

BPMI Notation Working Group

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October 15, 2001

BPMI Document Number: NWG-2001-09-01R5

Author: Notation Working Group Membership

Background

The membership of the BPMI organization agrees that a standardized visual notation for modeling business processes is required to facilitate communication of process information between members of any organization and for understanding of the capabilities of BPM execution languages, such as BPML and BPEL4WS. Therefore, the creation of a Business Process Modeling Notation Working Group (BPMN-WG) has been proposed to and approved by the BPMI Board. The reasoning is:

- BPM execution languages are extending process semantics and provide for the interoperability between BPM engines; and these languages not fully supported by existing visual notations to provide the interoperability for humans that develop and manage process executed by the BPM engines.
- The objectives of the BPMI.org are to support process management by both technical users and business users. The development of a notation that is intuitive to business users yet able to represent complex process semantics needs to be resolved.
- The market acceptance of process management by end users will be limited unless the industry converges upon a standard business process notation. This is of fundamental importance to business process modeling vendors, not only the BPMI.org. The board of directors recognizes that the development of BPMN is strategic for the BPMI.

The business world is rapidly changing. The revolutionary technology of the Internet has led to the faster and more efficient interaction between customers, suppliers, and partners. In fact, many businesses have grown and transformed so quickly that they do not understand their core business infrastructure. In addition, a new trend is emerging where the performance and *development* of business processes is a collaboration between business partners.

The BPMN will provide businesses with the capability of understanding their internal business procedures in a graphical notation and will give organizations the ability to communicate these procedures in a standard manner. Furthermore, the graphical notation will facilitate the understanding of the performance collaborations and business transactions between the organizations. This will ensure that businesses will understand themselves and participants in their business and will enable organizations to adjust to new internal *and* B2B business circumstances quickly.

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The BPMN Working Group will ensure that the notation will:

- Be methodology independent, in the sense that it will be able to express any process expressible using a BPM execution language, such as BPEL4WS or BPML.
- Be acceptable and usable by the business community. If small processes (or fragments of processes) cannot be easily jotted down by a business analyst on a blank piece of paper, then BPMN will not have been successful.
- Be useful in illuminating a complex process. That is, a complex executable process instance, visualized with BPMN, must be a step forward in understanding the process instance, for those not able to read BPM execution language schemas directly!
- Be useful in illuminating interactions between organizations in B2B situations, including the handling

of business transactions.

- Support BPEL4WS and BPML semantics.
- Be constrained to support only the concepts of modeling that are applicable to business processes
- Be extensible to support the future growth of BPM execution languages and business process modeling.
- Have a real semantics, not just a visual notation, as would be the case using diagramming tools for process modeling.
- The BPMN notation of a business process must be unambiguous. There should be a mapping from one or more BPMN notation instances to an execution level instance.

BPMN should be the natural visual form of execution languages. BPMN should illuminate and inform the business user about the structure and nature of an executable process. The purpose of BPMN is to be an intuitive notation for the development of executable processes at the business level. Where BPM execution languages are used to carry process semantics among computers, BPMN carries it among business users.

In the course of its work the BPMN Working Group will:

- Keep under review and periodically update the BPMN notation and outline the notation release schedule.
- Seek to minimize the technical constraints placed upon the business user when modeling business processes. This principle is paramount.
- Determine the Business Process modeling concepts that are applicable to the graphical notation.
- Determine which execution level semantics are and are not applicable to the graphical notation.
- Consider issues and opportunities of information sharing and dissemination in areas of common and related interest with other working groups and standards bodies.
- Ensure that the development of execution languages is reflected in BPMN.
- Produce a standard glossary of terms for use within process modeling.

Method of working

The BPMN will be developed and maintained under the ownership of BPMI.org.

BPML and BPMN will be two independent efforts. Each working group will have its own development schedules and deliverables. This will result in the publication of separate, but related specifications.

The BPMI will make its best endeavors to ensure that the working group includes companies that have a primary interest in this topic, in order to ensure industry acceptance.

The BPMN-WG members will elect a chair of the group in accordance with its by-laws.

The BPMN-WG will periodically solicit submissions from its members to establish or enhance the BPMN specification. Such a solicitation will define the scope for the submissions and specify a deadline for submission. Submissions from all working group members will be welcomed and will have equal status.

As in the case of BPML, the working group will elect a primary author for the specification and a small number of contributors committed to creating such a specification.

It is believed that all members of the BPMI will promote the market acceptance of the BPMN in an open and transparent manner.

Deliverables and time scales

The first draft is expected to be complete by November 2002. A more comprehensive version will be expected by April 2003.

Design Considerations

It will be the responsibility of the BPMN Working Group to make sure that BPMN will adhere as much as possible to BPM execution language specifications and to provide the appropriate mapping mechanisms.

BPMN must be extensible in order to support vertical-specific business process modeling. This is the same principle for BPML. Thus, BPMN must be a meta language for the notational modeling of process modeling languages. The board of directors believes that this level of abstraction is necessary to ensure the success of BPMN but recognizes that this is a longer-term objective. Shorter-term pragmatic work is equally desirable (see Deliverables and Timescales).

The term ‘notation’ refers to visual notations, designed to clearly visualize business processes. However, the notation is not limited to diagrammatic or symbolic forms of notation.

The working group need not address those aspects relating to manipulation of business processes by visual means, but this is not excluded if the working group members chose to include this. For example, there are a number of scenarios in process management, such as process decomposition, composition, and manipulation, which may require particular visualizations.

The notation need not be limited to the current industry standard ways of modeling processes. The working group should be creative about how to represent complex process semantics in a way that can be understood by business people. However, initially the working group should consider focusing upon pragmatic extensions of current practice that can support more of the semantics of BPM execution languages than existing notations.

The working group recognizes that there will be considerable innovation among BPM vendors with respect to the process desktop; that is, the user interface metaphor and representation for the management of business processes. The objective of this working group is not to standardize the process desktop; rather, it is to develop a representation that can represent any business process expressed in BPM execution languages using notational semantics.

The BPMN-WG members will ascertain the extent to which BPMN can be a standard notation, yet support multiple “look and feels” for how a particular process desktop might implement the BPMN specification.