



Closing the Gap for Competitive Advantage

True Collaboration between Business and IT

Across every industry, companies are in a constant race to find new ways to offset common business challenges and improve competitiveness. It is a continual effort to gain efficiencies, reduce risk, seek out new opportunities, and save vital resources of time and money. Achieving these efficiencies requires that companies focus on optimizing their core business processes. For example, an insurance company can reduce costs by decreasing the number of reviews new auto claims require just as a telecommunications firm that more efficiently provisions DSL can save both time and money. Regardless of the project, the ability to evaluate and refine the business process is critical.

The challenge then becomes how do you quickly and effectively build, refine, and execute your business processes? The key to achieving an agile enterprise, capable of responding to the day to day market dynamics, is true collaboration between the business and IT functions. The business users defining the process and IT team deploying the process must be able to communicate and work in synch. The benefits are obvious – clear communication equals faster time to market, fewer iterations, and lower costs to execute. All of which result in increased responsiveness and competitive advantage.

Closing the Gap with BPM

There have been several technologies that have come and gone with the promise of “closing the gap between business and IT”. One of the most promising has been, and continues to be, BPM – business process management. Companies use BPM to evaluate, redesign, and optimize new and existing business processes. The promise has been tools that enable IT and business users to develop and deploy processes jointly. Traditionally, business users have modeled the new business processes, then turned them over to IT for implementation, testing, and deployment. Unfortunately, despite the promise of collaboration, most traditional BPM solutions still leave business and IT speaking different languages and using different tools. Once the business users hand their processes over to the IT team, the business user loses the ability to modify the process and it is likely that the IT team may not fully understand the requirements. The business and IT teams are not in synch which creates the need for several cycles and iterations slowing down the process and increasing the costs of deployment.

What is needed is a way for business analysts to design their business processes with the same tools and vocabularies as the IT team does so that the IT team is not left questioning what exactly the requirements are. This enables the IT team to efficiently execute the business process and skip the multiple iterations. For this to happen, business analysts must be able to describe the processes, data and rules in familiar language without unnecessary technical detail and without compromising the developer’s ability to make that description executable in production. For example, while IT might talk about activity orchestration, schemas, and rule sets, the business analyst expresses those concepts as a process step, vocabularies and policies. So, a solution that facilitates closing the gap requires that business and IT understand each other and can act together without several “roundtrips,” i.e., iterations to get on the same page.

However, many solutions today don't do this. The current approach focuses on the modeling. This allows business users to design, modify, etc. the process in a tool that is easy for them to use. However, the output from that tool does not directly translate to the tool being used by IT. Business users like their tools since they offer all the bells and whistles, but the difficulty comes from the issue that their processes, once generated, have a lifecycle of their own. This could create a gap because there's no guarantee that the final process implementation by IT will look anything like its initial design.

Delivering on the Promise of True Collaboration

Although there are second-generation BPM solutions that have addressed the collaboration issue, the successful solutions mostly focus on human-centric processes that are long-running but are less frequent than more automated processes.¹ Core business solutions that provide the high-volume, event-driven transactions still maintain a separate and technically mismatched toolset for business and IT. This is changing – now the model you design is the model that is executed. And since these processes are significantly more frequent than human-centric processes there is potential for a greater impact on the business. For example, if a brokerage house was able to conduct trades faster and with fewer exceptions, significant money could be saved and customer satisfaction maintained at a high level. Just as if a bank could streamline the process of opening an online bank account, the bank could reduce costs and improve the customer's experience.

Now, a next-generation BPM product truly enables collaboration between IT and business with a single process meta model, one data model and one programming tool enabling a more iterative development style and fulfilling the promised business empowerment. Vitria, an innovation leader in the BPM market, introduced M₃O Suite™ – a new offering that brings to high-volume, event driven transaction processes the same type of business-IT collaboration found in leading human-centric BPM suites.

When business designs the process, they can directly share it with the IT team, clearly communicate the requirements, and jointly make modifications without stalling deployment. Nothing is lost in translation. Development cycles can be reduced by months or years, giving customers greatly improved levels of service. The enterprise then becomes agile and responsive to market demands in real-time.

What does it mean that M₃O Suite delivers true collaboration? In essence it means that the solution enables business to act like business and IT to act like IT without impacting how the two groups communicate. When questions or issues arise, instant-team-based messaging allows the users to communicate in real-time and stored vocabularies enable clear communication of requirements and deliverables. What is different about this approach is that the tool itself

¹ Human-centric BPM simply means the process requires human participation. An example of a human-centric process would be to "create a proposal" where the process requires a person to participate in one or more of the steps.

has been integrated. Where in the past the BPM product essentially provided two different tools – one for business and one for IT – the tools communicated instead of the users. The unified tooling within the suite means that the users are communicating directly and thus are not hampered by product limitations.

True collaboration is achieved with several key functions offered by this next-generation product. M₃O Suite facilitates collaboration by providing the business analyst business friendly modeling tools with a rich, easy-to-use interface. Features such as a unified modeling environment supporting both role and task based views (with drag and drop capabilities) provides both business and IT the ability to act on a process within a single environment. Additionally, layered annotations based on Web 2.0 technologies including business steps, vocabularies, and notations enable all users to communicate clearly and effectively throughout the entire process. “Repeatability” is achieved with shared and reusable business processes, rules, and documents so that valuable time and effort can be repurposed and accessed as modifications are required or new opportunities identified. Finally, role oriented workspaces enable everyone to maximize their results on their terms delivering optimized business processes.

These capabilities facilitate the cross-functional behavior that can ultimately lead to competitive advantage. The ability to clearly communicate process requirements, wants and needs between business and IT preserves precious resources – time and money. True collaboration - both during design time, as well as run time – eliminates mistakes and the time needed to correct those mistakes enabling more to get done with less. The resulting increase in productivity by reducing business’ reliance on IT to adjust processes and time required to make changes, means IT can focus on keeping core systems running. Ultimately the goal for a company is to close the gap between business and IT enabling everyone to deliver the optimal result to achieve business agility.

Empowering Your Enterprise

When business leaders talk about being agile, they mean they want to be fast. They need to keep up with fast changing business requirements, act on new opportunities and be the first to market with new products and solutions. Achieving this level of agility and responsiveness requires that the company be in synch and synchronization requires that business and IT work together to drive toward the common goal of winning in the market place.

Deploying the right business process should not stand in the way of you working together to achieve your changing business goals. Vitria M₃O Suite, the next generation business process analysis and management software, empowers business analysts, managers, and policy makers to respond to market demands in real-time. It enables IT to improve system integrity through greater governance and increase productivity by reducing development and execution time. As the leader in delivering innovative and next generation BPM solutions that help customers solve problems and achieve competitive advantage, Vitria has brought to market the first BPM solution that enables true collaboration to address the needs for your company’s core business processes.

If you would like to learn more about how to close the gap between business and IT, visit www.vitria.com and download the paper from Bruce Silver Associates “Bridging the Business-IT Divide in Enterprise Class Processes” for a more technical discussion of this topic.

To learn more about how Vitria M₃O Suite can meet your business needs, call a Vitria representative at 1-877-365-5935, or visit www.vitria.com

About Vitria

Vitria Technology, Inc. is the industry’s leading privately-held BPMS and integration technology company. The company has a rich heritage as a pioneer of BPM that spans more than a decade. Vitria’s award winning process integration solutions provide the backbone for many Global 2000 companies’ mission-critical business processes. Vitria has customers in North America, South America, Europe, Asia, and Australia.



945 Stewart Drive, Sunnyvale, CA 94085

Tel: +1 (877) 365-5935

Email: moreinfo@vitria.com

www.vitria.com

© 2008 Vitria Technology, Inc. All rights reserved. Vitria, M₃O and Exception Manager are trademarks of Vitria Technology, Inc. All other names may be trademarks of the companies with which they are associated. *Vitria M₃O Suite 8/08 300-1*