Chapter X

Participatory Development of Enterprise Process Models

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter we present practical experience from using a technique we call Modeling Conferences, a method for participatory construction and development of enterprise process models. Process models are an important way to support communication, coordination, and knowledge development within an organization. The Modeling Conference method focuses on broad participation from all actors in the organization, is grounded in a social constructivist perspective, and has its theoretical basis in the method of search conferences and process modeling. In an engineering consultancy firm, the Modeling Conference method has been used to develop process models for main common work tasks that have been implemented on an intranet. Independent evaluations show that participation through the Modeling Conferences led to significantly more ownership to the process models, and that the actors have developed new collective knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

The Modeling Conference is a method for participatory construction and development of enterprise models. In this, it takes as a starting point the business processes approach to understanding how organizations work. However, while most approaches to the mapping and "re-engineering" of business processes tend to be expert and management focused, the Modeling Conference technique focuses on participation from all the related parties, and the link between organizational learning and institutionalization through technology.

The focus on participation stems from a constructivist approach to understanding organizations. Organizations are seen to be a continuous construction and reconstruction of an organizational reality as individuals and groups enact their own local reality through everyday practice (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Gjersvik, 1993). In order to introduce change in the organizational construction processes, the method of change should reflect the joint participation in the everyday construction processes. Because of this, we have developed a method that has at its core the method of Search Conferences (Emery & Purser, 1996).

In the next section, we will present the background to our approach. In the third section the Modeling Conference method is outlined, and in the fourth section the application of the method on a specific case is presented. The results from independent evaluations of the longer-term results from using the approach are presented, and finally, general experiences from applying the approach in different settings are summarized, and further work is pointed out.

BACKGROUND

Processes have been a key concept in management and organization for the last decade, especially related to Business Process Reengineering. A process has been defined as:

"(…) a structured, measured set of activities designed to produce a specified output for a particular customer or market. It implies a strong emphasis on how work is done within an organization." (Davenport, 1993, p. 5)

Process orientation today is most related to organizational thinking, highlighting the importance of information technology. The methods used to map and visualize processes are also very similar to the models being used by various information systems and software engineering approaches. This may constitute a problem when broad participation is desirable, as the expressiveness of traditional modeling languages becomes a barrier when laypersons from many different fields try to use them to map their work processes. When deciding on

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