Best Practices in BPM & Case Management

BPM and Case Management

Evolution or Revolution?

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Evolution or Revolution?

By Andy Moore, Editorial Director, *KMWorld* Specialty Publishing Group

Andy Moore

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The Difference Matters

BPM and case management are not complementary; they are polar opposites. BPM describes an environment where frequently conducted tasks need to be replicated and repeated on behalf of those who conduct predictable work day in and day out.

Case, on the other hand, has nothing to do with predictable, repeatable processes. Case has evolved not from the assembly-line, cookie-cutter transactional processes that, however valuable, can't resolve the *exceptions* facing decision-makers every day. Case has emerged straight from the desks of those incredibly valuable employees who handle an eclectic mélange of information sources.

AIIM (the Association for Image and Information Management) has a handy definition: "Sometimes known as adaptive or dynamic case management, case management endeavors to improve the performance of your organization by putting case information front-and-center rather than considering the process as primary, the way workflow and BPM do. Such information will be accessed over the entire length of time you are working on a given task and will become the official record for that work.

"Case management is described as operating on bundles of content rather than individual documents or images. A 'case' is a compendium of information, processes, advanced analytics, business rules, collaboration, and sometimes social computing that relates to a particular interaction…" AIIM has become a dominant figure in this adoption of case management as the ultimate worker's tool.

In her accompanying feature article here, Amanda Ulery, product marketing for OnBase by Hyland, provides a "short list" of things to look at and consider as you reach to get a handle on "scattered spreadsheets, network folders or siloed departmental databases like Access or Lotus Notes—all of which can cause service, security and response times to suffer," Amanda writes.

"Consider the 'gaps' that exist in your daily work—areas that your major business applications can't fully support. Once you've found these, you've identified opportunities for a better case management approach."

Carl Sagan said, "We are star stuff." Well, organizations are "business process stuff."

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Some of these processes are simple; some are more complex. BPM is really good at optimizing those simple business processes and transactions. Case management focuses on the more complex business processes. This characteristic division between transactions (simple, straight-through) and complex, exception-prone processes defines and supports my hypothesis that BPM and case management do not live in the same neighborhood.

The Professionals Rule

Many discussions about case management solutions tend to focus on an organization's knowledge workers—individuals who use their knowledge and discretion to make decisions and move dynamic work forward. It's the modern equivalent of the big, fat briefcase. It doesn't matter if it's a legal proceeding, or a contract negotiation. A baffling array of support documentation can become urgent, to varying degrees, depending on the "case." It's entirely up to the professional which of these information assets can play a positive part in resolving the case. No pre-determined routing, no pre-established workflow, no "book policies" that decide the transaction for you.

With case management, you're on your own, baby.

I should hasten to add that there is a perception that case management is technology-free. That would not be true. In fact, I would argue that case management is technology-heavy. Every one of those assets that might become a critical inflection point in a case resides in some kind of repository, most likely electronic. Which means an effective case management tool must embrace not just the "system," as in many BPM instances, but instead, "whatever works."

The Technology Decision

I like the way Amanda puts it: "When it comes to case-driven solutions, you could have your developers build applications via custom coding or purchase multiple point solutions, each specific to one process. However, custom-coded applications take longer to build and are difficult to change; point solutions, while effective for one use, can't be easily extended to other areas of your organization or tailored for specific customer needs." That pretty much sums up the challenge for developers in this emerging area: "How much is too much? When do we drop in?" The technology piece DOES get complicated—do you provide tools to do the work (BPM) or tools that allow smart employees to do the work (case)?

Well, it might be good to talk to the people who face these dreadful exception cases. Ask them what they need for a toolbase. Do they want a dashboard that shows every conceivable option? Or do they want a technology background a little different than that? One that allows frictionless access to the "right information, at the right time, to the right people." Where have I heard that before?

Value from the Outside-In

Case Management with a Customer Focus

By Amanda Ulery, Product Marketing, OnBase by Hyland

Who really benefits from case management capabilities?

Many discussions about case management solutions tend to focus on an organization's knowledge workers—individuals who use their knowledge and discretion to make decisions and move dynamic work forward. And it's easy to see why. For these employees, case management capabilities make their lives easier, giving them a complete view of the information they need. Work is faster and more effective, tasks are streamlined, conversations are tracked and managed, key data and documents are compiled.

But in addition to your internal workforce, a critical stakeholder of effective case management is **the actual recipient of the service**—the customer, patient, student, client, constituent. For people outside your four walls, better case handling and access to information in context means reaping benefits like more personalized service, faster incident resolution and more accurate investigations.

Improving Customer Experiences

The customer is at the center of a successful case management approach. How can you think from the outside-in to improve your customers' experiences?

Identify opportunities to improve.

Think about your key processes, people and departments that are customer-facing. How can you improve these relationships and better manage the critical information that supports them? Look for areas where employees manage important customer-, student- or constituent-related information with scattered spreadsheets, network folders or siloed departmental databases like Access or Lotus Notes—all of which can cause service, security and response times to suffer. Consider the "gaps" that exist in your daily work—areas that your major business applications can't fully support.

Once you've found these, you've identified opportunities for a better case management approach. Determine which areas most directly impact the customer experience, and start there.

Choose a solution that allows you to be nimble.

When it comes to case-driven solutions, you could have your developers build applications via custom coding or purchase multiple point solutions, each specific to one process. However, custom-coded applications take longer to build and are difficult to change; point solutions, while effective for one use, can't be easily extended to other areas of your organization or tailored for specific customer needs.

A content-enabled rapid application development platform (such as OnBase by Hyland) equips you to be nimble, benefitting both your business and your customers. Rather than spending time developing from scratch or going to RFP for each individual point solution, you can point-and-click configure case-driven applications that connect all your information and supporting documents. Faster, more tailored applications equate to faster, more tailored solutions to your customers' needs. Point-and-click configuration also allows you to more easily adapt existing applications or add additional applications over time as requirements and priorities change.

Consider the future.

Think about your long-term goals—such as more personalized customer service, faster incident resolution, more comprehensive and accurate investigations. As your organization grows and expands toward these objectives, will the tools you choose today be able to grow and expand as well?

You'll also want a solution that can scale and shift with changing business and customer needs, seamlessly extending to other processes, departments and users. Your software vendor will become a longtime strategic partner, so be sure to select a vendor that has industry-wide recognition, proven implementations in the case management space and experience with information-driven applications.

Finally, think about your employees who interact with external stakeholders on a daily basis. They want a better way to get work done and tools that help them rapidly resolve issues, track customer information and manage relationships. An ideal solution should empower them with a complete view of all key data, documents, notes and other information surrounding a case, allowing them to better serve and ultimately retain your customers. ▮

Elevating the Student Advising Experience with Case Management at Notre Dame

The ability to manage case-driven work and related information empowers both the knowledge worker AND the individuals they serve. This is true regardless of industry–whether we're talking about insurance clients, credit union members, patients, or, in the case of The University of Notre Dame, college students.

Notre Dame discovered the power of a case management approach in improving the "customer" experience. Just a few years ago, the university's First Year of Studies (FYS) and other colleges were plagued by paper and information silos. Advisors managed key student data in separate Access databases and stored related content in spreadsheets, folders and physical file cabinets. Unsurprisingly, these methods impacted student service, visibility and data integrity.

Notre Dame turned to a case management solution from OnBase by Hyland to improve advising and better manage student information. From one interface, advisors access and track student information and related content, including admissions documents, visit notes and real-time data pulled from the student information system (SIS). With a complete view of each student in a digital file, as well as features like automated notifications, reporting capabilities and views into impending tasks and upcoming appointments, advisors can provide better student services and maintain more relevant relationships.

"Our solution has allowed our office to focus more on the students and their specific needs, while eliminating the need for mundane tasks like copying files or printing forms," says Amy Radvansky, an advisor in Notre Dame's Mendoza College of Business.

One of the biggest improvements was the timeliness of advising. With everything an advisor needs easily accessible in one central place–rather than stored in a file room or scattered among multiple network locations–advisors more quickly and effectively respond to office visits, calls and emails from students who have questions or issues. "The students are benefitting because the records are more accurate. Their information is right at our fingertips," Radvansky says.

By adding notes about advising appointments and tracking other information in OnBase, advisors work together to ensure they're providing a valuable, personalized student advising experience. "There's a lot more transparency between advisors, so we can better collaborate among departments about things like course drops, changes in intended majors, or any issues or complaints."

With an outside-in case management approach, Notre Dame has improved the experience for both its internal staff members and, most importantly, the students they serve.

For more information on the companies who contributed to this white paper, visit their websites or contact them directly:

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