Frequently Asked Business Questions

BizFlow® Platform for
Business Process Management and Collaborative Workflow

Q: What is Business Process Management (BPM)?

A: More than merely another layer of technology, business process management (BPM) is a complete business-driven solution that allows your enterprise to streamline, automate, and manage internal and external business processes, thus reducing costs while increasing customer satisfaction, product quality, and revenues. BPM provides control and visibility into the management of your people, systems, and business environment, and coordinates these elements to help you:

- Analyze and optimize process performance
- Simplify and automate processes
- Capture and enforce best practices, policies, and procedures
- Improve productivity and work quality
- Detect and respond quickly to changing business events
- Interoperate with these disparate systems and applications as part of a business process
- Foster collaboration among employees, customers, and partners

Q: What is the value of BPM to my business?

A: Adopting the right business process management solution will provide a work management platform that simplifies and streamlines the deployment of work activities between people, applications, and systems in a structured and collaborative manner. Additionally, BPM will allow you to create dynamic business process models (simulating real-life, real-time processes) that can be dynamically maintained and refined, based on changing business requirements. BPM will thus add value to your organization by helping you:

- Reduce operating costs
- Manage, measure, and improve processes
- Improve quality and reduce errors
- Eliminate paper-based operations
- Improve visibility into your processes
- Automate steps in your processes and reduce cycle times
- Improve communication among employees, executives, customers, and partners
- Extend the value of existing business applications and technologies

Q: Why choose BizFlow® as my BPM platform?

A: BizFlow provides a complete business process management platform that accelerates business results and produces a measurable return on investment by helping you:

- Foster an effective, productive, and mutually beneficial relationship between business users and IT personnel
- Remove the barriers that stand between the conception and the development of business solutions
- Provide a unified environment and a collaborative methodology for developing business solutions
- Make it easier for you to communicate, analyze, optimize, measure, and manage your business processes
- Deploy complete process management solutions and produce demonstrable results with them as quickly as possible

- Become an innovative leader in business process management
    - Delivers an interoperable process-based infrastructure that integrates your people, disparate systems and applications under one platform
    - Based on Java, XML, and SOAP standards for interoperability
    - Portal-ready and Web Services integration
- Deploy across leading OS platforms, including Windows, Solaris, HP-UX, AIX
- Gain total control over your operations with the power to model, test, analyze, optimize, and monitor, your processes quickly and dynamically
- Rapidly deploy and connect to existing systems for immediate return
- Utilize user-configurable interfaces adapting to any skill level and organizational role
- Increase profitability and reduce operating costs by streamlining operations
- Reduce IT technology costs by leveraging and adding value to existing systems and applications
- Bridge the gaps among your people, systems, and applications so that you can extend your business processes across your enterprise and beyond to business partners and customers.
- Boost productivity by automating routine tasks, enabling straight-through processing, eliminating paperwork, and collapsing cycle times
- Enhance employee morale and customer satisfaction with improved responsiveness and easier, more efficient ways of conducting business
- Improve the quality of products, services, and information by simplifying work, eliminating errors, and catching and fixing problem transactions
- Enforce process excellence across the extended enterprise

Q: How is BizFlow different from other BPM platforms on the market today?

A: BizFlow offers features unique among BPM platforms that can both inspire and enable enterprise managers to make their vision for process improvement a reality. BizFlow gives you complete visibility into your organization, its operations, and performance. In particular, BizFlow enables you to:

- Illustrate, analyze, and optimize your processes through user-friendly applications
- Automate your processes with powerful, intuitive business rules and rapid, graphical development tools
- Test business scenarios and make forecasts based on variations in inputs, resources, constraints, and other parameters
- Detect and respond quickly and effectively to changing business events
- Extend processes and best practices to other departments and divisions in your enterprise, as well as to partners and customers
- Make employees, managers, customers, and partners as efficient and productive as possible with a configurable, easy-to-use interface for work, management, and reporting
- Extend the value of existing IT infrastructure through an extensive API set that provides interoperability across your disparate systems, saving you time and money in your BPM initiatives
- Adapt and extend into the future through support for standards such as Java, XML, SOAP, and Web Services; the BizFlow platform provides safe and seamless collaboration and interoperability
- Scale your solutions for department and enterprise-level performance.

Q: My organization is global. Does BizFlow provide foreign language support? Does HandySoft provide regional service offices?

A: BizFlow is localized to the following languages: English, French, German, Korean, Japanese, and Chinese. BizFlow's user interface is fully customizable. HandySoft is also a global company, with sales and support offices worldwide, including the USA, Australia, Asia-Pacific region, and Canada.

Q: Will my organization have to change the way we do business in order to implement BizFlow?

A: The BizFlow solution allows companies to leverage their current people, business relationships, and IT infrastructure. BizFlow provides the tools to simplify and accelerate business transactions between people and systems globally.

Q: How are processes designed and developed?

A: BizFlow provides an easy-to-use, Web-deployable graphical Process Designer, offering powerful functionality in a point-and-click environment. Through the Process Designer, business analysts can quickly model processes, easily configuring sophisticated routing and business rules, deadlines, process variables, and more, through property editors. BizFlow process designs are clear, clean, and easy-to-follow visually. Use your existing electronic documents (such as those created in Microsoft Word or Adobe) or build intelligent forms supporting pre-population of data, calculations, electronic signatures, and more using BizFlow's Forms Designer. BizFlow provides many standard forms already used in the workplace and government. In addition, BizFlow provides a Process Simulator tool for the analysis of performance, cost, cycle time, resource utilization, and other metrics under simulated business conditions before deploying a process in a live production situation. With a simple mouse click, Process Simulator lets you visually test and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of your process definition while saving time and valuable resources. Process Simulator's optimization feature enables you to define your business goals, constraints, and variables. Process Simulator then proposes the optimum process configuration to meet the goal.

Q: How are BPM and BizFlow different from traditional workflow products?

A: Traditional workflow products focus on the routing of documents between people within an organization. They are typically task-oriented, driving the completion of a single activity, such as processing an invoice. Traditional workflow products do not integrate with business applications. BizFlow, on the other hand, coordinates work between people *and* systems internal and external to an organization. BizFlow is business-process oriented, involving many tasks, people, and systems. For example, processing an invoice might be one activity in an overall BizFlow order fulfillment business process.

Q: How are BPM and BizFlow different from traditional application integration products?

A: Traditional application integration products focus on the exchange of data between systems and applications. They are typically task-oriented, driving the completion of a single automated activity, such as updating multiple systems after an Account Representative processes a telephone order. They typically do not involve people during process execution. BizFlow, on the other hand, is business-process oriented, involving both automated activities and manual tasks performed by people. BizFlow provides an abstract layer separating business process logic from the underlying systems. Process-controlled integration is rules-driven and thus more flexible. For example, using BizFlow, a Purchasing Agent might be notified about a product with low stock count after the inventory system is updated. BizFlow also provides exception-handling capabilities that add value to traditional application integration products. For example, if the inventory system were down, BizFlow could send a notification to an administrator.

Q: I already use Visio to model business processes. How is BizFlow different?

A: Applications such as Visio provide tools for graphically illustrating the activities and routing paths of processes. These models are essentially static drawings. BizFlow models are fully configured, actionable processes that make it easy to go from concept to reality. The model accurately reflects the runtime process because it is the runtime process. BizFlow's graphical modeling environment helps business users quickly model processes—or import Visio basic shapes—and then configure process activities and transition details such as actor, action, business rules, deadlines, and other information.

Q: Does BizFlow provide any process templates, forms, or other components for a rapid jump-start?

A: HandySoft's BizFlow Accelerator Suites are pre-built, configurable solutions that accelerate the value of a company's existing business systems by delivering collaborative processes through industry- and department-specific process templates. This approach addresses the need within industries and across corporate departments to solve specific business problems that prevent companies from reducing costs and time-to-market while improving the quality of business operating environments. HandySoft currently provides Accelerator Suites for Financial, Insurance, and Six Sigma to rapidly address critical business challenges related to areas such as Accounts Payable, Sarbanes-Oxley compliance, and more.

Q: How do users participate in BizFlow processes? How do users build and administer processes?

A: People interact with BizFlow through a Web-based user interface that is fully customizable and can be localized for English, Korean, Japanese, French, Spanish, Chinese, and German languages. BizFlow also includes an easily configured portal plug-in UI option. Within the Management Area, executives, managers, and administrators can access the process design forms and process simulation and optimization tools, create and view reports, administer the BizFlow system, establish security, and manage users. Within the Work Area, users can initiate processes, access work assigned to them, view the status of executing processes, and run reports. Priority tasks are color-coded and listed first in the work-list. Work items can also be sent via e-mail or wireless device to users who may not always have BizFlow open on their desktop. When a user clicks on an activity, a form (BizFlow, Word, Excel, Adobe, etc.) or application is presented to the user, along with any accompanying attached documents or other information. When the user has completed an activity, the work item is removed from the worklist and proceeds to the next recipient in the process flow.

Q: *How can I view the current status of a process as it executes?*

A: BizFlow's Process Monitoring tool and Monitoring BizCoves provide real-time depictions of a process in progress. Color-coded icons in the Process Monitoring tool show at a glance the status and execution path of a workflow at any point. Drill down into the graphical representation for detailed information showing *who, what, when,* and *where*, including attachments, comment threads, and more. Monitoring BizCoves present time-sensitive critical process details, such as total purchase price of an order in progress, expected and actual delivery date of a completed order, inventory levels, or any other user-defined process detail. Monitoring BizCoves present information in tabular format within web clips that plug easily into the BizFlow user interface and portal applications such as Plumtree, SharePoint, or custom-created portals. BizFlow's monitoring tools are not static images; rather, users are able to take action when monitoring processes in motion. Users can suspend, resume, escalate, move work, and even alter a process path, depending on their privileges.

Q: *Is BizFlow specifically tailored to particular industries?*

A: BizFlow process models are all designed by the business process experts in your organization and thus suit any type of industry. BizFlow has been deployed in manufacturing environments, insurance industries, government offices, and more. Ask a HandySoft account representative for a copy of one of our award-winning case studies to learn more.

Q: *What tools are available for customization of automated business processes?*

A: BizFlow's graphical Process Designer offers many advanced features that adapt to and support an organization's business practices. Activities and routing rules can be easily defined using the point-and-click property editors to set options such as participants, deadlines, transitions, etc. Ad-hoc routing gives participants the flexibility to route work items to recipients who may not be part of the defined process. This feature is especially useful for review and approval processes, responding to RFPs, and other collaborative projects.

Q: *Must I hard-code individuals into process definitions?*

A: No. BizFlow supports the creation of user groups and hierarchies to avoid hard-coding individuals into processes. Hierarchies represent the variety of reporting structures that exist within an organization, such as organizational reporting based on department managers or project reporting based on a matrix team lead structure. User groups represent roles, departments, teams, or other conceptual definitions of individuals or multiple people. One or more people may be assigned to a user group; people may be assigned to multiple user groups or hierarchies; one or more user groups may be assigned as recipients of an activity. The hierarchical format of BizFlow's user management aligns well with corporate directory structures, such as Microsoft Active Directory System or Sun Java System Directory Server (formerly Sun ONE), found in most large organizations, providing rapid deployment and security.

Q: *What business applications or tools does BizFlow support?*

A: BizFlow supports Microsoft Project integration, including automatic creation of activities, deadlines, escalation, and routing rules within the Process Designer based on tasks that have been created in Project. The integration also updates the Microsoft Project Plan once activities are completed within BizFlow. Additionally, the Process Designer supports the import of Visio basic shapes, and BizFlow supports all Microsoft applications (Word, Excel and PowerPoint), as well as Adobe forms including Adobe signature capabilities. From an EDMS perspective, BizFlow supports the management and versioning of documents within Hummingbird, Microsoft Sharepoint, Documentum, and Destiny EDM (Korea only).

Q: Can BizFlow be embedded in our organization's corporate portal?

A: Yes. BizFlow functionality can easily be embedded in corporate portals and integrated with products such as Plumtree and SharePoint. Reports, work lists, process lists, and other data from BizFlow can be delivered as complete, self-contained packages of information, called *BizCoves,* which can be snapped ready-made into an existing enterprise portal.

Q: What reporting functionality does BizFlow support?

A: BizFlow's extensive data capture and reporting capabilities, coupled with its open data architecture, helps your organization:

- Capture the current cost of performing activities
- Target high cost activities
- Provide a context for establishing and monitoring performance measures
- Provide the link between activity modeling and economic analysis
- Forecast financial baselines
- Monitor process details and statistics in real time

BizFlow supports Benchmarking, Status, Workload, Throughput Trend Analysis, and Ad-Hoc reporting capabilities, supporting diverse information needs from executive level reporting to technical support troubleshooting. These report categories provide point-and-click report generation wizards that produce adaptable ad-hoc, graphical, and data export capabilities through the web browser. Create custom graphical reports within BizFlow or export report and/or process metadata to Excel, RDBMS, or OLAP cubes for assimilation into advanced reporting tools, such as Crystal Reports. For each process instance, BizFlow archives and provides visibility into a full audit trail of process data supporting historical reporting, benchmarking, trend analysis, and more. BizFlow's Process Simulator provides customizable report generation and export features that let you share essential details of your process simulating, analysis, and optimization.