White Paper

Process Modeling for SAP Blueprints: 10 Best Practices

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Theo has an IT education to bachelor level, and has obtained a master's degree in Business Administration.

He has worked for over 25 years on IT projects carrying out various roles from programmer to project manager.

In the last 15 years he has participated in various large SAP implementations. For the last 10 years he has been implementing SAP Solution Manager as a tool to support SAP Projects and SAP Application Management.

SAP Solution Manager is a tool to be used on the IT side of a company, as part of Application Lifecycle Management. In several ways, the maintenance of your IT applications can be supported using that tool.

SAP Solution Manager can also be used to support SAP projects to implement Business Processes. Within projects the SAP Blueprint Phase determines the requirements from a Business perspective and identifies the 'gaps' for those requirements which cannot be met with from an SAP standard perspective. In other words custom development is needed.

This paper shows 10 Best Practices on Process Modeling for SAP Blueprint Phase.

The Best Practices discussed in the paper are related to the areas below:

1. Source for Business Blueprint: SAP Business Process Repository
2. Reuse of standard document content provided by SAP
3. Business Process Model as part of the Blueprint
4. Hold workshops with business
5. Documentation of 'gaps' (custom development needed)
6. Importance of Master Data
7. Importance of SAP components
8. Generation of Blueprint
9. Blueprint review process
10. Blueprint signoff

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Best Practice #1: Source for Business Blueprint: SAP Business Process Repository

When a company decides to use SAP software, it decides to use a **software package**. This means standard software - the software is already there. This is important to know as SAP documented their software in the so-called **Business Process Repository.**

When implementing SAP software there are two important reasons to copy documentation provided by SAP:

- Accelerates Business Blueprint creation.

- Makes sure you stay within the standard provided software initially.

For these reasons it is best practice to copy Business Process Structure provided by SAP. Below is an example of Business Process Structure copied from SAP's Business Process Repository.
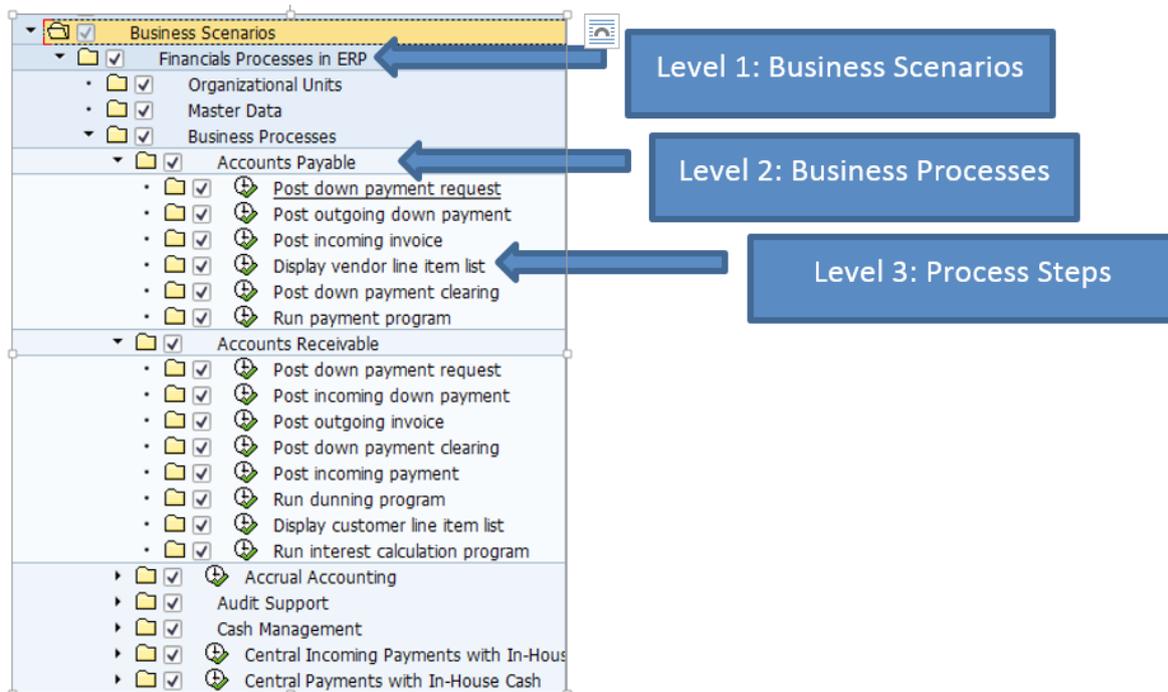

Figure 1 - Business Process Structure

As you can see in the picture above, the Process Structure contains 3 levels.

Best Practice #2: Reuse of standard document content provided by SAP

When making a copy of the documentation provided by SAP, you will initially only have one copy. But at least you're off to a flying start for the process definition for your own company. Even nowadays there are still many people who create a Business Blueprint from scratch instead of using available SAP data.

In SAP Solution Manager you will find useful material for creating a Business Blueprint when using transaction SOLAR01 and looking in the Project Documentation tab. This material can typically be found on Business Process level. Below is an example.
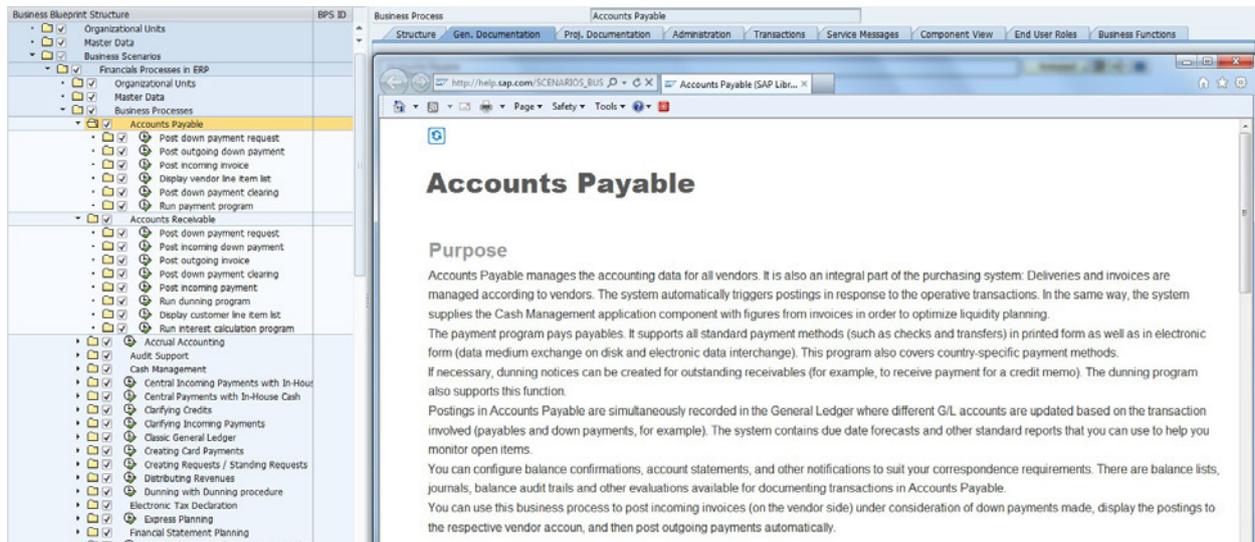

Figure 2 - Project Documentation

Best Practice #3: Business Process Model as part of the Blueprint

Many organizations use a separate tool to model graphical business process flows. Obviously, a business process flow is important information to be captured in a Business Blueprint. It shows the business process, and also the usage of SAP software within the process.

Also for that reason several business process modeling tools contain a software interface to synchronize business process flows with SAP Solution Manager. Initially the Process Structure comes from SAP Business Process Repository as shown in Best Practice #1. This same structure is then synchronized into a separate Business Process Modeling tool and enriched with the company's own process data (e.g. company specific usage of a process). Finally, the enriched data can be synchronized back into SAP Solution Manager so that the same information is stored in that tool as well.

Later in this paper we will cover the generation of a Business Blueprint using SAP Solution Manager. Having the business process flows in SAP Solution Manager is the first step in making it part of the Business Blueprint. The next and final step is covered in Best Practice #8 further down below where we discuss Blueprint document generation.

Best Practice #4: Hold workshops with business

Workshops are often held to enable people in business and SAP consultants to assess overlap and differences between SAP software and business processes. SAP consultants show the functionality covered by SAP software. People in business provide feedback on the requirements from the business side.

The workshops look at improving the quality of the Business Blueprint which in the end should result in sign-off of the Business Blueprint by people in business.

As mentioned in the first two Best Practices - also to accelerate the Blueprint phase - it is important to copy SAP Business Process Structure and related documentation.

But the discussions with people in business should show to what extent SAP software can cover business requirements.

Best Practice #5: Documentation of 'gaps' (custom development needed)

One very important element of the SAP Blueprint phase is assessment of 'gaps': where SAP software does not provide sufficient functionality. So this means that custom development is needed. SAP does not provide this functionality which is something that businesses need.

Within many companies the gaps are referred to as 'RICEF' which basically shows the types of gaps: Reports, Interfaces, Conversions, Enhancements and Forms.

Custom Development is normally a large part of the project work to be done as software needs to be created and tested from scratch. Listing these 'gaps' and integration in the Business Blueprint makes sure that the gaps are covered. Sign-off by people in business shows that the gaps really need to be addressed.

Best Practice #6: Importance of Master Data

When implementing SAP software a number of activities are needed:

- **Install hardware, Operating System, database**

- **Install SAP standard software**

- **Customization:** setting parameters in such a way that SAP software works in accordance with business requirements

- **Custom developments:** to bridge the gaps as set out in previous Best Practice

However when the above activities have been executed an important part of the work still needs to be done: Master Data set-up.

In SAP Solution Manager separate Master Data nodes are provided in the process structure to define the Master Data applicable for a process. It is possible to document the required Master Data elements and attributes. See below screen shot.
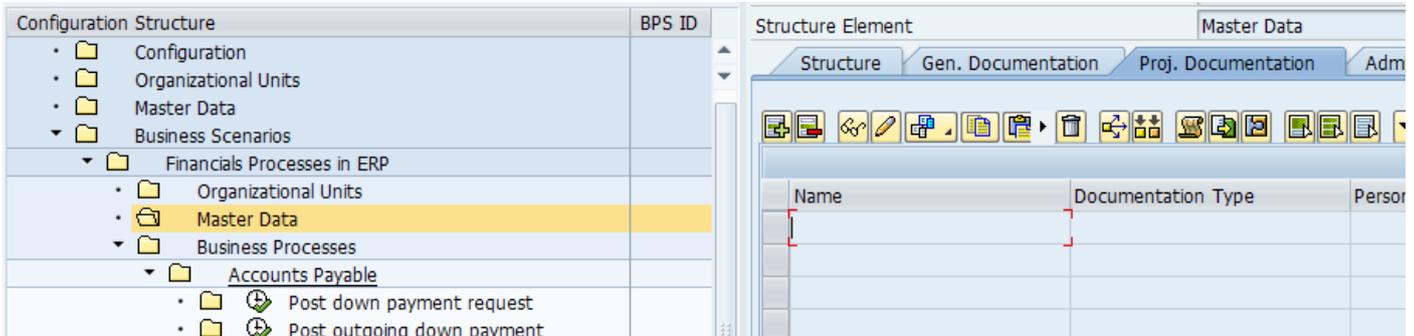

Figure 3 - Master Data ELements

Best Practice #7: Importance of SAP components

SAP Software is delivered in separate SAP Components. SAP ERP covers a lot of business functionality but separate components are there to extend or improve implementations where needed.

Some examples of SAP components:

- **SAP CRM (Customer Relationship Management):** more sophisticated support of CRM processes

- **SAP Portal:** software to run SAP functionality in a Web enabled environment

- **SAP BI (Business Intelligence):** supports central management of all reporting demands

- **SAP PI (Process Integration):** supports central management of all interfaces between SAP systems, and non-SAP systems

It is important to know which SAP Component is used to support a specific business process. Every SAP Component requires separate knowledge and is often covered by different experts. In case a specific change is needed in the software, the SAP Component shows which type of expert is needed to implement the change.

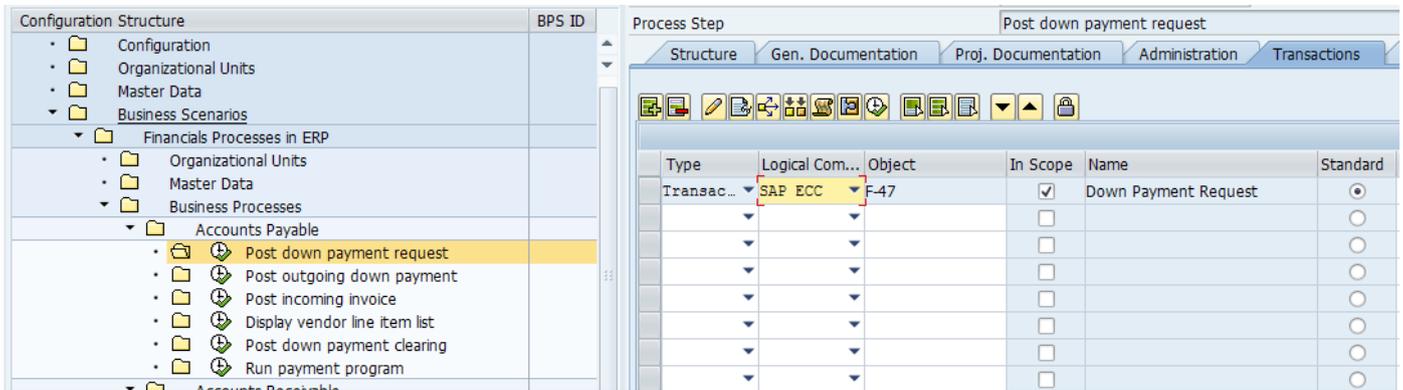Below you find an example, where SAP ECC component 'enables' a process.

Figure 4: SAP ECC Component

Best Practice #8: Generation of Blueprint

The Best Practices described above all form an important part of the SAP Business Blueprint.

SAP Solution Manager provides functionality to generate a MS Word document using all of these parts. Based on a Template document all data is collected and stored in the generated document.

These generated documents can be used for Blueprint review and sign-off as described in the next two Best Practices.

Below screen shots show the variety of filters and elements that can be selected before the Blueprint generation starts in SAP Solution Manager.
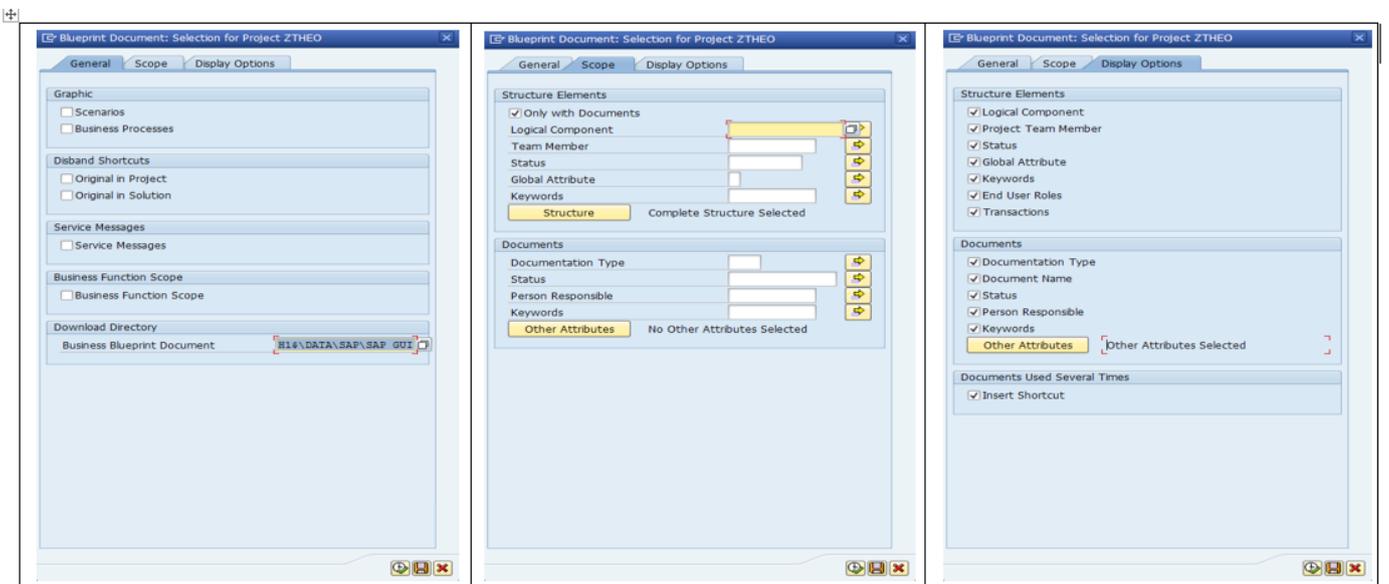

Figure 5: Filter and element selection

Best Practice #9: Blueprint review process

Normally, a Blueprint needs to follow a formal review process. Different types of people need to review the contents to assure the Blueprint meets different types of criteria.

Some example criteria:

- **Business fit:** are business requirements met in a sufficient way

- **Quality demands:** have different quality aspects been met with?

- **IT Operations fit:** do the solutions provided fit with existing – live – software?

As a result, reviews need to be covered in the sequence shown:

1. **Peer review:** a direct colleague - with similar knowledge – reviews the Blueprint, prior to below reviews

2. **Quality Assurance review:** Blueprint is checked on adherence with different types of quality criteria like: have standards been met with, are specific aspects covered sufficiently? (e.g. security, data consistency)

3. **Business review:** business representatives check the Blueprint on the capability of meeting business requirements in a complete and acceptable way.

As part of the review, comments are provided and changes need to be carried out where applicable. As soon as a review passes the criteria the next review takes place.

Best Practice #10: Blueprint signoff

As soon as all reviews have taken place and are agreed the final step is ready to be executed: sign-off. This is the formal closure of the Blueprint and (digital) signatures are required by a group of people appointed upfront.

The sign-off is a very important milestone as all software configuration and development will be based on the agreed Blueprint. Planning of all activities is based on Blueprint scope and contents.

All future change requests are subject to change control meaning every change will be assessed on necessity and priority. Impact on planning is estimated when change request is approved for implementation.

Conclusions

This paper shows 10 Best Practices on Process Modeling for SAP Blueprint phase. All together the Best Practices shown form an overall Best Practice for creating an SAP Business Blueprint.

This Business Blueprint contains the following parts:

1. **IT Process hierarchy, many times referred to as BPML:** Business Process Master List

2. **Business Process Flows:** graphical pictures showing a model of business processes using IT processes

3. **Process descriptions:** detailed description using text of both IT processes and business processes. The usage of Master Data is also captured.

4. **Gaps:** custom development needed for areas where SAP software does not provide (sufficient) functionality

5. **Master Data:** description of Master Data needed to enable implementation and usage of a related business process

6. **SAP Components:** SAP software system component used to enable specific process support

In workshops, Blueprint contents will be discussed by various stakeholders (Business, IT, etc.). Possible bottlenecks are investigated and options for resolutions are discussed.

At the time the workshops have been finished, the Blueprint contents are stored. Reviews will take place carried out by IT, business and Quality Management representatives.

When all reviews have passed, formal sign-off is required. The sign-off is seen as an official freeze of scope and contents. Every future change request needs to follow a change control procedure.

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