

Business Process Management Across the Extended Enterprise: Challenges, Examples and Benefits of Web-Based Software

Companies are seeking business process management solutions in a time when the traditional boundaries of their organizations have become increasingly porous to include suppliers, partners, and customers as integrated parts of their operations. At the same time, web-based software has continued to evolve in its capabilities and reach, and companies have increasingly adopted cloud-based services located outside the corporate firewall.

There are considerable benefits from extending business process management capabilities outside the boundaries of the company, and clearly measurable value is much easier to quantify when stakeholders are outside the traditional walls of the business.

For the purpose of this article, external stakeholders are considered to be suppliers, partners or customers who can have a meaningful impact on the performance of a company. These benefits are directly measurable in terms of supplier service level agreements, partner opportunities, and customer contract values. Establishing web-based software portals for the extended enterprise does come with challenges but the value significantly outweighs the costs.

Business process management can be relatively simple but still produces definable impacts on a company's performance. Requesting and approving a simple task through relevant levels of authority might not be a complex process in itself, but moving this to web-based software involving a supplier directly produces clear gains in efficiency, reporting, and engagement.

1. Challenges

1.1. Delivery

The first challenge for many businesses is simply reigning in a delivery mechanism. Web-based software needs an accessible URL for all parties, but as businesses continue to embrace stakeholders from outside their traditional boundaries, portals need to be in place that meet the company's security requirements and yet provide convenient access for users who – from a traditional IT perspective – might conceivably represent a security threat.

The solution in which this type of business process management system resides should present relevant messages by way of easily accessible information, news systems, and opportunities for dialogue through web-based software tools, such as blogs. These tools are designed to increasingly engage with users and unearth further value outside of the immediate process.

1.2. Maintenance

The information within this type of business process management module needs to be accurate, timely, secure and simple to maintain. Incorrect or inappropriate information is worse than no information at all.

Web-based software maintenance can carry a large risk. Sometimes, customers will put in place multiple, isolated portals that are each fit for a purpose, accepting the maintenance issues in the short term, but then losing focus over time so that the embedded information becomes low quality, out of date, or even incorrect.

2. Examples of Business Process Management

For the purpose of this discussion, recently implemented business processes which delivered real value are provided as examples below. Actual client names have been protected in all cases purely for confidentiality.

2.1. Public Facing: Authorizing the Use of a Brand

A business process management system that controlled the important access to the client's brand needed to be implemented for a major public sector client involved in minimizing energy footprints.

Control of branding – including appropriate use of logos – was essential to this organization. A relatively simple process was established that identified what kind of relationship the supplier had to the customer. The web-based software then identified what the branded material was required for and provided direct and automated access where authorization was deemed appropriate.

Surrounding information was provided by menus and content that directly accessed the large corporate public website, with no requirement for duplication and no risk of errors or maintenance concerns. In fact, business process management that previously required a dedicated full-time team now dealt with 90 percent of requests automatically, with reports and dashboards providing real time information to the marketing team.

2.2. Partner Facing: Partner Certification

Working with a global supplier of connections and cabling, a business process management solution was implemented to certify new partners. Partners are extremely important to this global company, and providing an efficient certification process within web-based software was critical to maintaining global reach without compromising quality.

Using portal-based permissions was essential, as partners required access to numerous processes including certification. Which processes partners had access to depended upon various factors including their status as a partner and their country of origin.

Business process management protocols were embedded in a single content- and document-based information layer to provide one location where global partner managers could inform and engage with their customers in a secure and permission-based environment.

2.3. Customer Facing: Risk Identification

An insurance company needed web-based software that supported a client portal in order to specifically allow client staff to report any risk that might lead to an insurance claim.

The process was embedded in a portal together with custom applications and a rich information layer that allowed the client to describe potential risks and relevant insurance solutions consistent with the brand and matching the requirements of marketing and sales.

2.4. Supplier Facing: Simple Task-Based Cooperation

Often, various suppliers require task-based business process management solutions on web-based software, such as an extranet. The extranet facilitates identifying time requests that have not been addressed within a reasonable service level agreement, observing what the overall status is, and

creating dashboards on an intranet that provide live status information to other managers not directly involved in this simple process.

3. Benefits

Business process management that reaches out to the extended corporation should be seen in the important context of offering engagement and messaging opportunities to users and companies.

The benefits gained through web-based software may seem to be outside the strict boundaries of the remit of a single business process, but when one treats a process as an isolated event within the company's relationship with customers, partners and suppliers, one misses a significant opportunity to engage with key stakeholders.

In all the cases mentioned above, business process management extranets were able to be implemented which provided the required processes, appropriate security levels, correct information access, and the assignment of a branded user interface on an individual user basis.

Web-based software ensures that in addition to the value presented by each process, the engagement with key stakeholders is optimal, low maintenance, highly visible to appropriate staff, on-point, and timely.

About the Author

Nigel Davies founded Claromentis 12 years ago, and has been involved with corporate software for 30 years. As Managing Director, his current three-year goal is to establish Claromentis as a significant supplier of [intranet software](#), information management software, process management and custom development products to over 1,000 companies and organizations. He has lived and worked in five regions including Europe, the Middle East, Asia Pacific and the United States, and brings this global perspective to all business relationships and customer engagements. For more information about Claromentis, visit www.claromentis.com.