



Vendor Insight

IBM discovers BPM mojo with Business Process Manager

Neil Ward-Dutton

Premium Advisory Report
April 2010

In April 2011, IBM formally launched a new family of BPM suite offerings for organisations pursuing BPM initiatives: *Business Process Manager*. *Business Process Manager* combines features and capabilities from two existing BPM suite offerings in the BPM space from IBM: *WebSphere Lombardi Edition* and *WebSphere Process Server*.

At first glance, *Business Process Manager* might look like a simple updating and blending of two overlapping toolsets. However when you look deeper, the release of *Business Process Manager* marks a significant departure for IBM, and warrants a thorough reappraisal of IBM's competitive position.

This premium report is published as part of one of MWD's advisory services. You can find out more about these services at <http://services.mwdadvisors.com>. The report can also be purchased individually for internal use only via sales@mwdadvisors.com. Reprint rights are also available for purchase.

Review this research in context

For further insight around the best practices highlighted in this research and to discuss this in the context of your own organisation, you can schedule a private advisory session with our expert analysts by emailing clientservices@mwdadvisors.com or call on +44 (0)20 8099 4301.

MWD Advisors is a specialist IT advisory firm which provides practical, independent industry insights that show how leaders create tangible business improvements from IT investments. We use our significant industry experience, acknowledged expertise, and a flexible approach to advise businesses on IT architecture, integration, management, organisation and culture.

www.mwdadvisors.com

© MWD Advisors 2011

Summary

Business Process Manager: a marriage of Lombardi and WebSphere technologies

Business Process Manager 7.5 repeats, at a high level, the formula that IBM followed in delivering *Blueworks Live*, but it does so for the on-premise BPM tools and platforms that have until now been present separately in *WebSphere* and Lombardi offerings. In other words, the overall feature-set and user experience of *Business Process Manager* is primarily influenced by Lombardi's historical approach.

Business Process Manager represents a leap forward for IBM

For the last few years, although it's too much to say IBM has been swimming against the tide of BPM technology development, the company has certainly struggled to break away from its historical roots in delivering a BPM technology offering – the offering overall was primarily skewed towards the needs of software developers and architects.

With the release of *Business Process Manager*, IBM can break away from its past. It's now a serious provider of well-rounded, deep BPM technology offerings. *Business Process Manager* demonstrates a vital clarity of purpose in IBM for its customers and prospects, and should give those companies improved confidence that IBM has its story straight. What's more, the promotion of former Lombardi technologies and design approaches to be front and centre in shaping the new *Business Process Manager* offering makes *Business Process Manager* stand out in terms of ease-of use.

Business Process Manager clarifies the roles of IBM's existing BPM technologies and provides a sensible roadmap

IBM used to pitch *WebSphere Lombardi Edition* and *WebSphere Process Server/Integration Designer* as offering equivalent functionality, but for different kinds of process improvement scenario. Now with *Business Process Manager*, which integrates the two offerings, the roles of the technologies are much more clearly defined. *Process Designer* is where you model and develop business-facing functionality that supports long-lived business processes; you use *Integration Designer* to specify processes that are primarily concerned with orchestration of services and back-end systems. Both design and development environments are now integrated through a common and highly capable asset repository, and share a common runtime and management platform.

IBM now has a potential entry point into the wider market with Express Edition

The delivery of a low-cost entry-level 'Express edition' of *Business Process Manager* gives IBM an opportunity to compete effectively for opportunities within small-to-medium organisations, within small departments of larger companies, and in emerging/growth markets.

Often, these projects are delivered with Microsoft *SharePoint* being the foundation of the application environment. *Business Process Manager's* ability to deliver process participant and administration functionality through *SharePoint* is significant here.

The dust settles: IBM's BPM technology direction is finally clear

A history of addition, multiplication – and market confusion

As a provider of workflow and application integration technology since the 1990s, IBM has a long track record that stretches back into the prehistory of BPM technology. It was the launch of *WebSphere Process Server* (as an evolution of the *WebSphere Business Integration Server*) back in 2006, however, that saw IBM explicitly start to address the market for BPM technology tools.

Initially *WebSphere Process Server* – along with its sibling development tool *WebSphere Integration Developer* – was squarely positioned as providing an orchestration facility for SOA implementations. Over time, though, by more closely associating *Process Server* and *Integration Developer* with *WebSphere Business Modeler* and *WebSphere Business Monitor*, IBM started to position its *WebSphere* stack as a full BPM suite to rival those of the specialist vendors that were starting to gather real momentum in industry.

The acquisition of FileNet in 2006 set the stage for more muddying of the water. IBM bundled FileNet's mature BPM toolset together with its *WebSphere* toolset into an overall 'BPM Suite' in 2008. The *WebSphere* tools were positioned as being most suitable for scenarios where application integration and 'straight through processing' were the principal concerns; FileNet was positioned as suitable for scenarios where document handling and approvals were the central issue. By this time IBM's competitors were already taking advantage of the perceived complexity of IBM's BPM technology offering in competitive sales situations. But it was when they acquired Lombardi in 2009 that IBM's BPM technology story started to get unsustainably complicated.

Lombardi Software was a fast-growing specialist BPM technology provider, focused on providing simple-to-use, flexible technology that delivered industry-leading capabilities. Moreover, it was a company whose Chairman was outspoken in his criticism of IBM's BPM technology offering and marketing: Lombardi positioned itself as being almost the "anti-IBM". Then, following Lombardi's acquisition by IBM, Lombardi's *Teamworks* was initially pitched by IBM as an offering for departmental BPM projects, whereas the *WebSphere* BPM technology offering was pitched as addressing 'end to end' business process transformations.

Given IBM's prior bullishness as a provider of BPM technology, the nature of Lombardi's offering, and the way it was now positioning the two offerings to customers, we found many things about this acquisition difficult to reconcile. In short, it initially appeared that either IBM was implicitly admitting that its existing BPM technology strategy and offering was failing, or that IBM completely misunderstood the power of Lombardi's strategy and offering.

Blueworks Live: showing the way forward

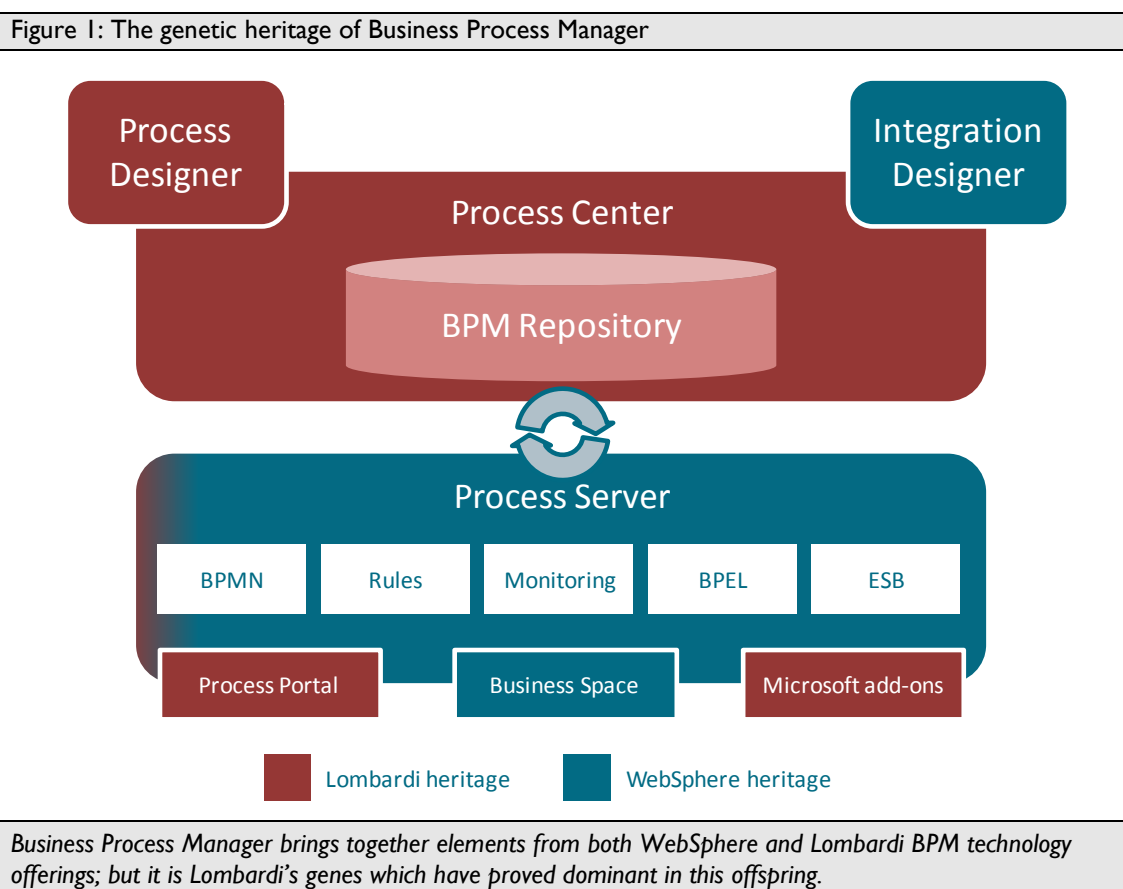
However with the launch of *Blueworks Live* in November 2010, the first signpost pointing towards a clearer and simpler future for IBM and its customers became visible. *Blueworks Live* brought together features from IBM's beta-stage hosted *BPM Blueworks* community and tool platform, and Lombardi's own successful SaaS offering, *Blueprint*. Crucially, as we highlighted in our report *IBM breaks new ground with Blueworks Live*¹, *Blueworks Live* in fact owes most of its heritage to *Blueprint* rather than to *BPM Blueworks*. Furthermore, the *Blueprint* heritage wasn't only made plain in the functional capabilities of *Blueworks Live*; it was also visible from the look-and-feel and focus of the resulting platform. *Blueworks Live* very much reflects the historical philosophy of Lombardi which was always about enabling IT and business teams within customer organisations to come together to solve process problems.

¹ <http://www.mwdadvisors.com/library/detail.php?id=325>

Business Process Manager: repeating the Blueworks Live formula

Business Process Manager 7.5 – launched in April 2011 – repeats, at a high level, the formula that IBM followed in delivering *Blueworks Live*. But it does so for the on-premise BPM tools and platforms that have until now been present separately in *WebSphere* and *Lombardi* offerings. In other words: *Business Process Manager 7.5* represents the combination of *Lombardi*’s and *WebSphere*’s on-premise BPM tools and platforms, with the overall feature-set and user experience of the combined offering being primarily influenced by *Lombardi*’s historical approach.

The *WebSphere* heritage capabilities are still there, but they play a component role in the birth of an offering where the *Lombardi* genes are definitely more dominant. Figure 1, adapted from IBM’s ‘marketecture’ for *Business Process Manager*, shows the primary heritage of each of the components of the offering. The vast majority of the offering’s components come either from *WebSphere Lombardi Edition*, *WebSphere Process Server* or *WebSphere Integration Developer*.



It’s worth noting that it’s not only in products that *Lombardi*’s genes are proving strong: IBM’s BPM organisation within the Software Group is also now strongly influenced by former *Lombardi* executives. Phil Gilbert, formerly *Lombardi*’s President and CTO, is now the Vice President within the BPM organisation with overall business responsibility, and many of *Lombardi*’s senior product marketing, management and development people now hold key roles within IBM.

Inside Business Process Manager

As you can see from figure 1, *Business Process Manager* blends the existing capabilities of *WebSphere Lombardi Edition* with *WebSphere Process Server* and *WebSphere Integration Developer*.

IBM's high level promise to customers is this: whether you're a 'WebSphere centric' customer with a heritage in using *Process Server* and *Integration Developer*, a 'Lombardi centric' customer with a heritage in using *WebSphere Lombardi Edition*, or a new customer coming to IBM for the first time for BPM technology, *Business Process Manager* should make it easy for you to get things done.

Key to fulfilling this promise and making *Business Process Manager* a success is that it needs to help existing customers to broaden their use of IBM technology, while at the same time not forcing customers to learn new skills or manage complicated technology upgrade paths. IBM's approach with *Business Process Manager* is to leave the existing design tools that customers are familiar with largely untouched, and instead focus on creating one integrated BPM asset repository, working hand-in-hand with one integrated runtime and management platform.

Process Center: a common repository

As figure 1 indicates, *Process Center* was formerly a core component of *WebSphere Lombardi Edition* (and before that, *Lombardi Teamworks 7*). *Process Center* is an easy-to-use asset repository that provides the following capabilities:

- Multi-user 'workspaces' that provide containers for all assets related to one project.
- Simple asset versioning through the creation of workspace 'snapshots', with the ability to quickly compare versions of models using roll back and 'roll forward' features.
- Support for asset reuse through the ability to quickly package assets into 'configurations'.
- Strong change impact analysis.
- Sophisticated tools for application deployment and runtime process versioning.
- A centralised download facility for the design tools *Process Designer* and *Integration Designer*.

Application deployment from *Process Center* is a streamlined set of tasks: the full *Business Process Manager* runtime, together with appropriate process application components can be deployed and configured with a handful of mouse clicks. For anyone familiar with IBM's technology, this is a very significant ease-of-management improvement.

Process Center has always been easy to access from within *Process Designer*; in *Business Process Manager*, all its asset management, change management and versioning capabilities are also easily accessible from within *Integration Designer*, too. *Process Center* can now manage *Integration Designer* assets in just the same way as it manages *Process Designer* assets.

Process Server: a common runtime, management platform

As well as integrating asset and change management capabilities for *Business Process Manager* in *Process Center*, IBM has pulled together the runtime capabilities of the former *WebSphere Lombardi Edition Process Server* and the *WebSphere Process Server* into one integrated runtime environment, also called *Process Server*.

The result can act as a container for BPMN models (a capability brought forward from Lombardi's runtime), BPEL flows (a capability from *WebSphere Process Server*), and Enterprise Service Bus (ESB) functionality (again, from *WebSphere Process Server*). It can also act as a container for business rules, which, as highlighted above, are implemented using an embedded version of ILOG's JRules runtime.

This isn't just 'PowerPoint-level' integration: in a simple single-server deployment environment, all runtime engine components are deployed by default onto the same Java Virtual Machine instance. Whether the deployment environment is single-server or distributed, the runtime containers are all managed from the same administration console. Where process applications contain some elements that need to be deployed to the BPMN engine and others that need deployment to the BPEL engine, *Process Center* packages all elements together and deploys them in one operation.

When it comes to process monitoring and optimisation, IBM has chosen to promote the former Lombardi technology, *Process Portal*, as the primary tool within *Business Process Manager* at the expense of *WebSphere Business Monitor*. The strong monitoring and optimisation capabilities of the former *Process Portal* are retained; the *Process Data Warehouse* that forms the source for the monitoring and optimisation tools is now populated not only by the BPMN runtime engine, but also the BPEL engine and ESB components. The *Process Portal's* user interface remains as one administration interface option for those that want it; IBM, however, positions its *Business Space* user interface framework (previously deployed as the default container for *WebSphere BPM* user interface elements) as the primary tool you should use. All the former *Lombardi Process Portal* administration, monitoring, work management and optimisation features are available within *Business Process Manager* as *Business Space* widgets.

Although *WebSphere Business Monitor* isn't a core part of *Business Process Manager*, it doesn't go away; but IBM now positions it more as a general-purpose business performance monitoring and analytics environment, for use where you want to combine observations from a process platform with other sources (such as event processing environments, packaged applications, and so on).

Design tools: continuity for customers – but clearer and complementary roles

As figure 1 shows, the BPMN-centric *Process Designer* which previously sat at the heart of *WebSphere Lombardi Edition* and the BPEL-centric *Integration Designer* that was the design environment for *WebSphere Process Server* both continue to play the core design roles in *Business Process Manager*.

Crucially, though, whereas these two environments used to be positioned as offering equivalent functionality but aimed at different kinds of process improvement scenario, with *Business Process Manager* the two design environments take on much clearer roles – roles that in fact reflect their names much more clearly. *Process Designer* is promoted as being the tool you use to model and develop functionality that supports long-lived business processes; you use *Integration Designer* to specify processes that are primarily concerned with orchestration of services and back-end systems. In an ideal world, IBM hopes customers will wrap *Integration Designer* process flows as reusable services that are then referenced from within 'higher-level' business process models. The aim is for customers to use both toolsets: *Process Designer* definitions will delegate technical integration and orchestration work to *Integration Designer* definitions, with *Process Designer* being used by business-facing design teams, and *Integration Designer* being used by IT development teams.

Although the core capabilities of these tools have been left untouched to a significant extent, there are some important changes to the design environments in *Business Process Manager*, some of which relate to the above product integration efforts and others being functional enhancements:

- **Integration with Process Center.** Of course in *WebSphere Lombardi Edition*, *Process Center* was already seamlessly integrated with *Process Designer* – and this continues. Now, though, *Integration Designer* has a seamless link to *Process Center* too, making *Process Center* the default place for storage and management of models you create in *Integration Designer*. When working within *Integration Designer* you can easily browse the *Process Center* repository, add definitions, manage asset versions and package assets into reusable 'configurations'.
- **Collaborative editing.** In *Business Process Manager 7.5*, the new version of *Process Designer* takes on the collaborative editing capability that's previously been a core element of *Blueprint* and *Blueworks Live*.

- **Integration of process models.** With *Process Center* now available as an integrated facility within both *Process Designer* and *Integration Designer*, it's now simple to specify *Integration Designer* flows which make use of *Process Designer*-modeled elements (such as forms, for example), as well as to specify *Process Designer* models which invoke *Integration Designer* flows.
- **Specification of rules.** In *Business Process Manager 7.5*, IBM has introduced a new implementation type for business rules which uses ILOG's BAL syntax (and is executed at runtime using an embedded version of ILOG's JRules engine, hosted on the *Process Server*). Existing rules specified in script in older versions of *Process Designer* and *Integration Designer* are still supported, but IBM is encouraging customers to use the new rules implementation as their preferred option going forward. Rules, like other model asset types, are stored, managed, packaged and reused through *Process Center*.

Customers of the *WebSphere BPM* toolset keen to continue using *WebSphere Business Modeler* as the 'front end' to *Integration Designer* are able to continue doing so; however, going forward IBM will encourage them to start using *Process Designer*. When it comes to process simulation, customers can continue to use simulation capabilities within *WebSphere Business Modeler*; but as above, IBM is encouraging customers to use the (more advanced, based on our assessment) simulation capabilities offered within *Process Designer*.

Three editions

At launch, IBM is making *Business Process Manager* available in three 'editions', much in the same way as it has historically done with middleware products like the *WebSphere Application Server*. Here, the different editions represent different blends of the former Lombardi former *WebSphere BPM* technologies, as well as different price points:

- **Standard Edition.** This edition is an updated, rebranded version of *WebSphere Lombardi Edition* (formerly known as *Lombardi Teamworks*) that's preconfigured for integrated deployment with the *WebSphere Application Server* and *DB2*. It combines *Process Designer* (for design and development), *Process Center* (for asset management, versioning and change management), elements of *Process Server* (apart from the BPEL and ESB runtime elements), *Process Portal* and *Business Space*.
- **Express Edition.** This edition is a scale-restricted version of the Standard Edition. Features used in larger deployments (clustering, failover and so on) are not available, but all the key functionality and tools found in the Starter Edition are included. At a price of under \$100k that gets you production server licensing for up to four CPU cores, *Process Center* (repository) server licensing for up to two CPU cores, three designer licenses and up to 200 users, pricing here is designed to appeal to medium-sized organisations or groups just starting with BPM initiatives on a small scale.
- **Advanced Edition.** This edition combines capabilities of *WebSphere Lombardi Edition* with the capabilities of *WebSphere Process Server* and *Integration Developer*, and packages together all the tools and capabilities shown in Figure 1. It's aimed at organisations with significant BPM investment and deployment programmes in play that have sophisticated integration requirements.

Migrating to Business Process Manager from other IBM BPM platforms

IBM has developed the *Business Process Manager* offering so that customers with existing investments in *WebSphere Lombardi Edition* and/or *WebSphere Process Server/Integration Developer* will be able to bring all their models and other specifications forward with no changes.

WebSphere Lombardi Edition customers have two upgrade options:

- They can upgrade to *Business Process Manager Standard Edition*, which falls within the scope of an existing maintenance contract – no extra investment is required.
- They can upgrade to *Business Process Manager Advanced Edition*, in which case a one-off upgrade fee will be payable. All existing models and specifications will continue to work; customers will then also be able to access and use *Integration Designer* and the BPEL and ESB components of the runtime platform.

WebSphere Process Server/Integration Designer customers have only one option, however, and that's to upgrade to *Business Process Manager Advanced Edition*.

With Business Process Manager, IBM can “walk the talk”

At first glance it might appear that the release of *Business Process Manager* simply represents the combination of functionality from two product lines. However when you look at the bigger picture of the competitive landscape and IBM’s overall strategy, there are many other important angles to consider.

For customers: clarity of purpose, advanced technologies

For the last few years, although it’s too much to say IBM has been swimming against the tide of BPM technology development, the company has certainly struggled to break away from its historical roots in delivering a BPM technology offering – the offering overall was primarily skewed towards the needs of software developers and architects. It’s supported BPM ‘on the ground’ primarily from the perspective of service orchestration and integration, while promoting its technology to the market as being more general-purpose. Initially the acquisitions of FileNet and Lombardi did nothing to quell uncertainty amongst enterprises regarding IBM’s direction. At the same time, key rivals TIBCO and Oracle have delivered significant new technology releases that give customers and prospects clear indications of their intent and direction as serious BPM players.

The release of *Business Process Manager* finally allows IBM to stand shoulder-to-shoulder against its key competitors as a serious provider of well-rounded, deep BPM technology offerings. *Business Process Manager* demonstrates a vital clarity of purpose in IBM for its customers and prospects, and should give those companies improved confidence that IBM has its story straight. What’s more, the promotion of former Lombardi technologies and design approaches to be front and centre in shaping the new *Business Process Manager* offering makes it stand out in terms of ease-of use.

As well as demonstrating that IBM now has a clear and sensible BPM technology strategy, the release of *Business Process Manager* also demonstrates that it has the technology approach and organisational momentum to pull it off. The combination of technology capabilities within *Business Process Manager* places the leading BPM features of Lombardi’s technology front and centre in the offering, and should give customers and prospects heart that IBM recognises what’s important in terms of technology to enable BPM success.

For customers: scaling success

Another encouraging element of the *Business Process Manager* release is the way that the *Process Center* component – which started to become prominent in the *Teamworks 7* release in 2009 – plays a central role. By extending the reach of *Process Center* so that it can seamlessly manage assets on behalf of (and from within) *Integration Designer*, and also so that it can seamlessly drive asset packaging and deployment to the new *Process Server* platform, IBM is sensibly promoting *Process Center* as the core BPM asset repository and change management component going forward.

This is important, because *Process Center*’s ease-of-use, combined with its ability to enable reuse of process elements, integration servers and other model assets at significant scale – and combined with the fact that *Process Center* plays a core role across the Express, Standard and Advanced Editions of *Business Process Manager* – means that IBM is giving BPM customers and prospects an excellent technology foundation to help them scale BPM success out from individual projects to larger and more long-lived programmes of work.

For IBM: reaching out to new customers

The delivery of a low-cost entry-level 'Express edition' of *Business Process Manager* gives IBM an opportunity to compete effectively for opportunities within small-to-medium organisations, within small departments of larger companies, and in emerging/growth markets. Specialists like AgilePoint, K2, AuraPortal, BizAgi and others specifically aim to deliver initial implementations at a fraction of the cost of offerings from platform providers like TIBCO, Software AG, Oracle and (historically) IBM. Providers like BonitaSoft with open-source software foundations also play strongly in these environments. Often, these projects are delivered with Microsoft *SharePoint* being the foundation of the application environment; *Business Process Manager's* ability to deliver process participant and administration functionality through *SharePoint* is significant here.

What about FileNet's BPM capabilities?

Although *Business Process Manager* represents a very welcome clarification of intent and direction for IBM concerning its *WebSphere* and Lombardi BPM technology offerings, the BPM capabilities provided within the FileNet portfolio aren't embraced in any way as part of *Business Process Manager 7.5*. Today, IBM is delivering against a separate roadmap for the FileNet technology, primarily through a product offering called *IBM Case Manager*. At the time of writing, IBM hasn't announced any plans to converge the roadmaps of *Case Manager* and *Business Process Manager*. However, the architecture that it's putting in place – specifically the way that it's using *Process Center* and a unified *Process Server* as the integrated underpinning for multiple design environments – means that the stage is set for making such a convergence feasible, if IBM should wish to take that step.

What should you do?

For existing *WebSphere Lombardi Edition* customers, migration to *Business Process Manager* looks like being a straightforward exercise. Any *WebSphere Lombardi Edition* customer with extensive BPM investments and a need to start driving more sophisticated process integration work should start exploring an upgrade to *Business Process Manager Advanced Edition*.

If you're an existing *WebSphere Process Server/Integration Developer* customer, you should schedule time to explore how *Business Process Manager Advanced Edition* will help you broaden the scope of your existing process orchestration work to start to encompass true business process improvement, and help you start to engage business stakeholders in a dialogue about how you can really impact business performance. *Process Center*, *Process Designer* and *Process Server* together create a closed-loop design-build-deploy-change environment that combines strong ease-of-use and collaborative design capabilities with sophisticated change management capabilities. Now that the integration points of these capabilities with *Process Server* and *Integration Designer* are set in a clear and sensible technology framework, you should consider using the advanced business process improvement capabilities within *Business Process Manager* before looking at licensing a specialist business-facing BPM toolset from an IBM competitor.

If you're part of an organisation implementing a BPM project or programme and have until now steered clear of IBM's offering because of uncertainty about the roadmaps of its various technologies or because *WebSphere Process Server/Integration Developer* didn't fit your requirements, you should seriously consider looking again now *Business Process Manager 7.5* is available.