

Procession TOA vs BPEL4People

The BPEL4People white paper authored by IBM and SAP set out to address the issue that Web Services Business Process Execution Language (WS-BPEL or BPEL) does not cover human user interactions in business processes. The paper focuses on concepts and scenarios where users are involved in business processes.

Procession's Task Orientated Application "TOA" Environment was developed with human interactive business processes at its core. This summary aims to describe how Procession handles the various scenarios described by the BPEL4People white paper and brings reality to what is conceptualised by IBM and SAP.

BPEL4People

- 1 People can be involved in business processes as a special kind of implementation of an activity that is recognised as a task assigned to a user.
- 2 It is desirable to define which people are eligible to start a certain business process.
- 3 During the lifetime of a long-running business process, conditions that require human involvement can occur.
- 4 It is desirable to have a business administrator associated with the process, who can decide what corrective action is necessary.
- 5 In addition to the requirement to support the execution of human tasks, the transition between human and automatic services (and vice versa), must be non-disruptive.
- 6 The 4-eyes principle often referred to as "separation of duties" is a common scenario thus being able to exclude users from performing an activity needs to be supported by BPEL4People.
- 7 Tasks represent work to be performed by humans thus in reality an escalation mechanism is required.
- 8 Sometimes it is not clear who should perform the task in hand and a there is a requirement to allow assignment of tasks.
- 9 Chained execution is a process fragment where a sequence of steps is executed by the same person. This is sometimes known in advance, but can sometimes only be determined during execution.

Procession TOA

- 1 Procession acknowledges at the core of any business lies People interacting with their daily tasks that make the business a reality.
- 2 Within Procession, there is a Process tray that has an entry for each business process that the current user is eligible to start.
- 3 In any business environment human interaction will need to reflect reality.
- 4 In Procession, there is the facility to create an organisational hierarchy so that each performer within the system has a manager associated with them. This enables any escalation tasks or notifications to be sent to the appropriate manager.
- 5 Within the Procession system, the process flow between human tasks and automatic tasks is integrated by default, so any transition between the two task types is seamless.
- 6 Each human task within Procession has a role associated with it. This role determines which users are allowed to perform and complete this task. This enables the exclusion of unauthorised users from performing actions upon the task in question.
- 7 Escalations are handled in Procession by utilising deadline links. Deadline links are used to automatically initiate an escalation process if a task is not completed within a set timeframe.
- 8 If a user is taken ill or becomes overloaded with work, then a process manager has the ability to re-assign any task to an appropriate colleague.
- 9 When a sequence of tasks is performed by the same user, within Procession, each task has the option to be automatically executed on completion of the prior one as controlled by the process design.

Summary

Procession builds Task-Orientated Applications "TOA" by linking human and system automated tasks together to form a process. This TOA approach embraces simple business logic and contrasts with the "system" starting point in the vision IBM and SAP have for BPEL4People In conclusion, the scenarios and concepts described in the BPEL4People white paper have already been implemented and advanced in Procession's Task-Orientated Application "TOA" Environment by adopting a new approach and standard – something rejected in the white paper in favour of building an extension to BPEL to do something it was never designed to undertake?

** Read the entire BPEL4People white paper at <http://www-128.ibm.com/developerworks/webservices/library/specification/ws-bpel4people/>