

# Managers' Guide to BPM tools

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Business process management (BPM) tools help the enterprises in making their business processes efficient and effective.

This Managers' Guide to BPM tools has been divided into seven easy to digest topics as below.

- **BPM tools: Definition and scope**
- **Top trends in BPM tools market**
- **Benefits of deploying BPM tools**
- **Disadvantages of deploying BPM tools**
- **Evaluating BPM tools: Aspects to consider**
- **Prerequisites of BPM tool deployment**
- **Top BPM tools vendors and their offerings**
- **Links for further reading**

## **BPM tools: Definition and scope**

A business process is a set of tasks conducted to meet a specific goal within an organization.

These business processes, in turn, could contain many sub-processes. E.g. 'ordering' online products would be a key business process for an e-commerce website. 'Shipping' would be a sub-process which would help complete the 'ordering' process. BPM tools are used for enhancement of such processes by organizations.

BPM tools consider business processes as assets valuable from a strategic perspective. This necessitates the need for them to not only be understood and managed but improved in an on-going manner; thus, adding value to the delivered products/ services.

## Top trends in BPM tools market

**Strong self-tuning mechanisms:** BPM tools would be strengthening their self-tuning capabilities by utilizing information collected about customer choices or demands.

**Preference for composition model versus code writing:** Organizations would prefer using existing software in a composition model to buying or developing new applications. Packaged application providers would need to continuously improve their offerings to sustain.

**'Go Green' initiatives:** As organizations strive to reduce their carbon footprint, BPM tools would be needed across the supply chain i.e. inter-organization.

**Cloud computing:** BPM tools delivered as service (SaaS) would gain momentum.

## Benefits of deploying BPM tools

[BPM tools help organizations](#) make their processes better in the following areas. These benefits result in incremental ROI in an on-going manner.

**Efficiency:** Help monitor processes systematically and in real time, thereby reducing areas of wastage. The [BPM tools also help in doing more with less](#) effort, offering higher quality return.

**Effectiveness:** Processes are designed to work according to a sequence of tasks. Temporary failure of any of these tasks leads to exceptions. BPM tools help with systematic handling of such scenarios.

**Change management:** Change to existing processes becomes trivial with BPM tools.

**BI:** By deploying BPM tools, companies can gain business intelligence (BI). BPM tools allow modeling of multiple processes and observing interactions between them. This information can help with analytics and reporting.

## Disadvantages of deploying BPM tools

**Limited customization:** Currently, BPM tools are offered as packaged applications which need to be customized for an organization's needs. Customization features might not suffice to fully meet the process-intricacies inside an organization's environment.

**Ineffective use post-deployment:** As is the risk with any new software deployment, there's always a risk of the selected BPM tool not being used fully and effectively post-deployment, thereby converting it to a non-performing and costly asset.

**Purchase cost:** Cost of the selected BPM tool, when compared to applications developed in-house, might be significantly high.

**Upgrades:** Upgrades and updates might be cumbersome, difficult, and costly.

## Evaluating BPM tools: Aspects to consider

**Acquisition cost:** Compare the costs involved in procurement and support.

**Deployment time of BPM tool:** Factor in the time required for customization, user acceptance test, and training.

**Customization offered:** Evaluate the vendor's process maturity and domain expertise as against key business expectations. Question would be: Is the vendor capable to deliver the expected level of customization?

**Reporting and analytics:** Check, for instance, if the BPM tool has the reporting and analytical ability to measure the business value that its deployment has generated.

**Vendor's capabilities:** Evaluate the vendor's proof-of-concepts and its ability to execute the project by meeting time and performance expectations. Carry out a reference check.

## Prerequisites of BPM tool deployment

Before venturing into deployment of a BPM tool, assess the following:

**Backup plan:** Do you have a suitably prepared and rehearsed backup plan in place if the deployment fails?

**Infrastructure readiness:** Do you have suitable infrastructure to deploy the BPM tool? Involve a consultant who specializes in this domain.

**Knowledge-base:** Do you have a dedicated staff to manage and support the BPM tool once it has been made part of your application environment? Also check if the vendor you select has a good support infrastructure and processes in place.



## Top BPM tools vendors and their offerings

BPM tool vendor	BPM tool brand	What the tool features
IBM	<a href="#">FileNet Business Manager</a>	Manages workflow among people and systems for content and case-based processes.
	<a href="#">WebSphere Lombardi Edition</a>	Provides a unified business process management (BPM) environment for collaborative process improvement
<a href="#">OpenText Corporation</a>	OpenText ECM (formerly Metastorm)	Task monitoring and management, process design and execution, integration with Office Applications and related Metastorm products viz. Metastorm ProVision.
<a href="#">Oracle</a>	Business Process Management Suite 11g	Management of all processes including human, system, and document processes; Social BPM interaction provides social computing in the context of BPM
<a href="#">Pegasystems</a>	SmartBPM / Pega BPM	Unified environment for process flows, business rules, data integration, presentation and customer experience, case management, security, and governance; integration with your existing systems
<a href="#">Progress Software</a>	Savvion Business Manager	Integration with a company's existing systems (viz. ERP and databases); integration with suppliers and partners
<a href="#">Tibco Software</a>	Staffware Process Suite	Aimed at helping business users and IT staff to collaborate on modeling, execution, and improvement of business processes.
Other key BPM tool vendors include Action Technologies, WebMethods, and Vitria.		

## Links for further reading

**Definition from WhatIs.com:**

[Business Process Management](#)

**Tutorial:** [BPM Tutorial](#)

**TIP:** [Lessons in efficiency: BPM tools for 2010](#)

**TIP:** [BPM tools: Benefits and opportunities](#)

**TIP:** [Best practices: SAP BPM tool](#)

**TIP:** [Insights on BPM/SOA Excellence](#)

**NEWS:** [Pattern-based change management a must for business success: Research](#)