

White Paper

Reusing Process Maps as the Basis of an EA Project

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Peter Harrad is the regional manager for North America, based in Orbus' Washington DC office. He has worked with modeling standards and techniques throughout his 20 years in IT, in a career that has covered software development, solutions architecture and international consulting.

Peter's particular areas of interest are opportunities arising from interdisciplinary touchpoints, how to balance practicality and rigor when modeling, and the importance of viewpoints in addressing different stakeholder perspectives.

When documenting an enterprise's current-state architecture, the best practice is to perform discovery on what documentation already exists in order to describe the existing state of affairs. While a common activity in such an exercise is to go and inspect the logical, conceptual and physical architectures of recent (and not so recent) projects, sometimes organizations forget that another resource exists, at least in terms of analyzing the business architecture – the process maps for an organization.

Process mapping activity is usually performed, when it already exists, by a different department. For example, processes are often created by a dedicated business analysis team, separate from the architecture team or, just as commonly, external consultants as part of a specific initiative or software project.

In this white paper, we draw on experience with some of our existing customers to consider how aspects of process analysis activities (either project-based or organization-wide) can help identify elements of a business architecture.

To begin with, it is worth doing some basic revision on what a process map includes. We will consider process maps created in the most common process modeling notation. Business Process Modeling Notation, or BPMN is the most common standard used to create process maps today. While it has an (undeserved) reputation for complexity, its status as the de facto industry standard makes it the best starting point for our discussion.

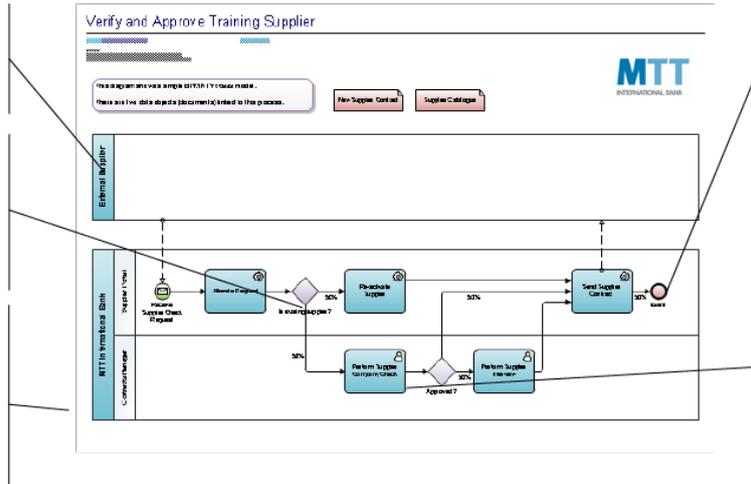
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A BPMN diagram can contain the following main elements:

Pool: graphical representation of a Participant in a collaboration

Gateway: Decisions/ branching (exclusive, inclusive, and complex), merging, forking, and joining

Lane: used for such things as internal roles (e.g., Manager, Associate), systems (e.g., an enterprise application), an internal department (e.g., shipping)



Event: something that "happens" during the course of a process

Activity: points in a process flow where work is performed

Looking at this diagram, it becomes clear that many of the elements that are mapped in traditional enterprise architecture views are also being described in the process maps.

BPMN considers the following items:

- Activities
- Lanes
- Participants
- Gateways
- Events

Mapping the metamodel

Many of these map to (Or can be mapped to) basic concepts in the TOGAF and ArchiMate metamodel.

BPMN element	Possible TOGAF element
Activity	Process
Lane	Actor/Role
Participants (Pool)	Actor/Role
Gateways	None
Events	Event

Obtaining the elements

The forthcoming discussion fails to consider one aspect, which is how to obtain the process maps. In an ideal situation, an organization will have a formally defined process repository. However if this is the case, it is likely that the organization already has its business architecture documented!

Therefore in general there needs to be a discovery exercise to identify which projects have created process maps. The project documentation might be stored in places such as SharePoint, a corporate Wiki, on file shares... or, just as often, a combination of all of the above.

But before using the maps that you discover in this way, there's an important caveat to be aware of: how true is the information you are reading? Or, to put it another way: what has changed since the project went live? All too often, we see process maps that were accurate at the time of delivery 9 months previously, but are now out-of-date. It is therefore vital to validate the currency of legacy process maps.

Conclusions

In this paper we have considered some of the ways that architects can use process maps as a starting point for mapping the business architecture of an organization.

Considerations when doing this include how to derive the elements involved and to what level of granularity. Does a single event in an individual process map warrant being considered as an event in the business architecture? The architects must also decide how to obtain the process maps and how fresh the process maps are. Is this still how the process is executed today? Nevertheless, pre-existing process maps can still provide an invaluable starting point whether starting or completing the documentation of business architecture. flexibility and motivated the organization to start modeling its enterprise architecture.

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