

# Fast Track to Business Process Orientation

White Paper by Dr Ilia Bider of IbisSoft ([www.ibissoft.se](http://www.ibissoft.se))

**Abstract.** In our market-driven society, there are a number of attractive ideas like CRM, “business process”, “enterprise system”, “real-time company”, that everybody considered as good to have but very few know what they really mean and, what is more important, what one can get from them. As implementation of these ideas requires considerable investment in money, and especially in time, their exploitation often does not go beyond preliminary investigation. Those that tried to implement the ideas are often disappointed by results achieved in correlation to investment made, and they might even feel “cheated”. Is it possible to achieve some understanding of the “attractive ideas” and make some use of them before making considerable investment? In pursuing an answer to this question, we have designed a “fast track to business process orientation” that allows you to get an answer to the questions “is it something for me?” and “what can I get from it?” with very little investment. Some hints about the concept of “fast track” are given in the text below.

## Motivation

Business process orientation is considered to be an effective tool for the companies and organizations to survive and grow in the fast changing world. Completing this task is a lengthy process that starts with process identification and goes through process mapping, reengineering, introduction of business process control and management and changing the organizational structure. Many managers consider process-orientation as a risky project because of its length and lack of possibility to evaluate the results before the project has been finished. The question arises whether there is a shortcut that allows to get a feeling of what business process orientation is, and at the same time get visible positive results of its introduction. If this shortcut can be found, a lot of people, managers, as well as workers, could understand advantages of process-orientation, which will make it easier to start a full-fledged project.

## Where to start

To find a shortcut of the type we need means to choose an area where:

- the advantages of process-orientation is visible to all people involved in certain kind of activities
- there is a possibility to introduce process-orientation in the area without too big investment in terms of money and work time.

Actually, such area exists and it concerns internal communication between colleagues working in the same organization.

During a usual working day, people working for non-manufacturing sector (sales, administration, etc) of a company or organization spend a lot of time communicating with each other. The professional part of such communication can be roughly divided into two parts: essential or value adding communication, and routine (non-value adding) communication. Essential communication is aimed at producing new value

(information), like in problem solving discussions, brainstorming, strategic planning. Routine communication is aimed at transferring information on current state of affairs, searching information on past experience, and assigning to each other various tasks, formally as well as informally (e.g., please, “have a look on my report”).

Essential communication is, normally, perceived positively by both people engaged in the communication and management. The first group is satisfied with their engagement in important tasks, the second group has understanding that the whole business is dependent on the results of such communication. The routine communication is not perceived positively by either of the groups. For example, who could be interested in giving the same briefing each time a new person is attached to the same task, or to make telephone calls or send letters just to inform about the time of the next meeting? As far as management is concerned, routine communication consumes time that can be used for more important tasks.

Considerable reduction of time spent for routine communication, if it can be obtained, will constitute a visible and positive result for all staff engaged in non-manufacturing (administrative) activities.

It may seem that the obvious solution to make the routine communication more effective in the electronic epoch is to use electronic means instead of papers, email being the most straightforward alternative for this end. However, business practice shows that switching from paper to electronic channels does not solve all problems of routine communication. For example, mailboxes can be easily clogged by a lot of messages with huge attachments that are supposed to inform on the current state of some task and/or its history.

### **How to proceed**

The more radical solution for reducing the routine communication is to try to “eliminate” it altogether. Consider, for example, a task of preparing a meeting. It consists of two parts. First, we need to decide what is the topic (agenda), who is to participate, what material should be prepared before the meeting, and by whom, etc. The second part is to communicate the information on the meeting to all concerned: what is the meeting for, who should participate, who should prepare the materials, who should read them, etc. What is worth, as time passes, changes are made in any of the issues listed above (participants, documents, time of the meeting) etc., which will require a new round of communication each time there are changes.

Suppose we can change the meeting handling in such a way that only the decision part of preparation is required (who, why, what documents, etc.). The second part is done automatically by giving full access for all concerned to your decisions say through a telepathic means. Then we will certainly achieve significant reduction of time spent for routine communication, and at the same time we will liberate the workers from (at least part of) boring routine job.

### **What is needed**

Telepathic means are not readily available for the moment, but the same effect can be achieved by using a process-oriented way of working supported by a proper computer system. IbisSoft, based on its own research, has developed a special state-oriented approach to business process orientation that can solve the problems of routine

communication. In cooperation with our partners and customers, we have also developed an “enterprise” computer system that serves as transparent means of routine communication almost with the same efficiency as telepathy.

The system, called ProBis, facilitates the workers to concentrate on the decision making part of their job while automatically giving access for all concerned to the current and background information on the tasks in which they are supposed to participate. The approach and the system (after appropriate tuning) can be used for various business/administrative processes.

We have developed also a special module in *ProBis*, called *iTeam* that supports “telepathic” communication for any administrating process (meeting, decision-making, reviewing or writing documents, etc.). This is a low-cost alternative that can be used to get the feeling of what business-process orientation is and what one can get from it. The system provides:

- Friendly, pleasant and efficient means of routine communication *for everybody*.
- In addition, *for middle management* it provides operative information on the state of affairs (and history) in all activities under his/her control, and on distribution of resources between these activities (who is overloaded, and who has nothing to do). The information can be used for operative planning, resource redistribution, conflict solving etc.
- In addition, *for high management* it provides reliable information for statistical analysis, which can help in strategic planning/decision making.

The introduction of *iTeam* does not require any significant investment, and it can be used almost at once after installation.

### **Where it ends**

After getting some feeling of what process-orientation is, you can proceed with detailed analysis of all your business processes, and one-by-one implementation of them via *ProBis*. The ultimate goal here is to make you company or organization mobile or “real-time” (another “attractive idea”). Under mobile we do not mean an organization where all workers talk to each other via mobile phones, but an organization that in timely fashion reacts on the changes in its environment and can reformulate its objective, strategy and tactics accordingly. And what is more important, it also has possibility and means to translate the changed objectives, and strategic and tactical goals into every-day operative work.

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For more information on *iTeam*, and our other products and services, please contact IbisSoft at [info@ibissoft.se](mailto:info@ibissoft.se).

**Short information about the company:** IbisSoft ([www.ibissoft.se](http://www.ibissoft.se)) is a consulting company based in Stockholm, Sweden. It specializes in the borderland between Management and IT, the main focus being on organization of operative work in non-manufacturing business processes.

**Short bio of the author:** Dr. Ilia Bider ([ilia@ibissoft.se](mailto:ilia@ibissoft.se)) is a cofounder and Director



R&D of IbisSoft. He has MS in Electronic Engineering and PhD in Computer and System Sciences, and combined experience of 30 years of research (in the fields of business modeling, computational linguistics, databases), and practical work (business analysis, and software design, coding, sales, and marketing) in five countries (Norway, Russia, Sweden, United Kingdom, and United States). Dr. Bider has published over 25 research papers as well as a number of articles for practitioners. His main specialty is finding research topics in his business practice, and testing research results in the

business practice. Dr. Bider is an inventor of the state-oriented approach to business process modeling that is based on the application of the conceptual ideas of the Mathematical system theory to the realm of business processes. This approach has been successfully tested in business analysis and application development practice of IbisSoft and its partners. Dr. Bider puts a lot of effort in bridging the gap between the academics and practitioners. He co-founded a series of international workshops on business process modeling where both academics and practitioners meet for fruitful discussions. He holds tutorials at international conferences to highlight the needs of practitioners for academic public. He sits on the editorial board of the Business Process Management Journal as a representative for practitioners.