

Dynamic Case Management

Albert Einstein once famously said, “*The only real valuable thing is intuition.*” It’s an interesting insight for a man who believed the universe was based on structured rules that could be discovered.

As Einstein acknowledged that human intuition is a key element to success, so have many organizations realized structured process solutions are not adequate to solve today’s dynamic business challenges. Modern businesses require new software platforms that seamlessly marry structured process control with knowledge and intuition of employees to solve increasingly dynamic business challenges.

AT A GLANCE

Key Challenges

The new technologies of recent times have changed us all. We have access to more information than ever before as consumers. The behaviors spawned online and on mobile devices have made their way into business. Businesses must learn to leverage the intuition and knowledge of their employees to adapt to this newly dynamic environment.

In doing so, they first must look at process. In an organized process, it is impossible to predefine every business challenge. Common business needs—like service request handling, incident management, and investigations—cannot be effectively addressed with purely process-centric or content-centric solutions.

In this realm of constant change, those that embrace modern technologies that combine process with the knowledge and intuition of their staff can evolve more quickly and dramatically impact positive business outcomes.

Solution

Modern Case Management Frameworks make this possible, effectively uniting Business Process Management (BPM) technology with knowledge and collaboration around a data record. Work may flow in non-sequential order to accommodate dynamic changes in the evolution of the business. Detailed audit histories are captured to trace the course of a case over time as users collaborate and process actions are taken. Case Management Frameworks provide the ideal software technology for any business challenged with constant change.

PROCESS IS NOT ENOUGH

Traditional BPM solutions relied on one key assumption: the flow and behavior of all business interactions can be predefined into organized process flows. Although this is true for some predictable processes, the vast majority of businesses have discovered few processes take a predictable path. Unexpected events in BPM were seen as anomalies to be isolated and removed through a pursuit of process efficiency and continuous process improvement. But in a world where social technologies like Twitter or Facebook can explode one isolated incident into a worldwide conversation, businesses must re-evaluate how they approach the unpredictable.

Achievement of process excellence is often impractical. Attempting to predict the unpredictable nature of every human behavior—and the world at large—will not bear the desired results. First, businesses must learn to empower employees with knowledge and collaboration tools to better understand the context of unpredictable events. Second, they must begin to trust the intuition of case workers to handle ad-hoc events quickly while keeping in mind the best interests of their organization.

Because of this, BPM solutions must see the world in more than just a process perspective. Knowledge and insight by humans must be leveraged to fill the grey spaces and ensure every interaction drives to a business goal. These new platforms that combine the best of BPM technology with the knowledge of humans are known as Case Management Frameworks (CMFs).

KEY ELEMENTS TO CASE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORKS

Modern Case Management Frameworks represent both an evolution and a convergence of many existing and new technologies to better meet the needs of dynamic business challenges. To effectively deliver the wide spectrum of interactions required in case management, CMFs must include:

Business Process Management

Although BPM alone cannot solve case style work, it is still important for case management, assuring rules and policies are followed when important decisions are made.

Data discovery

Case Management relies on case workers making informed decisions. To facilitate those decisions, a CMF should effectively converge information from multiple locations (i.e., systems) into a single record. This allows case workers to efficiently see all aspects of a case, discover the case's context to larger business goals, and make the most informed decisions.

Collaboration

Case workers must be able to easily collaborate in the context of a case, exchange professional opinions, and quickly reach conclusions as a group. Without close collaboration, context—which is just as important as the information itself—can be lost

Ad-hoc activities

The nature of case work is unpredictable. Therefore, activities should be able to occur in both a predictable and unpredictable manner. Ad-hoc activities allow case workers to create, assign, and complete work items in the context of the case, without a need for a predefined sequence of events.

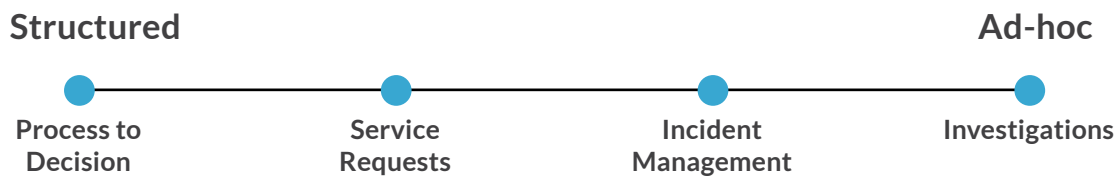
Audit trail

A case history is much more than just the process events. A complete CMF should provide the history of all content, process events, and collaborations in the context of the case.

A unified Case Management Framework brings together each of the pieces above to deliver a complete case solution. But not all use cases for CMFs are the same, and different solutions will find there are different levels of importance placed on each of these features.

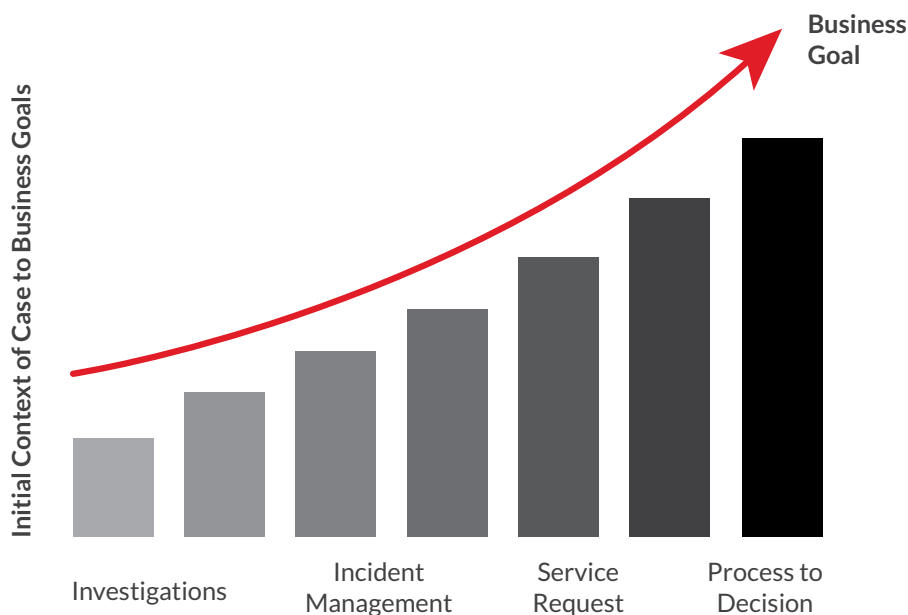
CASE MANAGEMENT USE CASES

Case Management Frameworks provide their core features over a broad set of potential use cases. Each use case for case management can be measured on a spectrum between structured and ad-hoc case work. Example use cases include: Process to Decision, Service Requests, Incident Management, and Investigations.



As noted in the graphic above, case management solutions can range from highly structured BPM-like use cases for Process to Decision, to a completely ad-hoc and unpredictable Investigation-style use case. Each of these use cases employs the key features of BPM, data discovery, collaboration, ad-hoc activities, and audit trail to varying degrees in support of case style work.

Every case management solution can also be considered a pursuit of context to the goals and objectives of the organization. Some use cases for case management, such as Process to Decision, begin with lots of context while others begin with little to no context, and the impact on the business goals must be discovered throughout the life of the case.





Process to Decision

Process to Decision use cases such as order processing largely flow in a predictable and reliable manner with a high amount of context to a business goal. But even in this orders example, exceptions can occur in an unpredictable way that must employ ad-hoc activities, as well as collaboration between customers, vendors, and order managers to resolve the order.



Service Request

Service Requests also have relatively high degree of structure, but the context is not well known beforehand. Unlike a simple order management scenario, Service Requests might cover a wide range of requests from customers, all of which cannot be predefined. The impact of the Service Request on the business goal must be discovered by reviewing data available, collaborating with case workers and the customer, and employing ad-hoc activities where appropriate. For example, a customer might inquire about a previously purchased product which is now defective. The product information and cause of the defect must all be discovered to properly resolve the Service Request case.



Incident Management

Incidents Management solutions have even less context than service requests. Where Service Requests are known to originate from a customer, for example, incidents may originate in any form and from any source. Little context is known before an incident occurs, but a high-level process must be followed to identify and resolve incidents as they emerge. For example, there might be a post on social media, like Twitter, commenting that a product offered by your company is of poor quality. The organization is only indirectly detecting the events by monitoring social media, and the person who posted on Twitter is entirely unknown, but, the path the resolution is the same: identify the incident, address the incident, and resolve the incident.



Investigations

Investigative case solutions have no predefined process and/or context, just a business goal. For example, a business might choose to investigate the potential of a new product offering. What is the product...how will it fulfill customer needs...and ultimately, how will it generate more revenue are all discovered in the course of the investigation. Structured processes are only employed in isolated areas and usually requested in an ad-hoc fashion as more context is learned during the life of the investigation.

CONCLUSION

With greater demands on organizations to support dynamic and unexpected behavior, organizations must turn to software solutions with case management style work. Through case management software, organizations can ensure even unexpected events lead to a desired business goal.

So if Albert Einstein was choosing a platform for case management, which would he choose? Likely the one that leverages and expands the intuition of all case workers.

The Appian Platform and the Appian Case Management Framework provide the capabilities needed for organizations to support all case management use cases. With a focus on ease-of-use, building case processes, records, ad-hoc activities, and audit trails is fast and intuitive. Each case solution built on Appian inherits a powerful enterprise-class architecture with high levels of security and scalability. And, Appian's unified architecture combines market-leading BPM, social collaboration, and data management.

Leading industry analyst, Gartner recently commented the following on Appian for case management :

Appian supports all routine and nonroutine process styles. It is most differentiated through its social centrality, allowing rapid innovation and discovery, as well as ad hoc and improvisational collaboration among customers, workers, partners and suppliers. This approach, combined with its platform capabilities, allows caseworkers to respond to dynamic and unpredictable casework.

– Gartner - Magic Quadrant for BPM-Platform-Based Case Management Frameworks - March, 2015

If Einstein was correct; if “...*the only real valuable thing is intuition,*” then the case management platform that best increases organizational intuition is the one that best addresses the needs of case work.

Appian

Appian provides a leading low-code software development platform that enables organizations to rapidly develop powerful and unique applications. The applications created on Appian's platform help companies drive digital transformation and competitive differentiation.

For more information, visit www.appian.com