> PROCESS CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

Introduction, Benefits and Approach to Set-up

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INTRODUCTION

Processes are among the most important assets of any organization.

This has been acknowledged by business leaders across all industries. In Gartner report "Leading in Times of Transition: The 2010 CIO Agenda," improving business processes is ranked number the one priority of CIOs in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010.

TOP 10 BUSINESS PRIORITIES IN 2010	
Priorities	Ranking
Business process improvement	1
Reducing enterprise costs	2
Increasing the use of Information/analytics	3
Improving enterprise workforce effectiveness	4
Attracting and retaining new customers	5
Managing change initiatives	6
Creating new products or services (innovation)	7
Targeting customers and markets more effectively	8
Consolidating business operations	9
Expanding current customer relationships	10

Source: Gartner EXP (January 2010) http://www.gartner.com/it/page.jsp?id=1283413

"Leading in Times of Transition: The 2010 CIO Agenda," Gartner, Inc. January 2010

Business Process Management (BPM) is defined as a holistic management approach that promotes business effectiveness and efficiency while striving for innovation, flexibility, and integration with technology.

BPM helps companies to cope with frequent market changes and increasing competitive pressure by increasing productivity and facilitating better cost control and risk management. Simply put, BPM helps companies to constantly monitor and continuously boost their operational efficiency.

However, BPM adoption is not an ad-hoc activity.

Many BPM projects are disbanded after implementation because they cannot deliver the promised results. The main reason is that organizations are adopting BPM technologies without applying proper supporting BPM disciplines via the competency center.

"Brilliant process management is our strategy. We get brilliant results from average people managing brilliant processes. We observe that our competitors often get average (or worse) results from brilliant people managing broken processes."

A senior Toyota executive, summarizing the reason for the company's relentless progress over the years

According to some research almost half of the enterprises that reported clear and measurable benefits from their BPM efforts had a BPM Center of Excellence (COE) in place; only 10 percent of the group reporting mixed results had a BPM COE in place.

What this shows is that a BPM Center of Excellence (COE) is a vital link in the chain of successful BPM adoption. A Center of Excellence or Competency Center is a cross-functional team with a formal organizational structure, defined tasks, roles, responsibilities and processes for supporting and promoting methodical BPM adoption and effective use of BPM and continuous improvement across the organization. It develops and maintains a library of reusable standards, methodologies, and techniques to ensure continues success with BPM projects and to minimize the time and effort needed to achieve those successes. The COE focuses on following critical activities:

> Creating and maintaining BPM vision and plans

> Taking inventory and capturing processes

> Continuously improving existing processes

> Creating new capabilities

In addition, a COE helps in addressing issues such as:

> How to create awareness and gain buy-in and acceptance

> What processes to consider and which one to automate next

> How to demonstrate the potential ROI of BPM initiatives

> How to develop competencies for successful BPM deployments

> How to engage and involve people from different organizational units

> What are the data collection needs across processes

> How to define key performance indicators (KPIs)

> How to identify key improvement areas

> How to successfully deploy projects and measure results

> How to develop and manage user training programs

It is important to note that a COE does not compete with other industry-accepted practices such as Lean, TOC (Theory of Constraints), and Six Sigma, which target some of above activities. Rather it complements and leverages any existing expertise and process initiatives in an organization.

FUNCTION

The BPM COE is the heart of your BPM effort. It is essentially the governing body for all things BPM-related within your organization. At a minimum the COE is tasked with the following objectives:

Establish and maintain a baseline set of BPM skills and competencies across the organization. Establish best practices for:

> Modeling notation and patterns

> Project roles and responsibilities

> Project methodology or how the organization will execute BPM projects

> Development and integration standards

> Establish policies for prioritization of candidate processes based on:

> Linkage to corporate strategic objectives

> Process impact and benefit

> Process complexity and scope

> Capability to execute the candidate process

> Maintain the process and business object library

> Evaluate process and project performance

> Promote organizational compliance with BPM governance policies and procedures.

BENEFITS

Various studies suggest that organizations with a Process Center of Excellence can see benefits such as:

> Increased usage of business process management practices

> Increased business user satisfaction

> Better understanding of the value of BPM

> Increased productivity

> Increased decision-making speed

> Decreased staff costs

> Decreased software maintenance costs

> Increased operational consistency

> Higher knowledge retention and faster transfer

That is achieved by providing functions in and support for:

> BPM methodology

> Process engineering

> BPM tool usage

> Training and skill transfer

> Knowledge management

> Repository of reusable artifacts

In addition, a formal BPM strategy through a COE can help with reducing the overall cost of automating business processes. Our experience has shown savings of more than 30 percent after the first project due to the significant reuse of initial hardware, and the BPMS software investment as well as a reduction in training and development needs resulting from produced artifacts and patterns.

METHODOLOGY

There are nine steps for establishing a COE:

1. Attain Executive Sponsorship

2. Define Goals and Success Criteria

3. Define Governance Structure

4. Establish a BPM Architecture

5. Set Up BPM Library and Repository

6. Establish Change Management Practice

7. Take Process Inventory

8. Prioritize Process Selection Based on Strategic Objectives

9. Start Executing BPM Projects

Step 1—Attain Executive Sponsorship

A successful COE and BPM strategy require an executive commitment throughout the organization and entail a change in the way IT thinks about and manages performance. Start with attaining this executive sponsorship and identifying process owners.

The executive sponsor is the linchpin of the COE effort, forming the link between corporate strategic objectives and program governance. The executive sponsor is not really an active member of the COE, but his or her active support is critical. The executive sponsor should come from the business side rather than the IT side; remember that the "B" in BPM stands for "business." The executive sponsor must understand the strategic drivers and linkage to corporate objectives and be able to affect the strategic decision making process. Additionally, the executive sponsor should be high enough in the organization to control a large set of the business operations— ideally the COO or even the CEO. It is the executive sponsor who will also control the budget and reap the benefits of the BPM initiative; so the sponsor will definitely have a vested interest in the effort.

When selecting an executive sponsor for the COE, consider the candidate's ability to communicate both up and down the organizational chain. A good part of successful BPM adoption is about cultural and organizational change, so a good executive sponsor must understand this and be able to effectively communicate this change throughout the organization. Therefore, understanding the organization to effectively solicit participation and funding is vital to the success of the program. The sponsor must understand what it will take to ensure this cooperation and to help the COE bridge any cultural challenges that may be encountered.

The first function of the executive sponsor is to write and sign a mandate for the COE and the BPM effort. This mandate will spell out the objectives, rights and responsibilities of the COE. This will become the charter for the BPM COE. At a functional level, this mandate is also helpful in overcoming resistance and friction from within the enterprise.

Step 2—Define Goals and Success Criteria

Clearly define business drivers and identify the success criteria to set the right expectations. Perform BPM maturity assessment, if there have been any previous initiatives at the organization.

BPM is all about business transformation and operational responsiveness. To that end any BPM effort must be linked to, in alignment with, and add value to the overall strategic objectives of the organization. This is one of the main functions of the COE when determining which projects or processes to undertake. Early in the process of establishing the COE, considerable time should be given to answering what you want to accomplish with your BPM effort. Your answer will function as the overall success criteria, providing a benchmark to use in measuring your progress, achievements, and failures.

Once success criteria have been set, establishing the scope of the COE and BPM effort. At this point you should also define what services the COE will offer to customers. Examples of potential services the COE may offer are:

> Process Analysis and Discovery

> Process Modeling

> Process Automation or Implementation

> Process Performance Assessment

> Process Improvement

> Process Governance

> Process Change Management

> Process Library Management

> BPM Education and Training

By "scope" we refer to the reach and extent of the services the COE will offer: departmental, line of business, or enterprise. In line with this is the scope of the transformation you are seeking with the chosen maturity model. Are you looking to fully transform into a truly process-driven organization, or are you seeking to gain process clarity through formal definition and documentation of your processes?

As part of goal setting a maturity assessment should be undertaken. The maturity assessment provides a baseline measurement of the desires and capabilities of your organization across the various BPM operational facets or service offerings listed above.

Progress Software has made available a simple questionnaire and corresponding report to assist in determining your maturity assessment. The questionnaire asks the relative levels of desired and perceived capability in the above areas. The responses can then be plotted to give a graphic of where your stakeholders believe they are and where they want to be.

There are many other available BPM Maturity Models available for use if this does not suit your needs. Among these are the Capabilities Maturity Model Integration (CMMI), Business Process Maturity Model (BPMM), and 8-Omega ORCA. All of them vary in their approach with the relative shared goal of providing a clear view of the desires and capabilities of your organization with respect to BPM. Many of these maturity models are also very heavy-weight, and a discussion of them is beyond the scope of this

paper. However, we do encourage an initial lightweight approach. As with all things related to BPM, start simple and build from your success.

It's important that both the executive sponsor and the COE itself be held accountable for determining the goals and a plan for achieving them. This plan should include not only technical aspects of the program but also organizational and cultural aspects. Remember that BPM is about business, not technology. In fact, only 20% of what BPM is about has anything to do with technology. Resist the temptation to immediately jump into solving technology problems. We are trying to solve business problems. Setting up a robust communications mechanism both up and down the organizational chain is also important. Let everyone know what you are doing and be sure to keep them included and informed.

Step 3—Define Governance Structure

The governance structure of the COE specifies how the COE is organized, what are the roles and responsibilities, how often the COE will meet, and how the COE conducts its business. The COE should meet on a regular basis; every other week is usually sufficient. Meeting topics should be split between the BPM program and individual project discussion and updates.

The COE is a cross-functional team that includes participants from both business and IT, and usually consists of the following roles:

> Executive Sponsor

> Program Manager

> BPM Visionary

> Enterprise Architect

> BPM Tool Expert

> Chief Business Analyst

> Process Librarian

> Lead Process Architect

> A Representative from Each Line of Business

Executive Sponsor

This role and its responsibilities were discussed above.

Program Manager

The program manager is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the COE and the BPM effort in general. This role should report directly to the executive sponsor and meet with the sponsor on a regular basis to provide program updates and to discuss any items of a critical nature that may require the attention and/or intervention of the sponsor.

BPM Visionary or Evangelist

This BPM visionary is the chief strategist for the organizational BPM effort.   This person will develop the overall business case and value proposition for BPM and evangelize it to the organization. The BPM evangelist should be intimately familiar with the overall organizational strategy, business drivers and objects and how the BPM effort will support these. The visionary/evangelist should be responsible for developing the overall vision of your BPM effort.

Enterprise Architect

The enterprise architect represents the interests of enterprise IT to ensure that the organizational standards, policies, and established architectures are enforced and utilized within the BPM effort. The architect will also provide general guidance and consultation regarding all technology matters that may affect the BPM effort as well as act as a conduit and BPM proponent to the enterprise architecture group.

BPM Tool Expert

The BPM tool expert provides general knowledge, experience and expertise to the organization around the chosen BPM tool set(s). This role is also responsible for creating the training curriculum and course material regarding the chosen tools. The tool expert is also responsible for running the training program to ensure that personnel receive adequate training to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively make use of the chosen tool(s). The BPM tool expert will also work with the process librarian and lead process architect in building the functional toolkit of business objects, processes, code snippets, etc.

Chief Business Analyst

As previously stated, BPM is all about business. So we will need a group of business analysts led by a chief business analyst. The chief business analyst represents the interests of all business analysts at the COE. Conversely, the chief business analyst will also represent the interests of the COE within the organizational community of business analysts. Every BPM project you undertake will require the use of a business analyst for process discovery, mapping, as well as determination of process metrics, SLAs (service-level agreements), KPIs, etc. The discovery, mapping and documentation process should be codified and standardized. This is also the primary responsibility of the chief business analyst.

Process Librarian

One of the promises of BPM is reusability of business functions, and business objects. The job of the process librarian is to develop, manage and promulgate the body of reusable process segments, code snippets, forms, style sheets, business objects, reports, metrics sets, and process models to the organizations. As you grow your BPM capabilities, you should begin to make heavier use of these pre-existing assets, spending less time re-implementing the same functionality. Reusability of assets is one of the tenets of becoming process-driven.

Lead Process Architect

Besides the process owner, the process architect is the pivotal role on a BPM project. The process architect is the lead role on the project, having both the technical and the business knowledge to successfully complete the project. The lead process architect represents the interests of process architects at the COE. Conversely, the lead process architect will also represent the interests of the COE within the organizational community of process architects. Every BPM project you undertake will require the use of a process architect to lead process modeling and process implementation. This project methodology and how it is executed should be codified and standardized. This is also the primary responsibility of the lead process architect. Progress Software has published a proposed BPM project methodology for use.

A Representative from Each Line of Business

These are critical yet often overlooked members of any COE and BPM effort. It is crucial that you have representation from the various lines of business on the COE. Each of these individuals will represent the interests of their respective groups. They will also be the primary conduit back to the lines of business. The representatives will also be the ones who nominate prospective processes and projects to the COE for execution. Care must be given to include and empower these individuals as they can become your biggest proponents or, if mishandled, your biggest detractors.

Step 4—Establish a BPM Architecture

Business and IT think about improvement differently. Business is motivated by having more control and flexibility to grow top-line revenue and accelerate time-to-market. IT is looking for robust and standards-based solutions, aligned with current skills/tools.

Successful BPM strategy balances the motivations of the business and the technical community.

The BPM architecture is the operational link between the organizational strategic objectives and the tactical project details. The BPM architecture defines how you will perform BPM. It ensures process alignment with:

> Organizational objectives

> Business operations

> Established IT architectures, standards, and policies

> Other processes

> Established process standards

The BPM architecture provides the foundational backbone of your BPM effort. As with the foundation of a house, it must be structurally sound if you are to build upon it. Unfortunately, the norm has been to develop this in an ad-hoc manner after the fact. The result of this is usually a completely fragmented approach that fails to meet or support any of the prescribed goals and requirements.

At a more functional level the BPM architecture consists of the set of rules and standards for performing BPM:

Common definitions of terms and taxonomy

BPM lifecycle definition, or how you will execute BPM projects. Progress Software has a separate whitepaper on this subject.

> BPM toolset standards and best practices

> Process modeling standards and best practices

> Enterprise architecture standards and best practices

> Performance, quality and utilization reports and dashboards

A full discussion of these artifacts is beyond the scope of this paper; however, Progress will be publishing additional material to further elaborate and discuss these topics.

Step 5—Set Up BPM Library and Repository

One of the COE responsibilities is to act as a hub and facilitate BPM knowledge sharing.

The process library was previously mentioned under the description of the process librarian role. However, further clarification is warranted here. The process library is the collection of process and sub-processes, code snippets, forms and layouts, style sheets, business objects, reports, metrics sets, and process models. This collection represents a considerable body of intellectual property of your organization. At their core, your process models alone represent how you do business. The idea of the library is to organically grow your body of components that can later be reused on future projects. An example of a reusable process component might be a purchase order approval process. For example, if you are a large coffee retailer, this process would specify the manner in which your organization submits and approves purchase orders. At a future time, you may be developing a larger process to define opening a new retail location. Obviously, you need to purchase many supplies and services to construct this location. This requires submitting multiple purchase orders. Instead of defining and redefining your purchase order process, you can simple reuse the pre-defined process from your library complete with the process definition, data structures, integrations,

metrics, and PO forms already constructed. The benefits of this approach are numerous, starting with the time you will save in your own project cycle. However, by adopting this approach you have also delegated responsibility for that particular business function to the group responsible for fulfilling that business function. This is very similar to object-oriented programming, where each object is self-contained and performs a discrete function. The same principle applies here but with discrete business functionality.

Step 6—Define Change Management Practice

BPM is about transforming your organization to be flexible, nimble, responsive and adaptive: in other words, process-driven. Shifting to process management as a methodology involves important business shifts at three levels:

> Management: process definition and optimization

> Operational: customers' and users' interactions

> Cultural: institutional inertia or how you have always done things

Poor planning and lack of proper change management at those levels can cause large investments and high expectations to turn into huge disappointments.

Change management is about handling transition in a controlled manner to avoid impairing operations, impacting customer service or interrupting revenue stream.

ITIL* defines the change management as followed: "The goal of the Change Management process is to ensure that standardized methods and procedures are used for efficient and prompt handling of all changes, in order to minimize the impact of change-related incidents upon service quality, and consequently improve the day-to-day operations of the organization."

ISO** defines the objective of change management as: "To ensure all changes are assessed, approved, implemented and reviewed in a controlled manner."

*ITIL (Information Technology Infrastructure Library)
**ISO (International Organization for Standardization)

At the management level COE needs to establish procedures and guidelines on:

> When to consider a process change (criteria)

> How to define a change (what to change and to what)

> What is the review and approval process for changes?

> How to identify, analyze, and handle inter-process dependencies

> How to decide on budget and priorities

At the operational level the COE needs to cover:

> Timeline and phases (how to unfreeze, move, refreeze)

> Handling of active processes during transition

> Approach to migrating data, reports, and KPIs

> Monitoring and reporting on implementation progress

And at the user level it defines:

> How the changes are communicated to internal users, customers and others (including behavioral changes and business results that are expected)

> How the sense of urgency is established

> Education plan for impacted parties along process, tasks and role changes

> How to handle resistance and ensure full participation

Planning and communication are critical to the success of any change initiative. The COE is responsible to standardize and translate these into a set of change management procedures, checklists and guidelines that are shared with all stakeholders for further distribution and implementation.

Step 7—Take Process Inventory

One of the first objectives of the COE should be to gather an initial inventory of the processes within the organization. How do you do business? Ask around the organization, and you will certainly be surprised at the lack of clear understanding among respondents. Take inventory of processes

within the organization. Identify and categorize them in collaboration with the process owners.

Generally, your processes will either be a core process or a supporting process.

Core Processes

These are processes that are common to your particular vertical industry and are performed by most if not all companies in that industry. An industry process for insurance companies is the process of issuing a policy for a customer. The basic steps are relatively common to all insurance companies. However, the details of how one insurance company performs this process are unique to that company and sets that company apart from competitors. These are your core intellectual property, and it is vital that these types of processes be captured and understood.

Supporting Processes

These are processes that almost every business or enterprise performs. They typically involve, or are viewed as, administrative processes. Core processes are often taken for granted and overlooked but are key areas to look for operational friction and are easy wins for improving operational efficiency. Examples of core processes might include:

Recruit-to-hire—What is your hiring process? This is a notoriously inefficient process.

New employee on-boarding—A continuation of recruit-to-hire.

Quote-to-cash—What is your sales process? This has a big impact to the top line.

Order-to-deliver—How do you order goods and services your company needs in its daily operations? How about one-off purchases?

In addition to the primary process categories discussed above there are several secondary categorizations for business processes:

Process frequency—How often do you perform this business process?

Process duration—How long does the process take to run to completion?

System-centric vs. human-centric—Does the process require the intervention of people in your organization, or is it purely a system-driven process?

Placing your processes in one or more of these buckets will help you in the next phase of process prioritization.

Step 8—Prioritize Process Selection Based on Strategic Objectives

Project prioritization is about selecting those projects to approach first that will give you the biggest value for your effort. One of the important success criteria for BPM is to start small, get some early, quick wins and build steadily from that success. Some of the most frequent mistakes organizations make when first adopting BPM are related to process prioritization and selection. The first mistake is to try to "boil the ocean." By this we mean that companies very often bite off more than they can chew with their first project by either choosing a process that is highly complicated or very large in scope. As mentioned above, one of the success criteria of BPM is to start small and build from that success. When you couple this with the organizational changes BPM encourages, the result can easily overburden most organizations.

Another mistake is choosing bad processes or processes that really are not processes but rather applications. There is a subtle yet important distinction between a business process and an application. A business process usually has a relatively linear flow with a distinct start and end point and is composed of a series of discrete business activities executed by people or systems. Conversely, an application is data-centric, where that data can also be modified at anytime by external actors; is non-linear in its flow; and often has no distinct start or end point.

Ideal process attributes for a BPM approach:

> Your process has a distinct beginning and end.

> Your process involves a lot of manual or paper-based activities that are time-consuming and difficult to track.

> Your process is composed of discrete steps or activities which can be performed by either a person or an automated system. It has a strong workflow component. It is easy to draw a multi-step flow chart of your process.

> There are clear roles or groups within your process responsible for seeing the work through to completion. People assigned to these roles can be permanent or they can vary.
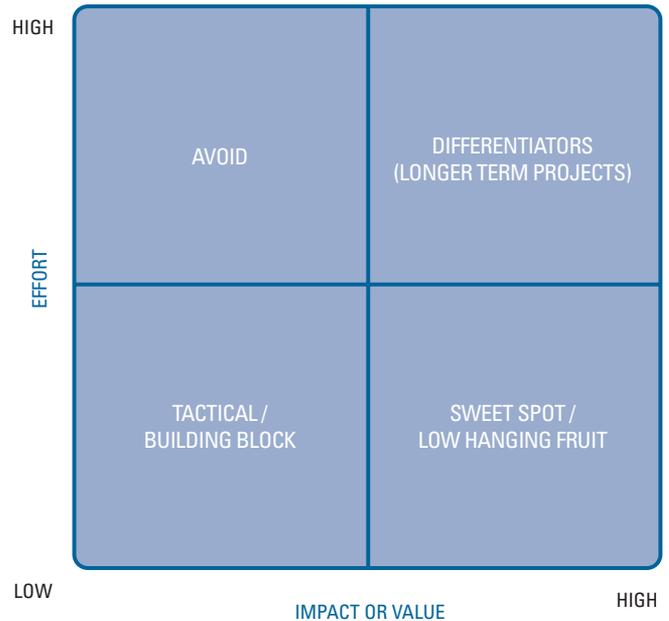
> Your process requires collaboration between individuals or groups to complete work. Review-and-approval is a common collaboration need in your process.

> Your process requires monitoring and "drill down" of the status.

> Your process requires measurement of process and human performance.

> Your process has audit requirements, including "who took what action when" and process traceability to show what path a specific process took.

> Your process needs integration to multiple data sources to accomplish specific tasks.

Not-ideal process attributes for a BPM approach:

> Your process cannot easily be drawn in a flow chart or divided into discrete, clearly labeled activities.

> Your process exhibits characteristics of a single-user software application rather than a business process orchestrating human and automated system steps.

> Your process has little or no human involvement.

> Your process has little or no collaboration between human participants.

> Your process does not require data from multiple data sources.

> Your process has no end point.

Once you have a set of candidate processes, it is time to prioritize them to determine which process projects to execute first. There are several methods to accomplish this. One of the simplest methods is illustrated below in quadrant matrix. Assign each candidate process a numerical value from 1-to-10 for the level of effort required and for the impact or value that process project is likely to have.

Once you have these scores, place them into the matrix above. Unlike most "magic quadrant" diagrams, you will actually have two "magic quadrants." You will want to focus first on those processes that fall into the "Sweet Spot / Low-hanging Fruit" quadrant. These will provide you with your initial quick wins. You do not need to complete all of them, just two or three. Once that is done, turn your attention to a project in the "Differentiators" quadrant. These projects will like be more strategic in nature and have a greater alignment with the overall strategic objectives of the organization.

HIGH		
EFFORT	AVOID	DIFFERENTIATORS (LONGER TERM PROJECTS)
	TACTICAL / BUILDING BLOCK	SWEET SPOT / LOW HANGING FRUIT
LOW		
	IMPACT OR VALUE	**HIGH**

If you wish to get a finer grained sieve with which to select process projects, add in some additional criteria to your list:

10. Initial Criteria
    > Level of effort
    > Impact or value

11. Additional Criteria
    > Process complexity
    > Frequency of process execution
    > Anticipated level of process adoption
    > Ease of process administration
    > Impact of not doing anything

When assigning quantitative values to your criteria, you can use the total sum or the average of your criteria scores, or you can weigh the criteria and get a weighted average. Any method is fine as long as is it consistent and understood by all participants.

At the end of this you should have a list of prioritized process projects to start executing

Step 9—Start Executing BPM Projects

Adopting BPM and achieving success with it constitues a process in itself. After completing the steps above you should be ready to start executing your first projects. One of the most common things we hear from customers is "I have taken the product training; I have set up my COE; and I have selected my first projects. Now what do I do?" Executing a BPM process project is not the same as traditional software development project. In fact, only 20% of what BPM has anything to do with technology. The rest is about business and solving a business problem. The high-level steps for a BPM project are:

> Define and model

> Implement iteratively

> Measure and report

> Simulate and improve or optimize and refine

> Repeat

The above steps are a modification of what is called the Demming Cycle, and is roughly analogous to the Capabilities Maturity Model Integration (CMMI). It is not necessary for your project to complete all the steps in this cycle.

A full discussion of the BPM project methodology is beyond the scope of this paper. For more information, read "BPM Project Methodology: A How-to for Your First BPM Project."

AUTHORS

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Pejman is a Silicon Valley technology veteran and serial entrepreneur with more than 15 years of progressive experience in providing software expertise and best practices to technology investors, business enterprises, and forward-thinking startups.

Widely known as a leader in the field of Business Process Management and Knowledge Modeling, Pejman has been a key architect of multiple high-profile products, including the award-winning Progress® Savvion™ BPM platform.

Today, Pejman is the VP of Solutions at Savvion where he combines his decade of BPM experience with his expertise as a PMP and Lean Six Sigma Black Belt to incorporate continuous process improvement into the next generation of business solutions.

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David is a 15-year veteran of IT and business and has served in a variety of roles both technical and business related. He has been helping companies transform and adopt BPM practices and techniques for five years now. David has had the pleasure of working with many different companies of all sizes in a variety of different verticals. This experience has provided David with a broad and clear view of how many companies are operating today; what they do well and what they can improve upon.

Prior to joining Progress Savvion, David spent three years with Lombardi Software (another BPM company which is now part of IBM) in its Global Services Unit, where he helped customers become "process driven,"

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PROGRESS SOFTWARE

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Progress Software provides innovative technologies that deliver flexible application infrastructures, extended visibility, real-time integrated data access and high-speed event processing.

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