



Get More BAM for Your Buck Out of Your Next BizTalk Project

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Over the last few years, the Business Activity Monitoring (BAM) concept has emerged on the scene and is drawing the attention of organizations worldwide. Building on the successful track record of Business Process Management (BPM) initiatives, which have automated many routine and common tasks, BAM takes these BPM applications a giant step further. BAM can now provide an additional level of return by supporting critical business decision making—in real-time. With a properly implemented BAM solution, executives and management can have a timely view of critical business information and quickly alter business rules and processes to correct any failures or take advantage of developing trends.

Microsoft's BizTalk Server 2006 provides a solid foundation for implementing BAM solutions. BizTalk BAM can be tailored to fit the needs of any organization and can be implemented on top of most current applications with little or no modification, often requiring less of a financial and time investment. Since it is built on the BizTalk framework of services, BAM solutions can be developed right alongside and in the same context as enterprise application integration and BPM projects. This integrated development experience offers one of the few real out-of-the-box BAM systems available.

On the business side, BAM's capabilities are demonstrated by its ability to process and analyze events based on rules and patterns which themselves can be updated in an easy and agile manner. One of the most productive features of BAM is the ability to create timely reporting. This timeliness ranges from real-time alerts and aggregations to trend analysis using months or even years of data. All of these can be configured on a per report basis to balance the need for data with the availability of processing power.

For the end user, BAM can provide data in a variety of standard and convenient formats. Close integration with SharePoint Services and Microsoft SQL Server offer rich display and delivery options. Large user groups can access common reports through web-based interfaces in SharePoint, while more sophisticated business analysts can download sets of data for deeper analysis using desktop tools such as Microsoft Excel. Leveraging the use of SharePoint Services, BAM can also offer a launch pad for closing the loop on critical business process or events by initiating human workflows when criteria are met. For real alerts, recipients can choose from a variety of channels including e-mail, instant message or sms. While alerts notify a user of an exception in normal business flow, it allows them to either react or to choose to not intervene in instances where it is not necessary. For exceptions that require attention, alerts can significantly reduce the time it takes to react.

Let's consider an example of how BAM can increase revenue and decrease overall costs in a sales and marketing environment. Having automated the sales process using BizTalk server by integrating separate systems, such as Salesforce.com and SAP, BAM can be used to track, qualify and distribute opportunities to sales personnel. BAM allows managers to review incoming real-time information to determine the best course of action for individual customers and to view information, such as the percentage of qualified leads

received already that day, week, or month, which helps them determine such things as whether a specific marketing campaign is effective. The number of leads converted to customers can be viewed at any given time thereby allowing up-to-the-minute sales forecasts, or the amount of open leads can be viewed and converted into a phone or e-mail list so that sales can follow up before the lead goes cold. Detailed information about each opportunity can be tracked accurately providing sales and marketing departments with information that can be utilized to prepare or modify their strategies. As a result, customers and employees receive the information and service they need quickly and efficiently leading to a more satisfied workforce and customer base. This leads to increased ROI because employee turnover is reduced, customer generation and retention are increased and overall operation costs are decreased.

In the perpetually competitive business environment, the BAM enabled business can remain agile and ahead of many curves in their industry. The example above is just one of many that illustrate how a BAM system can increase efficiency and productivity in an organization, as well as serve to provide a more well-rounded and satisfactory experience for all those involved in a business process, whether internal or external. In fact, results from a Gartner study conclude that more than 80% of BAM projects have a positive ROI. In addition, Gartner reported that the majority of BAM projects have an average implementation time of less than 3 months. With a relatively short time-to-market and the benefits that can be realized by being able to access, process and react so quickly to critical business information, it's hard to deny the compelling business benefits of BAM solutions.

