

# Automate to innovate: enhance business performance with IBM process automation.



“We have seen more change in the last 10 years than in the previous 90.”

— Ad F. Scheepbouwer, CEO, KPN Telecom, IBM Global CEO Study 2008\*

All organizations expect change, and most expect it to be fairly rapid. Yet only a handful of organizations are truly prepared for just how swiftly the business landscape can become unrecognizable. Organizations today must be ready to adapt and respond to marketplace changes and regulations faster than ever before — not only to reduce risk exposures but to capitalize on new opportunities and seize the competitive advantage.

Business processes are increasingly recognized as the key to competitive advantage and the foundation for how a company invents, provides and controls its products and services. Combining software capabilities and business expertise, business process management (BPM) can enable organizations to accelerate and sustain continuous process improvement through the ability to:

- Provide clear visibility into processes.
- Enable rapid process change.
- Identify and remove process bottlenecks.
- Manage human tasks and automate workflow.
- Streamline complex processes across disparate systems.
- Transform “what-if” scenarios into new processes.

Robust as it is, BPM can be even more powerful when combined with service oriented architecture (SOA) and, more specifically, SMART SOA™. IBM BPM powered by SMART SOA offers a flexible IT architecture to help improve the way organizations design, manage and optimize business processes. With greater flexibility, organizations can create more agile and dynamic processes that serve as the foundation for greater innovation, while facilitating a continuous alignment between business and IT.

## The journey to BPM

One of the biggest questions organizations have when it comes to BPM is where to get started. IBM has identified three common adoption patterns that organizations can typically use to address their process needs:


End-to-end process automation	Improve operating efficiency and reduce costs
Transform insight and action	Capitalize on opportunities and mitigate risk
Adapt and respond dynamically	Respond to change faster and easier

While each offers value in their own right, these adoption patterns can also offer a logical evolution on the path to BPM — starting with a focus on process automation.

## The ideal starting point: process automation

Core to BPM, process automation transforms manual, disjointed activities into streamlined, repeatable and consistent results, seamlessly orchestrating IT systems, information and human tasks.

The purpose behind process automation is to improve business performance through business processes — to understand what those processes are and discover ways to make them more efficient. By integrating diverse IT systems, information and content, and human task management capabilities,



## World's leading aircraft manufacturer optimizes its supply chain with WebSphere process automation solutions

**Challenge:** A leading aircraft manufacturer needed to ensure timely and cost-effective aircraft delivery and increase flight availability by streamlining its supply chain and aircraft parts maintenance.

**Solution:** With the help of IBM, the manufacturer deployed an IBM WebSphere® process automation solution powered by SMART SOA to streamline the transportation process of large parts among its different manufacturing facilities and facilitate on demand delivery for its aircraft production lines.

**Benefits:** As a result of the implementation, the manufacturer was able to significantly reduce aircraft production and operating and maintenance costs, including manual administrative costs; accelerate time to market for new aircraft; and optimize external and internal deliveries throughout the supply chain.

process automation can help streamline manual tasks and therefore accelerate overall efficiency in terms of quality, cycle times, resource allocation and cost.

More versatile and powerful than siloed applications, process automation helps usher in flexibility — enabling the IT organization to deliver innovative business models and ideas, and recombining and reusing existing assets to speed delivery of new initiatives. It can bring business value to the entire organization — IT, management, analyst and employees — whether through standardized business process execution, the ability to facilitate compliance with the latest industry regulations or more efficient integration across and beyond the organization.

### Transform manual tasks into automated efficiencies

The cost of manually orchestrating each activity of an end-to-end process can be staggering. Routine tasks drain employee resources from higher-value projects, wasting time that could be better spent doing more intelligent and demanding work. Worse, quality and cycle-time implications can lower customer satisfaction and revenue. This is especially true in areas such as order and claims processing where the same part numbers or account numbers are entered or queried more than once for the same event.

Process automation can help reduce or eliminate nonvalue-add tasks across the end-to-end process to achieve the highest rate of straight-through processing feasible, and therefore help

improve quality and enhance the customer experience. For situations that require some form of human intervention, such as exception handling, system-controlled human task management can offer the benefit of creating ad hoc human tasks, while still enabling the workforce to get the work done more effectively and efficiently.

IBM process automation capabilities can address the entire spectrum of automation, from straight-through processing to cases that require expert human skills. These capabilities include:

**Full process automation with no human interaction.** Often a significant portion of routine manual tasks, such as validation of input data and preapproved business logic for standards requests, can be fully automated — requiring virtually no human involvement. This type of automation (feasible for about 80 percent of all situations) can yield a significant and rapid return on investment by eliminating labor costs and shortening cycle times.

**Collaborative human workflow.** Some processes require cooperation among people. In these situations, the process can be controlled and automated by a process engine that automatically obtains and routes process-relevant information between steps to the right people for the tasks in question, updates back-end systems and presents information to human users to make timely decisions or ask for more data to complete the task.

# Process automation transforms manual, disjointed activities into streamlined, repeatable and consistent results.

**Exception/complex case handling.** A few tasks require more advanced human skills to be executed, such as when further analysis is required, explicit personal approvals are needed or when physical work steps such as placing a phone call are needed. Where possible, full automation is in place, but the system allows more flexibility on top of the structured and automated business processes for expert staff to intervene and circumvent processes where necessary.

## Transform inconsistency into compliance

As regulations continue to multiply, organizations are under increased pressure to prove that their processes are operating as designed and in line with legal and industry regulations or internal controls. At the same time, a highly competitive environment means organizations cannot afford even the possibility of a missed service level agreement (SLA).

When processes aren't truly automated, it is difficult for organizations to have confidence in their ability to reliably meet SLA, audit and regulatory objectives. Manual processes not only limit the ability of auditors to determine whether the task was performed in the right sequence and by the appropriate people, but make it difficult to accommodate increasingly demanding, transaction-intensive processes.

IBM process automation helps ensure processes run consistently and that only the right people execute the right steps at the right time, thus making the steps visible, measurable and auditable. Based on SOA, IBM process

automation combines the flexibility of loosely coupled open systems with the scalability and reliability associated with tightly coupled (and much more rigid) systems. The result is the best of both worlds: an agile infrastructure that can adjust workflows on the fly and the integrity needed to deliver seamless, long-running processes that span disparate systems.

## Transform inefficiency into integration

When it comes to connecting business processes and IT systems with business partners beyond the organization, differences in systems, applications, custom or nonstandard interfaces can make a challenging process impossible. Inefficient links can quickly turn into inconsistent response times and procedures that impact customer satisfaction and revenue.

IBM process automation can help you avoid the high cost of hardcoding a variety of complex integrations between in-house and supplier or customer applications. In addition, it offers the flexibility to accommodate changes and the agility to combine IT assets into composite business applications to help achieve faster time to value and lower operating costs. And by choreographing the separate steps in a process to help ensure they are consistently linked with the same inputs and outputs, process automation can help ensure the processes generate the same responses — time after time.

## Transform processes into business results

Process automation can bring significant benefits to organizations, yet realizing its full

potential depends on several underlying IT requirements. These include the ability to:

- Allow various components to be loosely coupled.
- Support business process automation and monitoring.
- Scale easily to higher volumes.
- Support mission-critical business processes.
- Deliver dedicated tools for various audiences.
- Support high-performance, high-volume scenarios.
- Support open standards and standardization for future enhancements.

A core offering in the IBM Business Process Management suite, IBM WebSphere Process Server offers a dynamic, flexible business process engine designed to help organizations automate formerly manual tasks to business processes across multiple systems or applications. WebSphere Process Server combines process flows, manual tasks and ESB capabilities in a flexible SOA engine that can orchestrate assets across applications, systems and people into highly optimized and effective processes.

Beyond its IT role, WebSphere Process Server makes it easier for business users to interact with processes through a secure, role-based environment called business space. By providing a consolidated view of business process content and enabling contextual collaboration in one location, business space enables business users to manage their processes more effectively, make smarter decisions and take action more quickly.



#### IBM process automation offers:

- Simple, flexible and powerful execution of standards-based business processes.
- The ability to streamline business activities.
- Straight-through processing with simplified exception handling.
- Repeatable processes to help facilitate consistency and compliance.

#### Why IBM?

IBM process automation solutions can bring the technology and responsiveness required to plan and build processes based on your business objectives, extending the life of your

IT assets and helping you realize a competitive edge through your business processes. Process automation from IBM combines deep industry knowledge and prebuilt assets with global reach, scale and a substantial partner ecosystem.

As the ideal starting point on your BPM journey, a simple process automation scenario can easily extend and scale to broader BPM initiatives that include modeling and monitoring. BPM and SOA together can help organizations move into the next phase of business process evolution — going from almost no business process automation into flexible, highly adaptable and — most importantly — measurable business process execution, giving access in real time to mission-critical business operations.

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\*“The Enterprise of the Future,” IBM Global CEO Study, May 2008.

#### For more information

To learn more about process automation from IBM or WebSphere Process Server, please contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit [ibm.com/software/innovate](http://ibm.com/software/innovate)