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Special Update

Partners Deliver on Microsoft's Jupiter Vision

Integration & Development Strategies

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On March 2, 2004, Ultimus announced that its BPM Suite now supports Microsoft's BizTalk Server 2004, the "Jupiter" release. Microsoft's retraction of its Jupiter deliverables for an integrated suite of server technologies to automate and manage end-to-end business processes — including all human and systems-based activities, as well as the data required to perform the tasks — does not invalidate the vision.

Amid growing awareness and interest among certain buyers for business process management, Microsoft's change in strategy has opened the window for Ultimus (and other partners) to complement BizTalk 2004 with a business user-oriented design framework that addresses business process automation efforts. These include complex human workflow and EAI/B2B capabilities.

The Ultimus .Net-based BPM Suite leverages BizTalk 2004's strong EAI/B2B capabilities and extends its new human workflow service (HWS) APIs with strong features for modeling, optimizing, and automating complex business processes that have more demanding requirements for human-to-human workflow management and business process management. Typically, complex business processes are multiparty, have multiple steps, exhibit non-sequential and contingency-based flow patterns, and depend on original documents for reference during the processing sequence.

Microsoft's HWS APIs, though appropriate for more casual human interactions with predominantly system-to-system processes, are insufficient to meet the demanding requirements of complex human processes. Industries where critical operational processes continue to be human- and paper-centric (such as insurance, government, financial services, and pharmaceuticals) often have business processes with these characteristics.

Bottom Line

When making business process management (BPM) technology decisions, organizations need to have a good understanding of their process requirements. If they are more human- and paper-centric, they should consider a product like Ultimus that extends the HWS APIs of BizTalk 2004. If they are more EAI-driven, then BizTalk 2004 alone may be appropriate. When the process requires a mix of both, organizations should combine the two for complete coverage of the process spectrum in a service-oriented architecture model.

Business Impact: To fully leverage emerging BPM technology, organizations must devote as much attention to optimizing people and paper-oriented activities as they do to systems tasks.