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BUSINESS PROCESS AUTOMATION



A Framework for Combining Best and Next Practices for the Agile Organization

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INTRODUCTION

Agile enterprises must adapt to continually changing business environments in order to survive in the long term. To do so they have to combine best and next business practices. Best practices ensure efficiency; next practices really lead to competitive advantages.

Traditional business process automation solutions, like ERP, SCM, or CRM systems focus on the implementation of best practices. Next generation process automation enables the implementation of next practices at an economically acceptable cost level. This is possible through a flexible integration of business process definition and software application support. The appropriate software

support must be dynamically adaptable to the business processes definition so that it supports the execution of enterprise specific processes.

Business process models reflecting best and next practices drive the configuration of next generation process automation solutions which “orchestrate” the appropriate application support. They become the critical link between strategy and execution.

BUSINESS AGILITY THROUGH BEST AND NEXT PRACTICES

Enterprises have to innovate continuously in order to survive on the long term. It is not sufficient just to implement best business practices or to reduce cost. Best practices may ensure an efficient survival of the organization, but not real success. Real progress is made through innovation. Innovation is key in the agile organization. And innovation requires the vision, development, and execution of next business practices, resulting in new processes. Successful enterprises have to combine best and next practices to achieve business process excellence and with that competitive advantages (Scheer, Business Process Engineering, 2003).

Innovation requires next business practices

An enterprise can drive innovation in various ways. The key types of innovation are

- Product innovation
- Collaboration innovation
- Process innovation.

These types of innovation are interrelated and together comprise a continuously evolving business model. Each influences the others. Product innovation may also imply collaboration and process innovation and so on. The types of innovation and their interrelations are visualized in Figure 1.

The classic form of innovation is product innovation. The term product is here used in a wide sense including goods, services, rights, or any other offering that is sold on the market (Kirchmer, Market- and Product-Oriented Definition, 1999). Product innovation means that a new product is brought to the market or the features of an existing one are increased or improved. A new digital camera may have a better resolution and an easier integration with a PC, a car, an advanced