
Subject-Oriented Business Process Management

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Preface

Numerous success stories on Business Process Management exist, however probably just as many reports of failure. In many cases, Business Process Management is an endless topic that people associate with paper, large drawings on the walls, endless discussions, etc. Based on these results, the IT departments of an organization generally receive an order to develop an IT-supported process. But workflows developed in this way typically do not have much in common with the original setting and its models, and therefore, they are rarely accepted by the involved stakeholders. Hence, so far the result of all these efforts is often unsatisfactory. Consequently, many executives still criticize Business Process Management. However, you find processes in every kind of organization—whether it is an industrial enterprise or a nonprofit animal breeding farm. Only when these processes are continuously scrutinized and optimized can redundant work in Business Process Management be avoided and the ultimate survival of the organization ensured.

Margot Berghaus writes in her book, “Luhmann easy to grasp” [“Luhmann leicht gemacht”]: “Social systems operate through communication, they are communication systems.” and organizations are social systems (Berghaus 2004). In other words:

Organization = Communication.

(A corresponding Internet search with Google delivered 269 hits on June 2, 2011). Activities in organizations performed by their members are coordinated according to organizational goals. As a precondition for this, members of an organization need to communicate with each other.

There exists a natural language sentence structure in all known languages. It is composed of three components: subject, predicate, and object. The subject is the starting point of activities, the predicate is the action on the object, and the object is affected by the action. Following this structure, everyone is well prepared to think in a process-oriented way and to model processes.

The subject-oriented approach to Business Process Management, which is presented in this book, is based on these simple, however, fundamental considerations. Actors (subjects) with their actions and their communication behavior are in the center of attention. A process is established by structuring the actions

of each actor and the necessary coordination of the required communication among the actors.

This book should be understood as an invitation to capture, reflect, and stimulate discussion around many different aspects of the design of organizations. All interested persons should be encouraged to simply try this pragmatic approach to Business Process Management. There are already many companies and institutions that have been trying it successfully, and they have been surprised that their processes have become intelligible to stakeholders.

It is an ambitious undertaking to write about an interdisciplinary topic, taking into account technical, psychological, economic, mathematical, and organizational aspects. We have tried to consider all these different aspects and their intertwining. However, we are convinced there is still much to be done and to be written about this topic.

While working on the book, we have enjoyed a team spirit allowing everyone to bring in his different background and experience, both in terms of theory and practice. Our intense collaboration allowed us to come up with a comprehensive picture of subject orientation. We experienced the struggle of streamlining structure and content as a constructive and inspiring moment of our cooperation. We hope the readers are still able to grasp it, in particular when reflecting the systemic nature of Subject-Oriented Business Process Management.

For helping us to be successful, we want to thank:

- Our families, supporting our endeavor more or less voluntarily
- All interested persons who have been waiting until we finished our work and have kept us under friendly pressure by their steady inquiries
- Metasonic AG for providing resources
- The customers of Metasonic AG for the numerous suggestions from the field
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- The proofreaders
- Deutsche Bahn for providing notebook-compatible trains in which even books can be written
- Richard Wright who converted our long German sentences with English words into real English. Nevertheless, the authors still take responsibility for any awkward sentences.
- Carina Busse who brought the manuscript into the right format
- Larissa Weithaler who made all the drawings

Special thanks go to Anna Fleischmann for providing her graphic design. This includes the design of the “To Go’s”, which help the reader to grasp the individual chapters or major sections of the chapters. The “To Go’s” represent fictional dialogs among the various stakeholders in Subject-Oriented Business Process Management projects in an entertaining style. As an illustration of the roles, we have chosen essential elements of fast food: food to go bags and cups. The reader can easily take

these to a place of his choice and quickly consume their contents. From the chapter “Subject-Oriented Process Analysis” onwards, they represent the different actors operating in the open life cycle of Subject-Oriented Business Process Management. Each cup and bag has a badge with the first character of the name of the role, such as F for Facilitator.

A note on “gender”: For better readability, we typically use the masculine form in the text. The female form is always considered to be included, and vice versa. When designing the fast-food bags and cups, we also took care to maintain a balance between the sexes.

In case the readers are keen on working with the introduced method, we refer to the Web site of the nonprofit organization Institute of Innovative Process Management e.V. (see also <http://www.i2pm.net>). There, interested persons will find material and tools currently available. Every person interested in driving Business Process Management forward outside of over-trodden paths, especially by bringing in his knowledge and valuable experiences, can become a member of the Institute of Innovative Process Management.

Spring, 2012

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Reference

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