

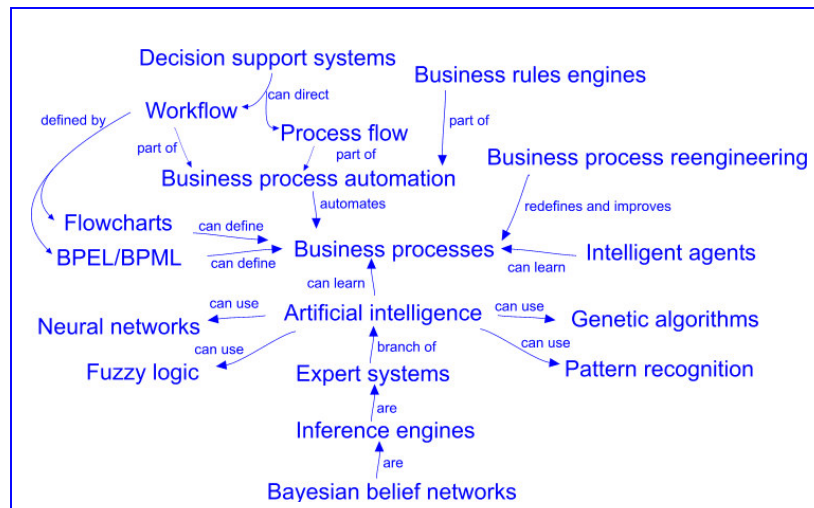
Business Processes Management Terms

Part 3 of an 8 part paper on Business Process Management (BPM)

It has been a long time coming, but computers are beginning to be able to do the work that people have traditionally done. They cannot manage expert work, yet can probably eliminate most of the repetitive work our office workers do.

As always, terms and confusion around their meaning obfuscate and annoy, and allow many to avoid rational argument over the benefits BPM can bring, or even the features of their products.

This paper sets out to define the terms and their meanings.



Business process

The series of steps and associated rules followed to achieve a desired outcome in a business setting.

Business process automation

A subset of BPM.

Business process management (BPM)

Monitoring, measuring, controlling and optimizing business

activities using automation technologies.

Artificial Intelligence

Machine based human-like reasoning.

Bayesian Belief Networks

Reasoning in uncertainty without enough information to make a purely logical decision.

BPEL (Business Process Execution Language)

An XML based language used to execute steps in a predefined process.

BPML (Business Process Modeling Language)

An extension of Unified Modeling Language (UML) specifically for modeling business processes

Business Process reengineering

Redefining a process for better compliance, faster speed of execution, easier management or cost savings.

Business Rules Engine (or Rules Engine)

A large set of if-then-else statements and weighting mechanisms used to make business decisions.

Decision Support Systems

The use of decision trees to calculate probabilities of success and costs of proposed actions.

Expert Systems

The use of rules and data to formulate an opinion.

Flowchart

A graphical representation of a process.

Fuzzy Logic

An extension of Boolean logic to account for partial truths.

Genetic Algorithm

An algorithm that applies breeding and mutation to converge upon a solution.

Inference Engine

Uses a large knowledge base to deduce results through inference.

Intelligent Agents

Software that carries out tasks without supervision, applying some intelligence and learning.

Neural Network

An inorganic mechanism working the same way as the human brain.

Orchestration

The fulfilling of the role of conductor in coordinating processes.

Pattern Recognition

The basis of all recognition (voice, handwriting, face etc). Patterns are identified in streams of data and matched against those on record.

Process Flow

The detailed flow of a business activity, e.g. take sales order.

Workflow

The ability to control work at a macro level, and flow it between people or organizations.

Related terms

BPM has become inter-related in some minds with software services. A software service is a piece of software in an enterprise which is called with data and/or commands to carry out some function. There is a great desire on the part of the automator to have some services through which it can integrate with the systems that support the business, although this is rarely realized.

Business Activity Monitoring

Monitoring the business activities of individuals and groups.

Service Oriented Architecture

An architecture in which applications are exposed as sets of services

Web Services

Services called via a web interface. Within the realm of web services, other technologies exist. They are:

XML

eXtensible Markup Language uses plain text and delineates the data from its description by enclosing the description in opening (<) and closing (>) tags.

SOAP

Simple Object Access Protocol wraps an XML message into a SOAP header and body to fully describe the message and what must be done with it.

UDDI

Universal Description, Discovery and Integration provides a method for discovering and understanding web services.

WSDL

Web Services Description Language describes web services using XML.

EAI

Enterprise Application Integration. It is difficult to automate without some form of integration. EAI can provide that integration, often using a web services approach.

Other Papers in this set

- Paper 1: What is business process management?
- Paper 2: Why automate business processes?
- Paper 3: Business process management terms
- Paper 4: How people work
- Paper 5: Business process management products
- Paper 6: Automation Oriented Architecture
- Paper 7: Case studies and common pitfalls
- Paper 8. The future of BPM