

Fujitsu Interstage Business Operations Platform: Case Management



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Leverage Knowledge in the Enterprise



The Fujitsu Interstage® Business Operations Platform (BOP) is a next-generation business solution and integration platform. Based on the leading Business Operations Platform from Cordys™ Software, it is designed to truly support the way businesses operate, finally bringing the worlds of business and IT together.

The Interstage® Business Operations Platform (BOP) is a next generation BPMS suite offering support to model and execute the whole spectrum of your process needs. This paper introduces the concept of case management in Interstage BOP.

Case Management

Most BPM suites enable users to model and execute standard processes that are very structured, prescriptive, and rules-based. These tools automate the interaction with human participants and systems involved in a pre-defined way.

However, many people don't work that way. Very few people follow a strict sequence of operations when completing their daily tasks. In fact, one of the main reasons that a task cannot (or will not) be completely automated seems to be that it requires humans to use their intimate knowledge of the process to adjust the contents of a task to fit the requirements of a particular instance.

Consider the processing of loan applications. Even though this process consists of several activities, not all of these are relevant in every situation. If the application involves a new customer – that is, someone without an account – then the registration of their information and the preparation of a welcome letter are relevant. Also, if a new customer requests a relatively high loan amount, some background investigation and the preparation of an additional appendix in the contract are relevant. In all cases, where the loan amount is high (regardless of any account held by the customer), it is essential to perform a risk analysis and credit check analysis. Finally, for each application, a contract is prepared.

Can all these processes be modeled? Of course they can. But, the greater the number of combinations, the higher is the complexity of modeling the interactions. Very soon the process designer may face the issues of “model explosion” resulting in an overhead on maintenance and negating the promise of flexibility and agility.

So what is the solution? Case Management.

A case, like a conventional business process, involves a collection of activities or tasks. However, unlike BPM, the process from initiation to completion of the case is not easily constrained to a process diagram.

This is because the interactions are unpredictable and the focus is on the work to be done, not the process to support it. Therefore, the activities to be performed in order to complete the case depend on the details of each instance. Furthermore, users can add new tasks, data objects, documents – even new processes – to the case while it is being processed. Case management inherently carries with it fluidity of structure in an ad-hoc manner.

A common component in systems that provide case management is the electronic case folder. It acts as a single container for all of the processes, tasks, data and documents for the case. The notion of a shared case folder, as opposed to a routed process instance, gives case management the flavor of team collaboration as well.

Examples of cases are:

- Claims in Insurance
- Service incidents in Utility
- Disputes regarding customer invoices and payments in Telecommunications
- Loan applications in Banking
- Amendments in Financials (policy mutation, salary changes, address changes, etc.)

Case Management particularly has a strong presence in knowledge-intensive BPM, where knowledge workers apply their inherent knowledge to take cases forward. From this, flexible processes are a must in Case Management. Also, work distribution in these instances is much more pull-oriented: knowledge workers pull the work and take responsibility for it. As multiple knowledge workers might work on a case, collaboration features are important as well.

Interstage BOP Case Management

The well-adopted standard for representing business processes is the Business Process Modeling Notation (BPMN). But there is no standard defined for representing a case management model.

As mentioned above, the power of case management is in providing flexibility for the case worker to decide on the next activities, based on the current activity and the context of the case as a whole. Interstage BOP Case Management provides the suggested next "follow-ups" in multiple options.

Automatic follow-ups

Automatic follow-up activities are the activities suggested by the system as the next set of activities for the case. The case worker has the choice to initiate all the suggested activities or some or none based on the context of the case instance. But, regulations and compliance legislation might require initiation of some activities. This is possible by configuring the activities to be executed mandatorily. For example, after a loan request has been raised, it should be verified for details.

Manual follow-ups

Manual follow-ups are the activities recommended for the case worker to be initiated based on the context. For example, if the loan amount is greater than a given amount, a credit check needs to be done. But based on the context, say the collateral provided, this may not be needed.

Intermediate follow-ups

In some cases, in order to work on a particular activity, another activity needs to be worked on first. For example, approval of the loan needs to wait for the collateral check to complete. Intermediate follow-ups allow an activity to wait for the completion of another activity before it can be made available for work.

Free follow-ups

Free follow-ups are contextual within the context of execution of an activity. They allow the case worker to initiate an ad-hoc activity at any time in the execution of the case instance. For example, during the loan processing it might be necessary to conduct a fraud check on the applicant – the case worker would simply initiate this "sub-process" as part of the case.

Clusters

By nature, a case is heavily human-oriented and knowledge-intensive. The effect is often a large number of activities in a single case. These activities need to cover the complex interactions and possibilities. And yet controlling the mandatory requirements is also essential for regulations and compliance. Activity clusters help control the complexity in the numbers and also ease of maintenance. For example, the whole gambit of checks can be grouped under a cluster named "Verifications."

States

States represent a temporal layout of the movement of the case from one stage to another in the life cycle of an instance. At any point, the case instance is a single state. A transition brings the state machine from one state to another. A transition can go only from an active state which is presently active. The transitions can be based on the completion of activities and/or receipt of events from within the system or outside.

Subcases

Larger cases might have a hierarchy with subcases. Subcases enable dedicated state management and performance management. A customer request can cause separate subcases to be created, each with their own processes, handled by different departments/case managers. An example is a mortgage application, with a mortgage part and a life insurance element, for which two subcases can be created under the main case. Another example is where a claim might be related to multiple policies, and one case per policy gets created. Those might be grouped under one main case. Every subcase can be treated as an activity in the main case. All the follow-ups' semantics are applicable for subcases (activity).



Linked processes

When a case gets detailed with activities, it can have one or more processes attached. However, there will be only one main case process. Any additional processes are sub-processes. During the lifecycle of the case, more processes can be added dynamically, or process fragments and activities can be added to existing case processes.

SLA management

Service Level Agreements (SLAs) are essential for effective case management. Lead times, due dates and escalations require monitoring via the case management calendar. Examples of calendar usage:

- When a case is added on date X to the actual collection of work items, it might have a norm for the lead time associated with it. To calculate the target end date of the case, both workable and non-workable days are taken into account to arrive at an end date, given the norm for the lead time
- Once an activity for a case is active, there might be a norm time for the lead time and a due date to be calculated
- An activity or milestone might have a reminder and/or escalation procedure attached, from which, for example, two days after the due date, a reminder is sent to the case worker when the activity/ milestone has not been completed

Audit

Keeping track of case data changes and actions performed enables auditing for the benefit of:

- Proof of governance and audit
- Transparency

Performance monitoring and reporting

To monitor the execution of cases and its processes, several types of metrics can be requested.

Examples of reports include:

- List of work-in-progress
- Inflow/outflow statistics per period
- Case lead times (compared to norm times)
- Process/activity metrics (lag time, work time, and completion time)
- Reporting on workload, age of cases
- Reporting on delays
- Case report with (authorized) data from the case overview. This kind of report is needed in situations, for example, when an occupational health officer is visiting the labor site

Some of the case management solution screens in Interstage BOP

Diagram 3:
Case Management Modeler – model the workflow with the required flexibility and control

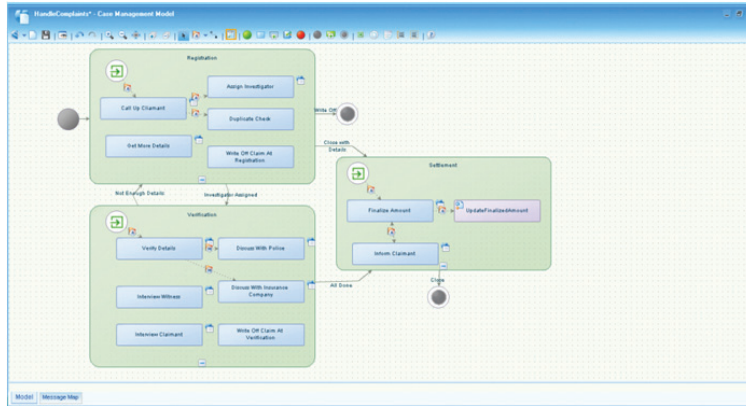


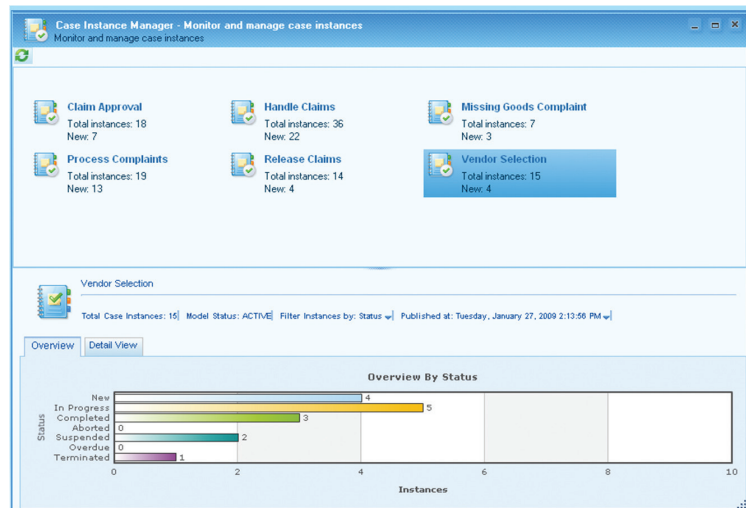
Diagram 4:
Inbox, a single view of the work

The screenshot shows a 'My Inbox' interface with a search bar and a table of tasks. The table has columns for POLICYNUMBER, CLAIMANT, TOTALESTIMATE, and Started On. Below the table is a 'Case Activities' section with a table of activities.

POLICYNUMBER	CLAIMANT	TOTALESTIMATE	Started On
P2145	Harry	7880	Monday, February 02, 2009 4:00:53 PM
P1005	John	5000	Monday, February 02, 2009 4:00:24 PM
P2346	James	3500	Monday, February 02, 2009 4:00:06 PM
P1005	John	3450	Monday, February 02, 2009 3:59:42 PM
P2165	Tom	2500	Monday, February 02, 2009 3:58:06 PM

Activity	Case Model	Assignee	Received Date	Due date
Settle	Case Models-Handle Claims	csuneeth	02 Feb 2009 16:01	05 Feb 2009 16:01
More Details	Case Models-Handle Claims	csuneeth	02 Feb 2009 16:01	03 Feb 2009 16:01
Check Accounts	Case Models-Handle Claims	csuneeth	02 Feb 2009 16:01	03 Feb 2009 16:01
Check	Case Models-Handle Claims	csuneeth	02 Feb 2009 16:01	None

Diagram 5:
Case Instance Monitor – real time view of the status of the cases and their execution



Drivers for adopting case management

Adopting Interstage BOP Case Management solution helps:

- Shorten case lead times. This is achieved by ensuring that all relevant information is provided to the person working on the case, empowering them to make informed decisions in real time based on the context. Proactive reminders and escalation of overdue activities ensures that activities are performed in a timely manner.
- Improve customer service. Each case worker has visibility of their cases and associated processes, enabling faster responses to requests and enquiries.
- Reduce process maintenance. The dynamic parts of processes are covered by case management, negating the need for creating complex flow models for exception handling and making the process simpler and easy to maintain.
- Enhance management information. Comprehensive visibility into the case processes and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) control exceptions on cases.
- Adherence to legislative requirements, regulations and SLAs, including detailed activity audit trails to demonstrate compliance.
- Reduce administration costs.

Conclusion

For organizations to succeed in today's market, they need to focus on the processes that underpin a number of core areas of the business to ensure competitive advantage through:


- Enhanced customer satisfaction and customer retention
- Reduced costs and administration
- Empowerment of staff to manage their daily tasks

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FPC58-3091-01 05/12.
12.0265

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