eVISION

Business Process Management Adoption Patterns

A White Paper

Exploring facts about an adoption style that minimizes risks and secures tangible returns

By Omar Badreddin
& Judith Paradis

01/03/2011

INTRODUCTION

Business Process Management (BPM) is a novel holistic approach to aligning aspects of the organization with its stated goals, and aims at bridging the gap between business and IT domains. Although the initial focus of BPM was on the automation of business processes with the use of information technology, it has since been extended to integrate human-driven processes in which human interaction takes place in series or in parallel with the use of technology.

Some argue that BPM is just an old trend making a come back, a fancier name for office automation and workflow designs. Well, the same goes for cloud computing, maybe it is just a fancier name for client server applications? There are even growing voices drawing similarities between the fashion and the software industry[1]. Both industries seem to be driven by trends.

Maybe following a trend does matter, or maybe not? Aside from these fruitless –however interesting- arguments, software development teams who seek to hop on the BPM trend face a large number of decisions, most of which are with unclear untested outcomes for many reasons. First, BPM is a trend with an emerging standard that is not yet well rounded. BPM tool providers, therefore, adopts their own BPM flavour, making integration with other tools –to say the least- a disaster. More recently, tool and solution providers are specializing in distinct BPM domains like human centric, transactions oriented processing and document heavy processes. New companies specialize in market niches; eVision, for example, specializes in providing IT solutions and consulting services in the research administration field. Grant funding management is process intensive with variations across organizations and must remain agile to fulfil industry requirements. Such variations in the industry, combined with BPM relative immaturity, add to the unpredictability of BPM adoption decisions.

Before embarking on a BPM project, software development teams need to make some choices upfront. This white paper focuses on one question; how much should the software development team invest in terms of resources and effort in BPM activities throughout the project lifecycle? In other words, how many man/hours results in the maximum return over investment (ROI)? Invest too little, and the returns are not enough to secure management commitment; invest too much, and your ROI is diminished. Two adoption extremes come into play; shock adoption and incremental adoption. In addition to presenting the two extremes, the paper presents an '*objective driven*' methodology and an evaluation scheme to assess the effectiveness of any BPM adoption strategy.

SHOCK ADOPTION PATTERN

One adoption extreme follows the shock doctrine, where all the business analysis and development activities are aligned with and driven by a BPM perspective. Those contemplating this type of adoption face no lack of resources; almost all tools and solution vendors market their tools with the underlying assumption that BPM is the way to go. BPM tools are typically demoed in an end-to-end style, starting from early stages

---

[1] http://parijatmishra.wordpress.com/2010/01/08/188/ and http://blog.ivarjacobson.com/in-need-of-a-theory-for-software-engineering/

of modeling of goals and processes, to optimization and simulation, all the way to late stages of execution and testing.

This extreme is attractive for some for few prominent reasons. The fast changing software industry gives a significant halo for anything new and trendy. The software industry, similar to the fashion industry, has shown willingness to adopt new methodologies with no or little questioning. For example, despite the highly perceived value of Capability Maturity Models (CMMS), such perception is not based on any empirically tested evidence[2]. Lastly, the shock approach, by it's inherit name, implies some determinism and power. After all, such doctrine has proven successful in other disciplines, such as economics where the introduction of market-oriented economies were successfully introduced using this approach.

INCREMENTAL ADOPTION PATTERN

The other adoption extreme is incremental or iterative adoption. This style has become recently more familiar with the fall of the water-fall development styles, and the emergence of software development methodologies that rely on iterations and more agility. This approach, of course, poses minimal impact on existing practices, and is geared to blend smoothly with existing project management practices.

Because BPM is also a business domain, iterations by nature has incremental returns. Projects that pursue this style of adoption risk losing management faith whose focus is return on investment. Making a business case for investing in BPM without tangible returns is doomed to fail.

This brings about the need to have an adoption approach that poses little impact on existing practices, brings minimal risk, but still brings about tangible returns and secures management commitment.

OVERVIEW OF EVISON'S BPM OBJECTIVE DRIVEN APPROACH

eVision's BPM approach focuses on using BPM as a supporting business analysis tool that drives business analysis, cost estimation, scheduling, scoping and requirement gathering activities. At the requirements elicitation stage, BPM sessions are scheduled regularly for each component under analysis. Stakeholders are invited to the meetings and subject matter experts (SMEs) are the main source for drafting the business processes. The following elements are the focus of the BPM elicitation sessions:

1. The process scope is defined: Manual and system interactions are identified.
2. Major participants are identified.
3. Processes and process tasks are modeled.
4. User tasks are modeled and described.

It is crucial to clearly identify your BPM adoption objectives because they drive your decisions and compromises. eVision's methodology uses these objectives as a corner stone in evaluation and takes the stand that BPM is a bridge between the Business and IT,

---

[2] "Guide to Advanced Empirical Software Engineering" edited by Forrest Shull, Janice Singer, and Dag I.K. Sjøberg.

spearheading the business analysis activities and acting as the main communication tool between analysts, stakeholders, system architects, developers and end users.

Objectives driving eVision's BPM implementations approach:

1. **Enhance communication and documentation of processes**.
   BPM to function as a central repository for all process related information. BPM to help uniform naming and discussions for all project elements and help overcome communication challenges.

2. **Reduce request for changes.**
   BPM helps both the client and eVision understand the existing business processes so that the implemented solution can become more business driven, rather than IT driven.

3. **Propel the production of other development artefacts (example: Use Cases, system components, and executable artefacts).**
   This helps reduce the gap between the business and IT domains, and shortens the development life cycle.

4. **Identify reusable processes**.
   BPM methodology is to assist business analysts and system architects to identify reusable blocks (services) that can be implemented once, and used many times.

5. **Help create prototypes and system guides**.
   BPM is to play a central role in creating system prototypes, system documentation, and user guides.

6. **Become a valuable business asset.**
   BPM brings knowledge accumulation to the forefront, and lays the foundations for an organization's processes to become the *de facto* standard in the industry.

7. **Enhance process transparency and technology adoption.**
   Business processes become more transparent and consistent which facilitates the adoption of modified, or new, processes. Instead of being impeded in existing applications and employee's experiences, business processes become more visible and manageable.

EVALUATION OF EVISION'S BPM OBJECTIVE DRIVEN ADOPTION APPROACH

eVision conducted a questionnaire[3] to help assess the level of perceived objectives achieved since adoption of BPM. The questionnaire asked participants the following question:

"To what extent you think BPM Activities has helped achieve the following goals?"

---

[3] The questionnaire was completely voluntary. Participation was kept anonymous. All personally identifying information was permanently deleted. The questionnaire took about 5 minutes to complete.

The questionnaire lists the seven BPM objectives stated earlier in this paper. There were 10 responses from subject matter experts and stakeholders. The questionnaire collected responses on six scales; Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, and N/A. The scales were given weights of 5 for SA to 1 for SD. The following is consolidated participants responses.

Figure 1 summarizes participants' responses for the 7 questions. For example, the figure shows that there are in total 16 Strongly Agree responses, 29 Agree responses, 8 Neutral responses, and 1 Disagree response.
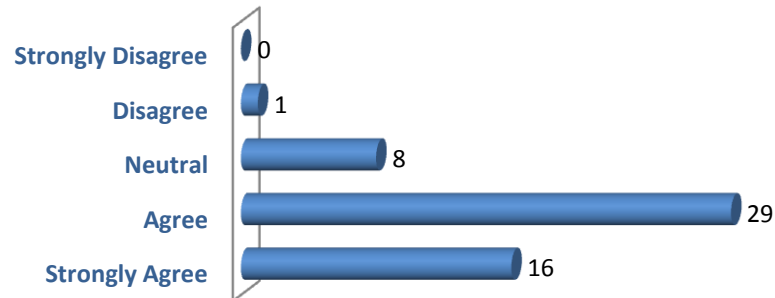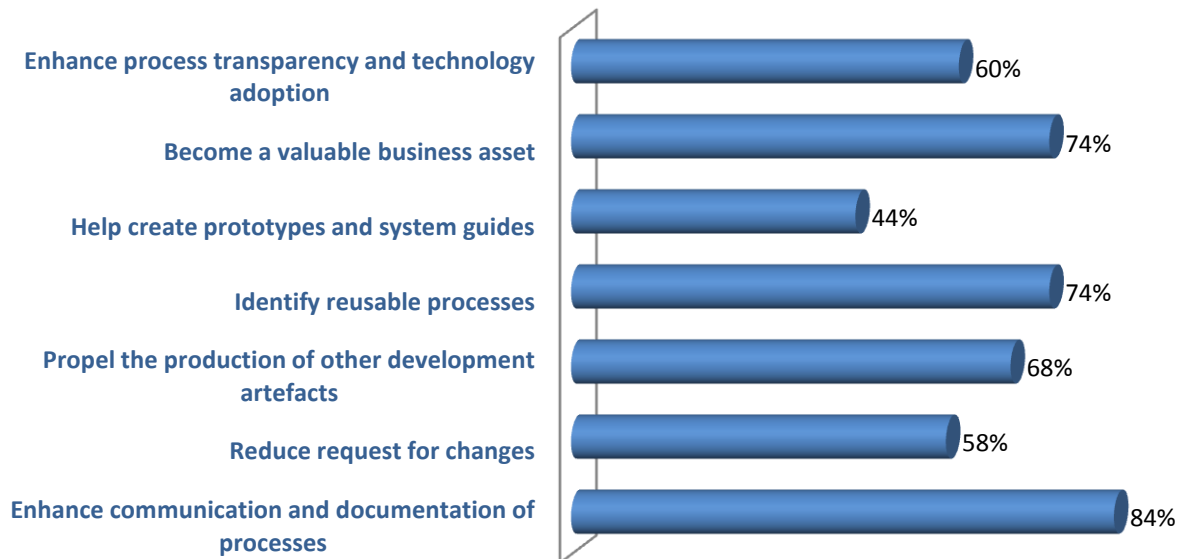
Figure 1: Total responses

Figure 1 indicates very strong positive overall responses for the 7 stated BPM objectives. Using the weighted average for each of the 7 questions, figure 2 summarizes the overall satisfaction of each of the BPM stated goals.

Figure 2: Weighted average for BPM objectives

The objective of *"enhance communication and documentation of processes"* was the top goal in terms of satisfaction. The least satisfied goals were "help create prototypes and system guides" and "reduce request for changes". The survey was conducted early in the implementation cycle, therefore the participants did not have a chance to fully assess such goals. Therefore this objective might be undervalued because of the timing of the survey.

CONSOLIDATED FREE-TEXT RESPONSES

The questionnaire included a free text section for comments and ideas for improvements. The following is a consolidated summary:
- I found the BPM Exercise to be extremely valuable.
- It was much easier to explain processes.
- I foresee using some of the BPM for training
- BPM is becoming a communication tool across departments and it is becoming a business asset/tool.
- I do not think it is detailed enough yet to be used for optimization
- Great participation from IS and business units and the sessions were productive.
- More knowledge transfer required eVision to IS team.
- I find BPM the most natural way to describe requirements in a complete/constant manner without redundancy.
- BPM helped crystallize my understanding of the processes
- Sessions were well conducted and were effectively run
- BPM will save us a lot of time down the road
- BPM allowed us to better understand our business, and why do we do things in a certain way, and question what processes we should change.

Ideas for improvement
- It can be put in business hands for more detailed documentation.
- We should use the entire BPM to identify collaboration ideas (across departments)

SUMMARY

Businesses that pursue BPM shock adoption pattern risk disturbing existing methodologies and may have unexpected consequences on resources and effort. This is a risky approach that could create much success. Projects that follows BPM incremental adoption pattern risk losing management faith, whose focus is return on investment.

eVision has tested and evaluated an objective driven adoption style that introduced minimal disturbance to the existing development methodologies, but still was significant enough to gain trust and adoption by stakeholders and management. eVision has conducted an evaluation using subjective stakeholders feedback collected by means of a survey. The results show significantly positive feedback, reassuring the success of this adoption pattern.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Tel: 1 866 525 2272
General Inquiries: info@evision.ca

eVision Quebec City Area
335, Rue Saint-Joseph Est – Bureau 200
Quebec, QC G1K 3B4
Tel: +1 418 525 2272 / +1 866 525 2272
Fax :   +1 418 525 9222

eVision Montreal Area
1010, Rue De Serigny, Bureau 315
Longueuil, QC J4K 5G7
Tel :   +1 450 679 1113
Fax :   +1 450 679 3222

eVision Ottawa
440 Laurier Avenue West, Suite 200
Ottawa, ON K1R 7X6
Tel: +1 613 782 2381