



Extend BPMN to Suit Big Business Objectives

Standard, schmandard. You can declare anything you'd like a "standard", but unless people actually use it, calling it a "standard" puts it into its own category – look under "L" for "Lame". Standards find adoption success by following a tried and true mix of usefulness (complementing and enhancing existing technology), appeal (gotta want to use it or you won't), and popularity (stay with me here and block out your flashbacks to high school). Fortunately for us, it is with this in mind that the authors of BPMN had the foresight to include the ability to "extend" the standard which would allow additional information to be included for appropriate purposes. This would allow vendors to fill the gaps that were left by the initial versions of the standard.

For those unfamiliar with BPMN, it is a diagram notation and modeling standard whose primary initial purpose was to communicate process knowledge between the Process experts and the Application Developers who have the responsibility to automate the process. You can easily see how successful a standard it has become based on vendor adoption and customer usage. But just like any other successful standard, it has its limitations and gaps. One of the identified gaps is the fact that since the initial goal was this interchange between Process folks and IT folks, it doesn't include sufficient concepts to lend itself easily to higher levels of "business" modeling (more on this later).

That said, the goal of the BPMN standards group is to continue to fill those gaps to allow for maximum fidelity of model interchange between vendors and they are tirelessly putting forth efforts to enhance the standard in this regard. They've got the wherewithal to recognize that without those efforts there is a big danger that this extended information will not be generally available unless vendors that consume it actually know that it is there to recognize. Therefore the concept of standard "Model Interchange" is of significant importance to the BPMN standards team.

But given the timeframe and coordination it takes for these standardization efforts, it is comforting for vendors to know they can make use of the existing extension capabilities of BPMN for very specific needs. An example of this type of extension is the additional Data Object types and Task Types used in the LEAD Reference Framework* to allow users to model the multiple layers of an enterprise.

Case in point - in addition to the standard "Data Modeling" provided by the "out of the box" Data Objects included in BPMN 2.0, LEAD adds "Information Modeling" objects and "Business Modeling" objects. This allows both the Information and Business modeler to use the same BPMN diagramming standard which provides a higher level of visual communication (and therefore assimilation) to the consumer of these models.

On top of these extensions, the LEAD Reference Framework defines additional Task Types which helps with Activity definition in order to mirror a wider range of real world system and human interactions (pretty useful – heck, pretty epic). The impact of this extension is huge when you think of business interaction that would never be automated can be easily captured and communicated. Once captured, it becomes available for things like Impact and Risk analysis as well as a host of other report outcomes.

No one wants to get left behind. The combination of extensions like these along with a comprehensive Enterprise Modeling methodology is what makes the LEAD Reference Framework one of the world's leading methodologies for businesses to both innovate and transform their organization to better compete and become unique within their own market space.

It seems like a no-brainer for us at iGrafx to provide these BPMN extensions in order to support customers who wish to use the LEAD Framework in their efforts to strive for bigger-yet-attainable business objectives... so we did.

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* iGrafx includes extended modeling icons and diagram objects and enables specific object relationships in support of and based on the LEAD Framework. All rights are reserved by LEADing Practice ApS.