



## BPM in Europe

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## ABS Inside!



The year 2007 has proven to be a fruitful year for BPM in the Netherlands. The various BPM conferences -- "Trends in BPM," BPM2007, "Business Process Management," and others -- that have been running for a couple of years, have all, this year, had record breaking attendance. I have been involved in all these events and have noticed quite a consistent trend: Most presentations are now approaching BPM from the business side. How will the business process help the business? Compare this to a couple of years ago when most presentations were about tools and technology. It seems that we are all still listening to analysts like Gartner. By means of a "definition evolution," they have updated/upgraded their "Services and Tools" definition of 2003 with a "Management Discipline" definition in 2006, and we are following it. This, in its self, is good news as the BPM community, with the technology oriented in crowd of a couple of years ago, is now expanding to include business people with real business issues.

Two good examples of the recent presentations based on the "2006-type" BPM implementation occurred when--

- Willem van Oppen, CPO with the Dutch Telco giant KPN, described the success of collaborative KPIs. The alignment of buyer-supplier performance incentives in service-critical end-customer-facing processes ensures joint commitment and improves business for both parties. This approach was built on a solid and deep understanding of buyer-supplier interdependencies using System Dynamics Methodologies.
- Tetra Pak, one of the worldwide leading food packaging companies teamed up with healthyPeople a local Dutch supplier of quality fruit juice. They presented the success of the "customer integrated design" concept based on Supply Chain Management. The open communication and mutual trust resulted in an award winning team.

In both cases the companies were not realizing BPM implementations, but just looking for ways to improve their business. A BPM audience had to tell them they were implementing a Business Process. Strangely enough, just over a year ago "DAS rechtsbijstand," an insurance company, presented their BPM-implementation at a BPM-Forum event. But, some people in the audience considered this not to be a BPM implementation because the technology used was not recognized as a BPMS, i.e., the technology used wasn't mentioned in a Gartner MQ.

This summer, John Adegeest of the "Amersfoortse" another Dutch insurance company, in a presentation, described how his company was using BPMS to implement a true enterprise wide

business process. He asked the audience to come up with some other local examples of enterprise wide BPM implementations. The audience of about 100 BPM-professionals did respond with numerous examples. But, there was a debate as to whether these were all examples that fit the 2003 “Services and Tools” definition. The audience could only give one or two examples that fit the 2006 “Management Discipline” definition. The question stuck with me, and, even when I later asked a friendly analyst to come up with some examples, the question was still unresolved for me.

So, the big question remains: Is it all a big hype? Are there only a few “2006-type” BPM implementations out there? I suspect the issue lies elsewhere. Bringing the four examples above together and, specifically, the question John Adegeest raised reminded me of the way cars are advertised; i.e., a couple of years ago a new car would sell if you would stick a label reading “Airbag inside” or “ABS inside” on the trunk. This was the new feature no car could do without. But, how many new cars produced today will have ABS written on the trunk? Answer: None. Why? It is a standard feature with all new cars. And probably in the future you would not even know if you had an airbag or ABS in your cSo, John’s question could be rephrased as “Which company has BPM inside?” This question is easy to answer for the “2003-type” BPM implementations. You just check if your company is using BPM software from the companies listed in one of the various BPM Magic Quadrants. But, how to answer this question based on the “2006-type” definition? That is, which companies have implemented the BPM Management Discipline or a BPM mindset? This is a much more difficult question to answer as a discipline or mindset is not as easy to spot as a tool. The discipline or mindset is not apparent, and, I suspect, most companies may not even be aware that they have adopted what we call a BPM mindset. Traditionally, we have only been looking at places where BPMS have been implemented; i.e. we have gone to the BPM conferences’ websites and have read the collateral of the BPMS providers to find these examples.

I believe we are looking in the wrong place or, at least looking in a manner that is too restricted. If BPM as a Management Discipline is about improving agility and operational performance, if BPM is about aligning the organizational entities and/or KPIs both inside and outside the organization, then why not look out for the high performing organizations and assess what they have done to get there. I have a sneaking suspicion that markers like “collaborative KPIs,” good alliance management, or supply chain management, just to name a few, are good indications that the organization has implemented a BPM mindset. The organization may just not be aware of it.

The downside for BPMS vendors may be that an organization can implement a “2006-type” BPM without using any BPMS. One should realize that any HRM, CRM, ERP, CMS, etc., system has a business process inside. As long as the result of the implementation is a high performing organization, then “ABS inside” will do, ABS being “Any Business Software.”

*I would like to ask the reader to take the above into account and suggest examples of 2006-type” BPM implementations. I strongly believe there are numerous good examples out there if we start looking in the right place. Please mail your suggestions to [NLinfo@bpm-forum.org](mailto:NLinfo@bpm-forum.org)*