their products in the context of a holistic BPM architecture; Systems Integrators can take the opportunity to re-think and adapt their delivery processes; BPM communities such as BPMG.org, BPTrends.com, BPMInstitute.org, ABPMP.org and BPMForum.org can use it to focus the BPM debate and generate ideas to shape the future BPM landscape.

There will be no magic answers to many of these questions. Strategies for tackling the challenges will emerge, but will need a full BPM community effort to develop. To facilitate this process we are committed to publishing all suggestions and observations we receive. Please share your thoughts, ideas, additional questions and best of all—answers.

Please send your comments to Howard Smith (howard.smith@ontology.org) and Ceri Williams (cwilliams@theintegrationpractice.co.uk).

About the authors

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Required reading for everyone

01. What is a business process?
02. What is business process management (BPM)?
03. Why should my CEO care about BPM?
04. How does BPM provide my organization competitive advantage?
05. What's the impact of BPM on business strategy planning?
06. Is BPM a single discipline and tool set, or are there multiple definitions of "BPM" in the marketplace and therefore multiple ways that organizations can benefit from BPM?
07. What unites vendors who call themselves BPM?
08. What is meant by the "third wave" of BPM?
09. What new concepts does an organization need to understand in order to effectively use a BPM solution or method?
10. What is a Business Process Management System (BPMS)?
11. Is there a standard definition of a BPMS?
12. Who is using BPMS today and why?
13. I've heard that BPM can help an organization to change its processes, and sustain emergent change on an ongoing basis. Is this real and how does it work?
14. How does one explain the value of using a BPMS to a colleague who has not encountered the idea before?
15. What's the elevator pitch for BPM? What's the elevator pitch for BPMS?
16. Does BPM imply that my processes have to be standardized?
17. Is BPMS predicated on the assumption of business process reengineering (BPR)?
18. Are BPM (business process management as defined by BPMI.org) and BPM (business performance management as defined by BPMForm.org) the same or different or related?
19. How does BPM relate to Business Activity Monitoring (BAM)?
20. How would you know whether an organization or business sponsor is ready, willing and able to exploit the full potential of a BPM?
21. Is it possible to do BPM without using a BPMS? Is the value of BPMS in the method or in the technology?
22. Is BPMS a theoretical concept or a practical product?
23. What's the significance of swimlanes in a BPM process model?

24. Does a company need to understand Pi Calculus in order to use a BPMS?
25. What is the real significance of Pi Calculus?
26. How significant is the BPMS trend in the IT industry? Should I take notice?
27. Is BPMS intended as an enterprise class platform in the same way that ERP and application servers are?
28. Is Siebel UAN the same as BPMS?
29. Is SAP Netweaver and xApps the same as BPMS?
30. What is the Business Process Modeling Language (BPML)?
31. Why was BPML developed?
32. What is the Business Process Modeling Notation (BPMN) and what is its relationship to BPML?
33. What is the difference between BPML and BPEL?
34. Is there a standards war in the BPM area and should I wait before deploying BPMS?

For those making the business case

35. Is BPM for real or just a vision?
36. What is the business case for BPM? How is it articulated? Is there any difference to traditional business case development for traditional IT systems development projects?
37. Where do the primary benefits of BPM lie?
38. What is unique about BPM tools, systems and projects?
39. Who buys BPM and why?
40. What's the low hanging fruit for getting value from BPM in a typical organization?
41. Does BPM have an application sweet spot?
42. What factors influence getting the first BPM project off the ground?
43. Why should I care about BPMS, what's unique?
44. To what extent does a BPMS really lower the entry point to new business processes?
45. At the current stage of market development, where is BPMS most applicable? From the initial cases, are any patterns emerging that show where it offers most value?
46. What is the rock bottom business case for using a BPMS, as opposed to claims for enhanced "agility" etc?

Process improvement, quality and reengineering

47. How does BPM technology help improve business processes?
48. What is the relationship of BPM to reengineering (BPR)?
49. How can a BPR project leverage BPM tools?
50. What's the role for process improvement, reengineering and change consultants in facilitating a new BPM system?
51. What's the role of reengineering, process improvement or change consultants after a BPM system has been deployed?
52. My job title is "process improvement". How does BPM help me personally?
53. How do management consultants (internal or external) fit into a BPM effort?
54. What's the significance of BPM to business analysts?
55. What's the relationship between BPM and Six Sigma?
56. How can Six Sigma practitioners benefit from BPM?
57. Can organizations that are organized by function, as opposed to process, adopt BPM?
58. How does an organization move from a functional orientation to a process orientation?
59. Does BPM only work if there is clear ownership of end-to-end processes?
60. How can a BPMS be used to create standard processes in my organisation?
61. How can a BPMS be used to create unique processes in my organization?
62. How can a BPMS be used to customize processes in my organization?
63. Can a BPMS help an organization to adopt standard industry process models, e.g. RosettaNet, SCOR, TMF?
64. Does use of BPMS reduce the need for standard industry process models?
65. How are processes discovered, captured and codified as formal process models?
66. What does it mean for a process to be "executable"?
67. How does one select business processes for a BPM project?
68. How does one prioritize BPM efforts?
69. Is BPM only about automating business processes?
70. How does BPM make processes visible?
71. How does BPM make processes measurable?

72. How does BPM help discover and document processes?
73. Can BPM reinforce key performance indicators?
74. Can tacit process expertise be tapped in a BPM project?
75. How is BPM assimilated within a typical organization?
76. What constraints exist that will regulate the assimilation of BPM by end user organizations?
77. What process competences do I need to effectively use BPM solutions?
78. What developments are required in BPM methods, capabilities and governance before it is safe for BPM to be widely deployed?
79. What do BPM practitioners mean when they talk about a process lifecycle?
80. How does BPM facilitate experimentation with business process change?
81. How are process models validated and verified?
82. How do BPM tools empower teams to work together within and across departments and organization?
83. As a result of BPM, can end users now change live business processes? What kinds of change do BPM solutions permit?
84. Would an organization want to control changes to processes by end users? If so, how?
85. It has been said that BPM systems allow processes to evolve in line with changing business requirements or events occurring in the business. How realistic is this and how does it occur in practice?
86. Is there anything in the BPM approach that guarantees better and more well structured business process models?
87. How complex is it to define a process model and deploy it on a BPM system?
88. How does BPM allow an organization to differentiate its processes against potential competitors at the same time leveraging industry best practices?
89. Does BPM ease the traditional resistance to the adoption of new IT systems by people in the business?
90. Is there a BPM maturity model I can draw on to help position BPM projects?
91. Is there a minimum level of commitment required to make BPM viable?
92. Can simulation be used to design or experiment with new business process models?
93. Can simulation be used to evaluate new process models before they are put into operation?
94. Can simulation be used as an active component within a process model?

95. Do different BPM solutions limit the business processes that can be deployed upon them? How general purpose is the tool?
96. Can a BPMS implement collaborative processes, as opposed to procedural, deterministic and workflow-like processes, for example, product design (PLM)?
97. How many real world processes really need the power of BPMS, as opposed to, for example, a traditional workflow or ERP process?
98. How is modeling a process in a formal language like BPML different to other process modeling techniques?
99. How can an organization learn to model processes in BPML?
100. Are there disciplines that organisations have applied in the past that could help them to develop competence in BPML?

Process owners

101. Does BPM change the concept of process ownership in an organization?
102. Does BPM facilitate a move to clear process ownership?
103. How does BPM help establish standard processes?
104. Can BPM tools be used to impose a single, orderly process where that has not existed before?
105. Applications seem to be the best way of getting a standard process. BPM offers flexibility in process design. Is this a good thing and do I need it?
106. Applications are not easy to customize. Can BPM help?
107. How does a business govern and manage process change if BPMS has been deployed?

Project management

108. What's the significance of BPM to project managers?
109. Who are the stakeholders in a BPM project?
110. Who will most readily adjust to and benefit from using BPM systems and applying BPM principles?
111. How will roles change in a typical systems integration and systems development project as a result of introducing a BPMS?
112. What's the impact of BPM on requirements phase?
113. What's the impact of BPM on design phase?
114. What's the impact of BPM on IT systems deployment?
115. What's the impact of BPM on test phase?

- 116. What's the impact of BPM on IT maintenance?
- 117. What are the risks in BPM projects?
- 118. How can risk in BPM projects be mitigated?
- 119. How can risk in BPM projects be mitigated?
- 120. What is the maximum scope that a company should attempt a BPMS project before wider deployment?
- 121. How does change management work in a BPM project?
- 122. What does configuration management work in a BPM project?
- 123. Who will most readily adjust to and benefit from using BPM systems and applying BPM principles?

Enterprise architects

- 124. Where does a BPMS fit into a typical IT architecture?
- 125. What's the significance of BPM to an enterprise architect?
- 126. What's the significance of BPM to a technical architect?
- 127. How do architects work with process improvement people using BPM?
- 128. What impact does BPM have on IT service composition and de-composition?
- 129. Is there a type of process that is more ideally placed for BPM than other pre-existing technologies such as ERP, workflow, EAI and bespoke development?
- 130. How are enterprise modeling tools used in conjunction with BPM systems?
- 131. Can I reuse the process diagrams in our enterprise repository?
- 132. How does BPM co-exist with existing IT systems? How do BPM tools leverage existing IT assets?
- 133. What does it mean to integrate existing IT systems with BPM systems?
- 134. Is it easier to do BPM in a green field situation?
- 135. How is automation using BPM different from automation using, for example, packaged applications?
- 136. Is BPM relevant to companies that have decided "ERP" is their strategy?
- 137. Is there really a case for BPM that is not already met by workflow systems?
- 138. Is BPM relevant to companies where workflow solutions are heavily used?
- 139. What is the buy versus build equation for BPM?

140. Do packaged processes for BPM solutions exist? If they are, what's the difference with packaged software?
141. Should organizations start with packaged processes when they are building a BPM solution?
142. Does BPM change the well-understood process for selecting, deploying, configuring and customizing through development, packaged applications?
143. How does BPMS relate to existing packaged solutions?
144. How does a BPMS extend, combine or consolidate one or more packaged applications?
145. Who should be involved in drawing up an RFP for BPM technologies?
146. Should the RFP include the process models sought, even in outline? If so, how can they be expressed?
147. Are there best practices as to how BPM is acquired, deployed and exploited in order to maximise the return on investment in BPM solutions?
148. Will standards ensure that process models developed using one BPMS can be transferred to another?
149. Where does BPMS sit in the IT stack? Will it become part of the operating system infrastructure and bundled with platform vendor offerings?
150. What is the largest BPMS deployment to date?
151. Is a BPMS a solution, a platform or a toolkit?
152. How much of a solution can be modelled in BPML?
153. How does BPML relate to UML?
154. How is BPML used if a company is applying the Zachman Framework or similar methodologies, e.g. CSC Catalyst
155. How does BPM relate to Rational Unified Process (RUP)?

CIO and the IT organisation

156. How does BPM enable IT process improvement?
157. Can BPM help consolidate ERP and other IT systems?
158. Can BPM alleviate ERP upgrade time and costs?
159. Does my shared services organization need BPM?
160. Can BPM help create a more standardized IT infrastructure?
161. How does BPM help deploy new end-to-end processes across the unique and diverse IT assets of an organization?

- 162. Does BPM change the relationship between business and IT?
- 163. I've heard BPM can "eradicate the business-IT divide". What does that mean?
- 164. If business people are more empowered by BPM to change business processes, how does the IT function manage the potential knock on effects in terms of quality of service, capacity, storage, resilience, and so on?
- 165. How does IT systems development governance change as a result of BPMS?
- 166. For a CIO, is BPMS anything more than just another box and another software application to manage?

COO and operations management

- 167. What's the significance of BPM to those managing the performance of organizations? What does BPM mean to the COO?
- 168. How does BPM enhance decision support?
- 169. What additional business intelligence does BPM provide beyond existing approaches?
- 170. How does BPM make processes measurable?
- 171. How does BPM enable incremental process improvement?
- 172. What's the significance of BPM to service management?
- 173. What's the significance of BPM to operations management?
- 174. Companies acquire processes from many sources. How does BPM provide flexibility, extensibility and customization of processes once they are in operation?

CTO and technology strategy

- 175. What BPM technologies are available?
- 176. What different categories of BPM technology exist?
- 177. Is BPM one new technology or is it a hot convergence market as some analysts state?
- 178. Is BPM anything more than a re-branding of pre-existing IT solutions from other fields?
- 179. What does "pure play" BPM mean?
- 180. What does a BPM solution consist of?
- 181. Is BPMS a well-defined category of enterprise software?
- 182. Which vendors are currently offering a BPMS?
- 183. Do workflow vendors provide BPM solutions?
- 184. Why do workflow vendors now call their solution BPM?

185. Can workflow vendors evolve to provide a pure-play BPMS?
186. Do rules vendors provide BPM solutions?
187. Do EAI vendors provide BPM solutions?
188. Can EAI vendors evolve to offer a pure-play BPMS?
189. Do application server vendors provide BPM solutions?
190. Can application server vendors evolve to offer a pure-play BPMS?
191. Is BPM the same as code generation or CASE?
192. How do BPM tools differ from collaboration tools such as Lotus Notes and Microsoft Exchange?
193. What technical requirements should an organization look for in BPM solution?
194. What should an organization include in a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a BPM solution?
195. If there an off the shelf BPMS selection criteria checklist that I could use as a starting point?
196. How mature is BPM technology? What can be said in general about BPM solutions service quality, reliability, performance, scalability and solution integrity?
197. Is there such a thing as a packaged business processes, as we used to think of a packaged business application?
198. Does BPM means that package application vendors lose control of their IPR?
199. Who owns the IPR in BPM projects?
200. What should architects look for in terms of the interoperability of BPM products to other IT systems?
201. What should architects look for in terms of interoperability between BPM products?
202. How does BPM work in a heterogeneous and distributed IT environment?
203. Do I care about BPM standards and languages?
204. What's going on with BPM standards? What underlies the debate about BPML or BPEL?
205. Do standards matter when evaluating BPMS products? Which ones?
206. Which groups are involved in developing standards relevant to BPMS?
207. What is the relationship between BPMS and Web services standards?
208. What does BPM do to help me build a Service Oriented Architecture (SOA)?
209. What is a Process Oriented Architecture (POA) and how does it relate to BPM?

- 210. What is the relationship between BPMS and workflow standards?
- 211. What is the relationship between BPMS and the OMG's Model Driven Architecture (MDA) and UML if any?
- 212. Which aspects of BPM standards does BPML.org focus on? Is BPML.org coordinating with other groups?
- 213. What is the complete stack of standards relating to BPM?
- 214. Is there a risk at this stage in the market that a company will use proprietary extensions that will lock them to a particular BPMS vendor?
- 215. Analysts claim there will be a BPMS shakeout. In that case, should companies wait?
- 216. In five years, who will be the predominant provider of a BPMS?
- 217. Does interoperability mean something different in the future world enabled by BPM?

Systems and software development

- 218. What's the significance of BPM to an application developer?
- 219. What advantages does BPM provide over traditional ways of designing and building IT systems?
- 220. Why should I switch from Visual Basic or Java to BPML or BPEL?
- 221. Does BPM change the waterfall model of software and systems development?
- 222. When is it appropriate to include a BPMS in new IT development?
- 223. Is there really any difference between developing an application using a BPMS and developing an application on an application server?
- 224. What level of expertise is needed to utilize a BPMS? Are the tools oriented to developers or end users or process analysts?
- 225. If BPM processes can "change" during execution how can that be tested?

Packaged Application (e.g. ERP, CRM, SCM) design and implementation

- 226. What impact does BPM have on Packaged Application vendors?
- 227. What impact does BPM have on Packaged Application systems?
- 228. What's the significance of BPM to Packaged Application developers?
- 229. Can BPM help extend and customize Packaged Application systems? What does Application Extension using BPM mean?
- 230. Will BPM process models ever approach the complexity and sophistication of Packaged Applications?