

THETA

The Higher Education Technology Agenda

Innovating Business Process

The University of South Australia has embarked on a program of business process innovation. This program aims at improving process efficiency and effectiveness, reducing costs and adding value in all business areas.

Through its strategic planning, the University identified online administration and cutting red tape as key enablers to achieving its goals in both internal and external service excellence. A scoping exercise determined that the University has upwards of 400 manual paper based processes across all University functions. Additionally some processes fell in between ERP systems. To supplement shortfalls in capability, business units developed processes that include manually transferring data from one system to the next by either rekeying, or again, the use of paper based forms to collect and facilitate the data input.

Manual paper based processes have inherent shortcomings. Error rates in filling out data can be high, lack of validation can slow the execution where staff members return the form to the customer, the need to enter duplicate or redundant data can be a waste of effort. There are many more.

Implementing IT solutions for processes is not a low risk exercise. ERP systems are slow to keep pace with the process needs of the higher education sector. Integration of best of breed solutions, despite best efforts, can still result in fragmented process flows for the end user. In-house developed systems can carry a high maintenance burden, and fall short in delivering sophisticated functionality for analytics and mobility support.

The University of South Australia applied a Business Process Management Suite (BPMS) to uplift redesigned business processes to an online environment. While the BPMS delivers core functionality for role management, workflow, tasks, forms etc. – the platform allows the rapid development of online processes fit for purpose, through its design technology. With the BPMS, the application of the technology to evolving business processes can be agile. Information Systems can be 'built for change'.

Cloud hosting of the BPMS enables the focus of implementation to be about the business

process redesign rather than the server architecture and procurement of infrastructure. It also eliminates the middleware administration costs, which are a great barrier for BPMS implementations.

The BPMS delivers a mobile interface to user tasks without additional development overhead. By having tasks available on mobile devices, the velocity of business process execution improves. This is especially the case where simple approval tasks can be undertaken anytime anywhere, whereby previously barriers to approval tasks might have been the reliance of the relevant piece of paper, or the need to be present at the user's workstation.

The capturing and analysis of business process metrics leads to improved business processes. "You can't manage what you don't measure" is an old management adage that is accurate today. By standardising the capture and reporting of process metrics, UniSA business leaders are able to make informed decisions around process improvement activities. Objective data about business process exceptions informs the decision to invest further resources.

The Business Process Management discipline is a step towards a common language between business leaders and technical solution providers. A platform-based solution has enabled the rapid application of online solutions to a range of business processes.

Through business process innovation, UniSA has achieved higher levels of engagement from business stakeholders, and has closely aligned IT solutions to the business need. Business leaders have greater control over their own processes, and the BPMS positions the leaders well for process improvements into the future.

This presentation will outline UniSAs approach to business process innovation. It will explore the implementation challenges, together with the value the program of work brings to staff and students of the University.

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