Play the Innov8 game to learn business process management

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Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to learn the fundamentals of business process management (BPM). Play the strategic IBM® BPM-simulation game, Innov8, in which you focus entirely on BPM activities. Interact with other virtual employees, participating in their daily activities in the fictitious company, After, Inc. In the process, you learn all about BPM, discovering, collaborating on, and optimizing the company's business processes.

Overview

Thunder crashes. Lightning flashes. You enter After, Inc., a shadowy, futuristic-looking, gray and black office. A voice resonates:

"Pay careful attention to what I am about to say. Your background demonstrates a keen instinct for business process management, and it will be tested. Your mission is to investigate a critical process from the inside. Are you ready? Good. You will use business management software tooling acquired by the director of IT, Sam Archer. I will contact you with further instructions."

It's up to you to play now. Keep in mind that After, Inc. has some business performance issues, and Mike, the CEO, has recruited you to investigate, discover, and optimize the pain points in the business process. You, our hero, have been given the mandate by the CEO to find all documents and indices to help accomplish this mission. In addition to the CEO and you, the BPM expert, the other employees you work with at the company are (see Figure 1):

- Stavros, the business analyst.
- Sharon, vice president of sales.
- Sam, director of IT.
- Stella, the call center veteran.

Figure 1. The main characters
There are three types of BPM activities you discover during the game:

- Process discovery and process modeling
- Collaboration-driven simulation and iterative process improvement
- Real-time business management

**BPM concepts introduced by the game**

To help you understand this game, let's start by defining a few concepts related to business process modeling and business performance management:

- **Business modeling and simulation** helps you visualize processes and identify bottlenecks, disconnects, and inefficiencies. Simulation lets you create and test what-if scenarios before deployment to identify business impact. You define metrics, or key performance indicators (KPIs), that are used in the monitoring environment.
- **Collaboration** helps clients share responsibility for managing business processes to compete more effectively anywhere, at anytime. It also facilitates teamwork, throughput, and team creativity for changing rule processes and rules no matter what the geographic location of the participants.
- **Business activity monitoring (BAM)** is the ability to monitor process performance and detect events that may influence performance. Analyzing process efficiency and efficacy, and aligning process improvement with enterprise goals and objectives involves using software agents to listen for critical business events, correlating the event data and updating KPIs. When these are combined with KPI-designed dashboards, operational managers can visually monitor and, thus, better manage the progress of individual work items in real time. This approach enables managers to intercept work where appropriate and alter the work item or the process flow to improve the desired result.
- **Analysis and optimization** is the ability to continuously evaluate process execution and results, applying analytical insight, trending, and predictive, action-based suggestions to optimize the in-process model. Ultimately, the goal is feedback into the model for continuous improvement and optimization.

During the game, you can use a laptop to store working files, see your to-do list, access product documentation, and, of course, use the business process management software tools:

- **Business modeling tool** lets the people who know the business model the vital aspects of the process by using drag-and-drop functions (referred to as business modeler later in this article).
- **Business monitoring tool** is designed for managing and interacting with processes as they are executing by leveraging powerful analysis technology and real-time monitoring capabilities. (This tool is referred to as business monitor later in this article.)

**Process discovery and process modeling**

The CEO provided you the *business architecture heat map* to start with. This map is a component-based model of the enterprise, shown in Figure 2, in which the components selected as the initial focus for the business transformation are identified.
The rows represent the three types of management activity performed:

- **Direct activities** relate to defining policy, plans, goals, organization, and budgets, and assessing overall performance.
- **Control activities** involve allocating tasks and resources, authorizing, and making decisions, as well as overseeing and troubleshooting.
- **Execute activities** relate to administering, maintaining, and operating.

The columns in Figure 2 represent groups of related business activities that are obtained by partitioning the complete collection of functions. For example, business administration involves decisions and activities that enable and support all the other functions (such as, how the business supports and enables itself).

As a result of prioritizing the highlighted components in Figure 2, you have to select **Customer Service/Call center** as the primary component for transformation.

The next steps you need to complete in this activity are:

- Obtain the software modeling tool from Sam Archer in the IT department.
- Get from Stavros, the business analyst, the call center business process model.
- Find the call center veteran to model in the tool the selected business process.
- Get all the items to add metrics to this business process.

Indeed, the first step in business process modeling is to model the as-is business process. How does it operate today? Maybe your client is currently capturing process information via a desktop procedure, perhaps using Microsoft® Visio or PowerPoint slides. That's a first step (being able
to capture the process on paper), but you need more than just a picture. You need the ability to capture business metrics and data, business rules, volumes, and dependencies.

Figure 3 shows the modeling tool you use during the game:

**Figure 3. The business modeling tool**

![Business modeling tool](image)

This prepares you for step two: Analyze the as-is business process. During this step, you bring the model to life through simulation. Simulation lets you view the process in operation before you deploy it into production so you can optimize process cost, efficiency, and effectiveness. Simulation also lets you see if there are bottlenecks or queues building. It allows you to consider various options, or what-if scenarios, so you can make an informed decision based on best business practices. You might want to consider what if we simply hired more people versus a scenario where you use technology to automate routine steps.

After collecting all the data you need to simulate the business process, you discover the process bottleneck depicted in Figure 4.
By using the capabilities of a business modeler, you've demonstrated that After, Inc. has gained a deeper understanding of the processes the company already has in place and potential ways to improve them. Often, as existing processes are modeled and simulated, complex relationships and behaviors are exposed and evaluated.

**Collaboration-driven simulation and iterative process improvement**

During the second part of this game, you participate in a business meeting where you're involved in process enhancement. Around the table, the executive team represented in Figure 5 discusses highlighting resource issues, areas of high cost or low profitability, and portions of the process that merit examination for streamlining. From left to right you see:

- Ashok, the director of human resources.
- Liang, the director of customer service and call center operations.
- Thomas, the senior IT architect.
- Sharon, the vice president of sales.
- Mike, the After, Inc. CEO.

**Figure 5. The business executive team**

One of the more powerful capabilities of the business modeler is to include the financial attributes of the process model. This provides ways to examine the cost implications of a proposed change.
to the process. The model also can include revenue attributes, which enables the evaluation of profitability or even break-even analysis when examining the impact of a new version of a process.

After process enhancements are modeled by you, these changes can be simulated and validated in multiple what-if scenarios for comparison and analysis. These scenarios can vary the quantity and timing of the input, the available resources and costs, and the paths through the model.

When the new version of the process has evolved to a fairly complete stage, the business measurements can be established and added to the model. These elements can form the structure for measuring the business performance of the new process when it's deployed.

**Real-time business management**

This is the most interesting part of the game: monitoring the automated process.

*Monitor* can be an overused term, as it means different things to different people. But make no mistake about the use of *monitor* here; this is a line-of-business (LOB) monitor meant for LOB executives and managers to monitor the business process as opposed to having the IT staff view server usage and throughput.

One key feature of the business modeler is its ability to create the business criteria of interest for monitoring after deployment. The business modeler exports these business criteria, or business measures, in the form of a business measures model. This model is imported into the business monitor and used as the basis for the presentation of dashboard data to both business and operational viewers using a portal interface.

The dashboard you have to manipulate is represented in Figure 6.
Figure 6. The business monitor dashboard

Monitoring allows management to:

- See the work as it's being processed.
- Understand who has the work.
- Measure items that fall outside established business guidelines or key indicators.
- Take corrective action to correct problems by reassigning tasks and resources to get the process back on track.

A key advantage here is that you can alert LOB management before it's too late, so action can be taken to fix a problem. Through the monitor's operational dashboard, managers can see the work and start, stop, and transfer work items directly in flight.

The last step of this game consists in taking the corrective actions. The business environment is constantly changing (regulations change, competition changes, customer demand changes), but now your client can monitor, take corrective action on, and improve the business processes.

Try it now and get the best score (KPIs). You have to dynamically change the business rules and the human resources allocation, analyze the running process, and survey alerts to adapt to these new requirements. Good luck!

If you succeed in your mission, you'll be congratulated. If not, well, there are other options, as you can see in Figure 7.
Conclusion

Innov8 is an interactive, 3-D business simulator designed to teach the fundamentals of BPM. BPM enabled by SOA delivers continuous lifecycle improvement, driving innovation in the business process and business model. Capabilities from both the software and the expertise follow a logical lifecycle approach for modeling, optimizing, designing, deploying, and managing business processes.

BPM allows your organization to:

- Expose bottlenecks, resource issues, and other potential areas of improvement and latent value in your processes.
- Test proposed processes and study results before committing resources using simulation and analysis.
- Evaluate the financial impact of existing and proposed processes.
- Bridge the domain gap between business and technology for faster and more accurate communication.
- Reduce implementation time, making your business more agile.
- Establish a structured measurement regime for the business value of your processes.

The goals of business activity monitoring are to provide real-time information about the status and results of various operations, processes, and transactions. The main benefits of BAM are to:

- Enable your enterprise to make better informed business decisions.
- Quickly address problem areas.
- Reposition your organization to take full advantage of emerging opportunities.