orbus software

Joan Pournara CBPA®

Joan has specialized in business analysis for more than 25 years and is currently involved in Enterprise Business Architecture. She was the first South African to qualify as a CBAP® (Certified Business Analysis Professional) and has also trained in TOGAF® and Zachman Frameworks.

Joan is the Director of Education on the Board of the IIBA®-SA Chapter that she co-founded. Joan lectures in Business Analysis for ESI-International (an IIBA™ Endorsed Education Provider) and is an Executive Consultant in Business Architecture and Analysis, consulting to organizations at a strategic level and providing mentoring and coaching at a tactical level.

Before I get into the content of this White Paper I want to define the words used in the title; 'Business Process Modeling' and 'Collaboration'. I do this as good Business Analysis etiquette is to ensure that everyone reading this document has a common understanding of the meaning of these words. When working with stakeholders on a project, with Executives at Strategic level or with End Users, it is poor Business Analysis practice to assume people have a common understanding of the meaning of the words we use daily and usually take for granted everyone has the same understanding as us. This is especially true when the organization we work for or the project we work on reaches across global boundaries, cultures and languages. Building a Glossary of Terms or a Definitions document is essential.

Business	A business (also known as enterprise or firm) is an organization engaged in the trade of goods, services, or both to consumers. A collection of departments or functions that share common data and participate in related processes that share common goals by providing products and services to the customers of the organization.

|	
Process	Sequence of interdependent and linked procedures which, at every stage, consume one or more resources (employee time, energy, machines, money) to convert inputs (data, material, parts, etc.) into outputs. These outputs then serve as inputs for the next stage until a known goal or end result is reached. [Business Dictionary] A series of interconnected actions, steps, or procedures leading to a result.
Model	A model is a representation of reality. Process modeling is a technique that uses diagrams, text, and metrics to document understanding of the current or desired processes and essential business activities in a business area.
Collaboration	To work together, especially in a joint intellectual effort – *[The Free Dictionary]* Collaboration is a joint effort of multiple individuals or work groups to accomplish a task or project – TechTarget.com

TIP: Models are built by Business Analysis practitioners using techniques such as Job-Shadowing; Observations; Focus Group Workshops. All stakeholders who are impacted by the process are included in the Business Analyst's investigation. Typically the roles are: End Users; Supervisors; Managers and those groups who require

information from the process, i.e. Marketing, Audit, Compliance, etc.

"Process" describes behaviour

A process model is used to visualise how work flows and the sequence in which it flows. Work may be performed by one person (one role); by a group of people (different roles); in one location or repeated across many locations; start in one area and handed over to another area, be simple (few tasks) or complex. The activities/tasks within the process may be manual, automated or a combination of the two. A process model only describes the sequence of activities/tasks and where performed it does not describe the data structure needed to support the information being transformed during the activities. The data structure is modelled separately using a Data Model and the process and data is usually brought together at the lowest level of Modeling using a data flow diagram (DFD).

A process always has one start (an event (input) to trigger the activity to begin, for example, Customer buys a new product); can have multiple ends (must have at least one) and can have multiple 'outputs' (a report to management; invoice to customer; stock order list to supplier, exception report to Audit, as an example).
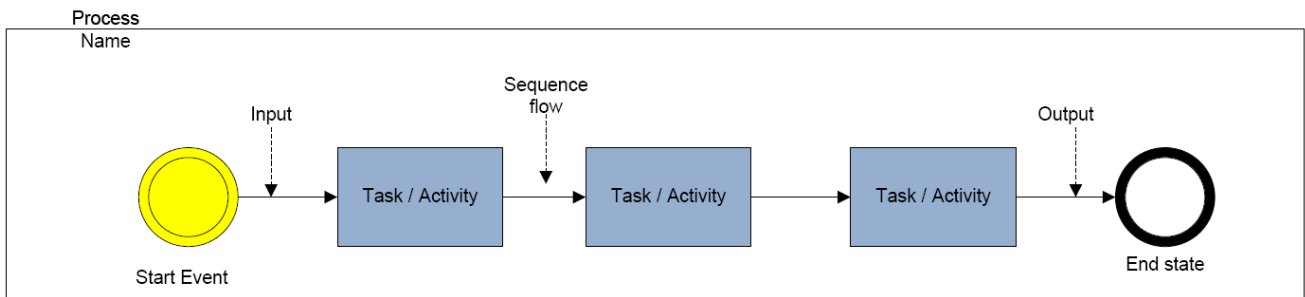
A process can have multiple variation and exception processing paths as business rules are applied to it and is modelled at different levels of abstraction (for example, as a Value Chain at a high level and decomposed to the lowest (atomic or leaf) level in a Data Flow Diagram).
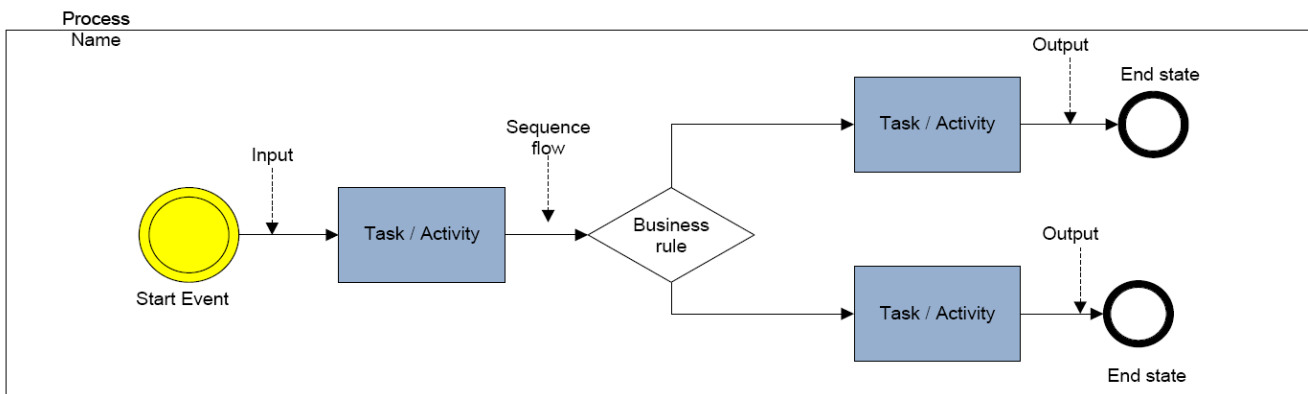
TIP: When working with business stakeholders to build behaviour models, it is advisable the business stakeholders are knowledgeable about the business and have the authority to be decision makers especially when the focus of the modeling effort is to design the future state. Processing behaviour can be described using a Process Diagram (single or Swimlane); Activity Diagram; workflow diagram; Data Flow Diagram; Flowchart.

It is a cumulative effort

Because a process model is a 'representation' of reality, the accuracy of the business knowledge represented in the model is a cumulative effort from all parties impacted by the process and facilitated by the Business Analyst. To be useful, the model must be meaningful, up-to-date, truthful and complete. This implies the model must contain all of the textual, measurement and supporting elements needed for the process to operate effectively and accurately.

For Business Analysis practitioners, the use of a central repository that supports a modeling environment and a document content management environment together as one remains a dream as many organizations grapple with the myriad of EA and BPM tools in the market, some simple to use, others very complex to use and seldom do they truly support Business Analysis holistically.

Where do I begin?

It usually takes several iterations, working with business stakeholders, to model a process that accurately represents the business. But whilst the model may be seen to be accurate it is in no way complete until the IT stakeholders are brought into the picture, especially when the process has automated activities. By this time, the process model has been decomposed to the lowest level by the Business Analyst and he/she is ready to facilitate a combined workshop with both business and IT stakeholders. If the organization's IT strategy includes SOA then this collaborative workshop will be an excellent start to a joint-decision making effort regarding the software services that are to bebuilt to enable the business.

If an organization's reach is across geographical (including global) boundaries, on-going collaboration between stakeholders is very difficult and usually becomes a major headache for project leaders and business analysis practitioners. Virtual meetings, teleconferences, video conferences, webinars, etc. have narrowed the communication gap but I have never found these methods totally satisfactory when modeling business requirements for a project.
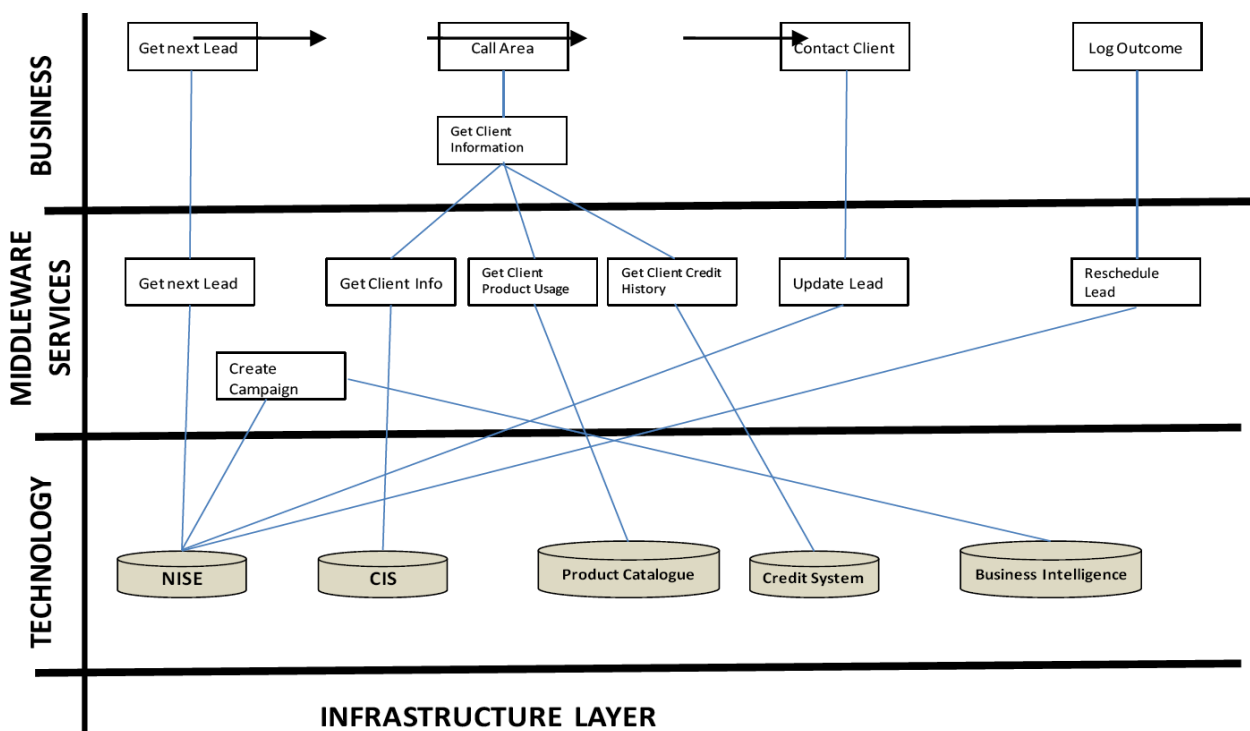
A Business Analyst facilitates a collaboration workshop with Business SMEs (Subject Matter Experts); SOA stakeholders and System Analysts/Developers to design a process model at the lowest level to identify re-usage or development of SOA services and other IT resources to support the business process.

How will a repository help me to collaborate?
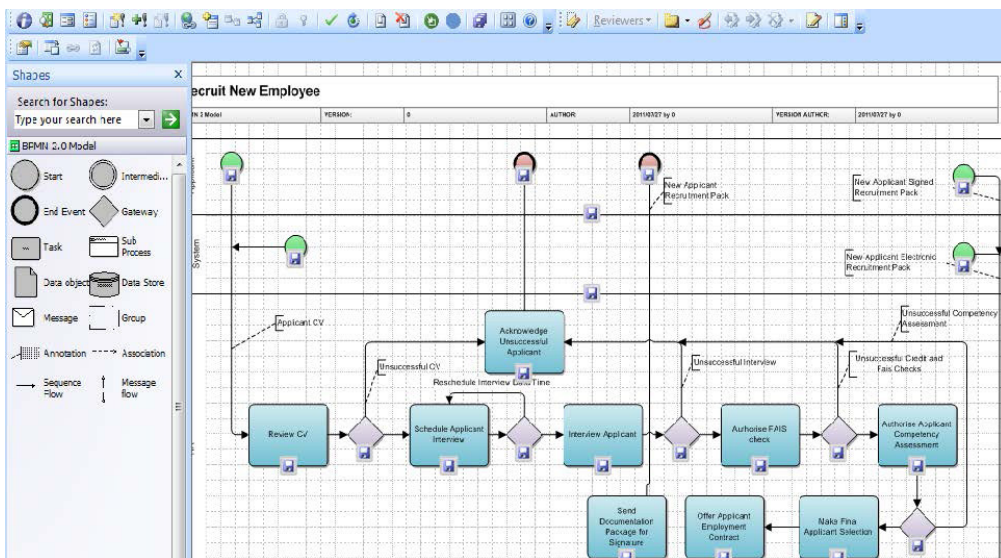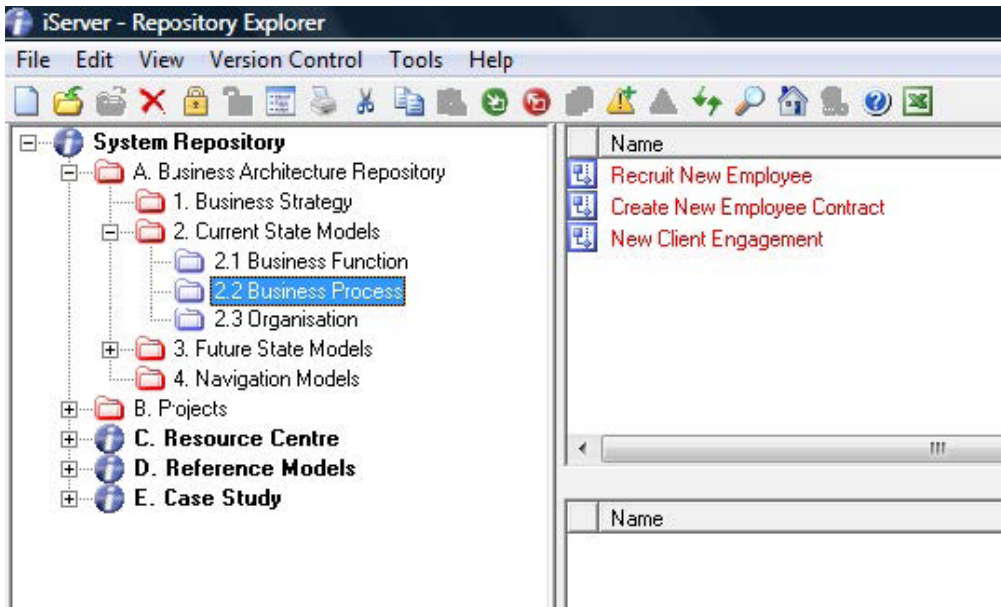
A repository is used to organize working folders, keep information together (one fact in one place), share and reuse information, manage issues and to encourage iterative collaboration
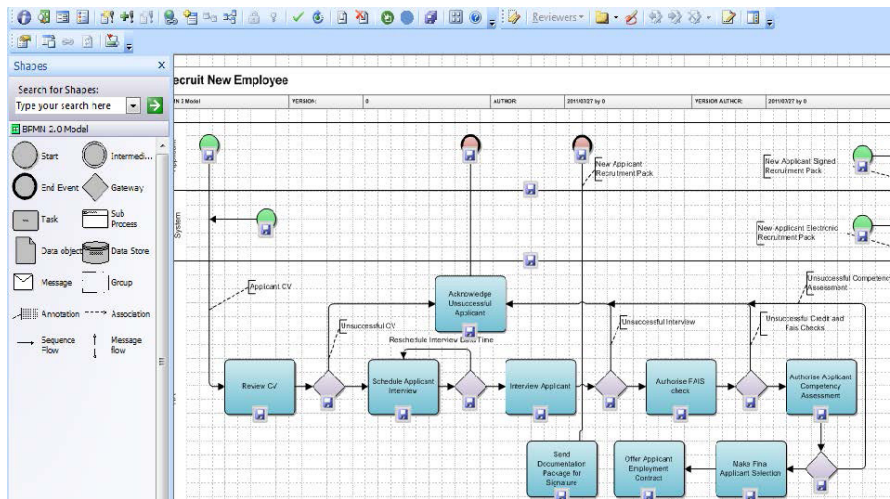
An Interactive Publisher or Live Browser Portal allows you to publish models and make them available to stakeholders anywhere to view, provide feedback, create and manage issues until the model reflects reality accurately and is approved and base-lined.

TIP: When requirements are collected into documents or repositories they must be organized to be usable. Often requirements are grouped by a topic: processes, data, security, performance, the system affected, etc. While this is relatively easy for the author of the requirements document, it may make the requirements difficult for other stakeholders to use. Organize the repository folders to be most useful to the most important stakeholders/ teams, and attempt to minimize the challenges to the rest. A good repository will allow you to create relationships between objects (icons, models, documents).

Conclusion

The practice of business analysis is complex and good practitioners can be extremely successful using simple tools such as a white board and Word documents. However the complexity of organization's today and the economic conditions that force organization's to respond to market conditions faster and more efficiently, means that Business Analysis teams need tools that:

a. Are easy to use (no major tool training required)

b. Supports re-use of objects, models and document content (one fact in one place)

c. Supports easy collaboration across organization and geographical boundaries

d. Allows relationships to be created between objects and supports drill-down from high level to low levels of abstraction

e. Allows modeling notation and template standards to be enforced consistently across teams

f. Supports impact analysis views

g. Supports meta-data to be stored against objects to improve status positions, reporting and issue management.

iServer from Orbus Software meets all of my needs as a Business Analysis Professional (at Architecture and Project level) and I have no doubt that if implemented and used correctly in any Organization, it will bring together the resources and elements an organization needs to manage in order to exist and to achieve its strategy.

orbus software