

Chapter 56

Business Process Design Meets Business Practices through Enterprise Patterns: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Every day companies deal with internal problems in order to manage human resources during the execution of business processes. The ability to quickly identify and rapidly apply effective business practices to recurring problems becomes crucial in order to improve the efficiency of the organization. To seize the opportunity of adapting their business practices to emerging organizational forms (Extended Enterprise, Virtual Enterprise) and to reuse the expertise of knowledge workers – who are central to an organization's success – companies are required to face several challenges. This paper presents a set of business patterns useful in resolving emerging organizational issues to support the activities of knowledge workers, increase their productivity and their ability to find the information they need, and enable collaboration with colleagues without changing their habits. Also it describes a real case study and a software system that allows companies to introduce these business patterns in the workplace, adopting an Enterprise 2.0 approach.

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INTRODUCTION

Companies base their success on the use of established business practices to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the activities related to their core business (Gebauer & Lee, 2008). The introduction of efficient business practices can help resolve recurring problems through proven solutions coming from past experiences (Dietz, 2006). Traditionally, this is achieved through the leadership's ability to empower the workers' productivity in a company, but in reality businesses can benefit from systematic, structured investment in the tools and methods supporting collaboration (Kristensen & Kijl, 20102010).

In the past 50 years, a new form of worker – the 'knowledge worker' (Davenport, 2005) – has become more and more important for companies. The knowledge worker is "one who works primarily with information or one who develops and uses knowledge in the workplace". Typically, knowledge workers operate multiple tasks at the same time. They have different working contexts and different channels to deliver information. (Baars & Kemper, 2008) They are involved in many parallel 'knowledge processes' (Simperl et al., 2010) that are often not codified in formal procedures but are unstructured or semi-structured, collaborative and continuously changing. The advent of Web 2.0 has also amplified the presence of knowledge processes not coded in formal structures because knowledge workers have many basic collaboration tools at work but are not checked by traditional information systems. In this context it is essential to keep coherent knowledge processes (unstructured) and business processes (structured), moving from tacit to explicit knowledge (Alderete, 2012; Jashapara, 2007) and involved in shaping a new kind of information system known as Enterprise 2.0 (Maule & Gallup, 2010).

Researchers have pointed out that process modelling and design practices can represent a way to respond to this new situation. If the Enterprise 2.0 tools can be adapted to Extended Enterprise

and Virtual Enterprise organization, they can give flexible support to networked human processes. Moreover, network systems based on technologies and architectures of participation offer a new model for online knowledge sharing, cooperation, and collaboration that is different from the traditional institutional framework (Blau, 2011).

In a networked context, the management of informal processes/activities is a challenging problem. Such activities are often collaborative and, typically, they are not codified or elicited as business practices. Informal processes limit the growth of a company because they are highly dependent on the ability of the knowledge worker to correctly and promptly manage activities and generate the information overload. As Lundqvist, Sandkuhl, and Seigerroth (2011) observe, new organizational and technological approaches are needed to prevent knowledge workers' information overload, by proposing methods of achieving a more pertinent and accurate information supply. A formal definition of business practice contributes to capturing and understand the information demand and roles in organizations. Researchers such as Henkel, Johannesson, and Perjons (2011) suggest that enterprise models and business models as being adequate tools for design and maintenance of processes, which require collaboration in agile and flexible networks.

In trying to address the modelling issues involved in business practices, we have explored the traditional Business Process Management (BPM) approach. In particular, we have attempted to formally describe the collaboration and coordination processes in which knowledge workers in a real Small-Medium Networked ICT Enterprise were involved, integrating them into the information system in order to derive process models efficiently (i.e. consuming less resources and time) and effectively (i.e. at a high quality to meet specific needs). However, the unstructured, adaptable and changing nature of knowledge processes soon became an obstacle to the formalization of large-scale business practices. So we decided to

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