

GREEN WITHOUT BPM?

How BPM Suites can make your business more green

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Introduction

It's difficult to flip through business and technology articles or reports today without encountering some mention on how to be a green business or a briefing on the latest innovations in green technologies and initiatives. Articles abound on how businesses are reinventing themselves as green businesses, letting go of wasteful practices and products, and embracing more efficient and green technologies. In addition, the government has seemingly committed in spending billions of dollars towards green initiatives, technologies and programs that will create green jobs.

It is surprising however that process automation through Business Process Management Suites has received very little mention in the media as it relates to green initiatives. This white paper will explain how, through adopting BPM, an organization can become more green. Not only is the amount of waste and inefficiencies that can be reduced through a BPM implementation significant, the companies adopting BPM indicate a significant cultural shift has occurred in their organization that is in tune with a green business' objectives.

Some Not Very Green Facts and Realities of Businesses Today

Large Paper Consumption

According to the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the average office worker in the United States consumes about 10,000 sheets (4 Million tons or 27 pounds per person) of paper each year. On average, that translates to about \$4 Billion per year. Although this number has been gradually dropping each year thanks to technology innovations and software platforms like BPMS, it is still a staggering number and very "un-green."

Error Prone Manual Processes

About 70-80% of workflow processes performed daily in businesses are human centric and manual. For those unfamiliar with the term human centric workflows, they refer to business processes that connect people together in a flow, and that typically require a person to move each step of the process forward. Expense Reports Approvals and Time-Off Request Tracking are two very popular human centric business processes that occur daily. Human centric processes tend to be manual, and that often translates to being error prone, requiring lots of paper, inefficiencies and wasted time – not very green.

For example, let's examine a manual paper based Purchase Order (PO) approval process: The process involves a person printing or copying a blank paper form to request an approval of a PO. Then they deliver the completed paper form to their manager for initial review. Upon approval, the manager ships the document to another office to obtain controller signoff. After the controller approves it, they make a copy and ship the document back to the manager, who then files the request and notifies the employee of the approval.

Not only is such a manual process paper intensive, at any point, human errors can occur and the attempts to correct them can further amplify paper consumption. The process is also prone to inefficiencies and time delays due to having to ship packages and keep copies for reference in two offices. The process also only works if each person involved knows what to do and when to do it, i.e. the manager knows to approve it and then to get finance approval etc. An employee unfamiliar with the process may skip a crucial step, resulting in having to start the process over from scratch, causing delays and additional paper use.

Multiple In-Person Meetings

Oftentimes business processes require employees to travel between offices to meet to collaborate on certain steps or to attend business meetings, especially in manual processes. For example, a typical project management process is manual and human centric. Many

project managers require update meetings to be held in person so that all stakeholders can participate and share project issues. For geographically dispersed teams, projects and companies, this often translates to fuel usage costs, transportation emissions, inefficient time spent travelling and so on. Needless to say, these directly contribute to a less than green environment.

Business Process Management (BPM) to the Rescue

What is BPM?

BPM is a disciplined approach to business process improvement that focuses on identifying, creating, executing, documenting and controlling internal processes with the goal of improving business efficiency and customer service. A BPM Suite is a set of computer based technologies that allows the business to achieve this goal. Typically these suites are platforms that enable the deployment and automation of many types of processes on a single integrated environment. This reduces the need for multiple applications to support various business function needs.

Let's review the manual PO process described earlier and observe how BPM can make it green.

BPM Eliminates Paper

Once a manual process has been automated using a BPMS, the paper trail is virtually eliminated in most cases. The paper form is converted into one or more web forms, which are filled out on a computer screen or handheld device. In addition, the trail of the documents is converted into a computerized process diagram that shows real time status of the document. The solution can be hosted and accessible from anywhere, enabling users to access the web form from any office and approve it. This eliminates the need to ship the document. In addition, BPM solutions typically include reporting. Thus, going back to the example PO process, reports on the process and its status are built in to the solution and approvals are handled electronically through digital signatures. This reduces the need to have various calls between offices to check

the status of the document, which desk it's sitting on, whether it is approved etc. Moreover BPM Suites can act as a document repository, where the users can access any document digitally in a short amount of time. Eliminating paper is a major advancement in attaining a company's green objectives.

BPM Eliminates Human Error

A BPM Suite notifies each user in a process according to the process flow diagram and only when they are needed to perform a task or activity. There is no possibility of human error since the entire process is orchestrated by the BPM platform. In the case of the PO process example discussed earlier, human error is virtually eliminated and a full audit trail is available at any time to report on the lifecycle of the PO. By eliminating inefficiencies and human error, companies can avoid reinventing the wheel and increase productivity, furthering their green objectives.

BPM Reduces Travel but Keeps Collaboration

Since all parties in a process are now collaborating online, the need for travel is greatly reduced, and even eliminated, in many processes. Users can review the documents online, make changes, track revisions, and even markup the documents and share the markups, all from their office or anywhere they have access to the Internet and browser. In the project management process example described earlier, the stakeholders would be able to check the project status information in real time and can follow up on issues through the BPM platform, minimizing the need for in person meetings. This results in considerable energy savings and cost reduction in travel, ensuring a more green organization.

Conclusion

The body of media coverage today on green technologies is missing a key enabling technology, Business Process Management (BPM) Suites, that this author believes should be in every organization's green technologies arsenal. Reduction in paper use, human error, process

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inefficiencies, and travel costs more than justify the need for every business to deploy a BPM Suite, if they wish to fully adopt a green culture.

About Interneer, Inc.

Headquartered in Los Angeles, CA, Interneer is a leader in human-centric Business Process Management (BPM) solutions. For over 10 years, Interneer has provided companies of various sizes, the simplest and quickest way to automate their human-centric business processes and workflows with the Interneer Intellect Platform. Interneer Intellect is a browser-based integrated suite of products comprising all components required for a comprehensive Business Process Management solution. The Interneer Intellect Platform is uniquely suited to transform business processes and workflow in far less time with less expense. No need for additional tools, software and integration. Interneer Intellect's integrated environment is a "One Environment Fits All" solution and does not require users to purchase, install, maintain, and learn multiple disparate systems. The intuitive user interface portal makes it easy for business, IT, analysts and end users to collaborate, execute and improve business processes, all without programming.

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