Groupware Based Ad Hoc Workflow Management: The GroupProcess System

Concept, design, and archetypal implementation
of a collaboration on demand solution
to support weakly structured processes in organizations

by

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Abstract

Many of today's companies already have a strong integration of Workflow Management Systems (WFMS) in their IT infrastructure which is regularly used for predefined processes only. Furthermore, predefined processes are designed and implemented by specialists, whilst the process knowledge of the involved employees remains mostly unused. On the other hand, the everyday business life – especially in team oriented office environments – additionally requires utilization of flexible, rather short living processes (ad hoc workflows), that can only be predetermined in advance to a limited degree. Those processes are currently not adequately supported by information technology and consequently email systems are often used to execute them. Moreover some ad hoc processes that are used more than once could become established and important processes for the company. Thus there should be a supported way to transform these processes into predefined workflows in a WFMS.

Therefore, the GroupProcess project examined ways to support ad hoc processes in companies using information technology. Based upon this analysis, a lightweight, user-friendly tool has been designed and implemented that enables all involved people to design processes and execute, as well as reuse them. The GroupProcess system is integrated with existing systems like WFMS, Knowledge- and Office-Management-Systems. Besides practical studies at the Groupware Competence Center at the University of Paderborn (GCC) the GroupProcess system is being evaluated in case studies in cooperation with companies such as Siemens AG, DaimlerChrysler AG, IBM Corp., and some small and medium-sized businesses.