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The future in Business Software for large organisations. And the future is now!

A white paper by David S Chassels CA, CEO of Procession

Background

This paper is designed to address some of the challenges that all large organisations face and to stimulate discussion in the context of the Procession's unique capabilities. Such attributes have been described by no less than Bill Gates as the holy grail and future of software.

Corporations and governments invariably have large IT systems that have evolved over the years based upon transaction processing and database storage and represent a significant investment in money, labour and knowledge. The traditional design of systems often results in information being stored in isolated silos, duplicated many times and as a consequence very simple procedures become complex and challenging.

Any attempt to modernise systems by changing or even replacing a legacy system is inherently risky, would be prohibitively expensive and ill-advised in almost all circumstances. These legacy systems contain vast amount of highly valuable, often confidential and largely irreplaceable data, and as such are germane to the functionality of the business.

So, how in times of cash restraints do IT executives retain the best of their legacy system, representing £ms of investment, and yet also introduce a unified, cross-platform, flexible, process-driven solution?

Procession represents a new generation of software as Business Technology with its own unique design philosophy that is "process driven" in its approach, is generic in its application supporting people operating whatever the process, and delivers a comprehensively more effective use of legacy systems. This global first requires no custom coding or code generation and costs some 80% less than the alternative technologies available from dominant vendors IBM, Oracle and Microsoft.

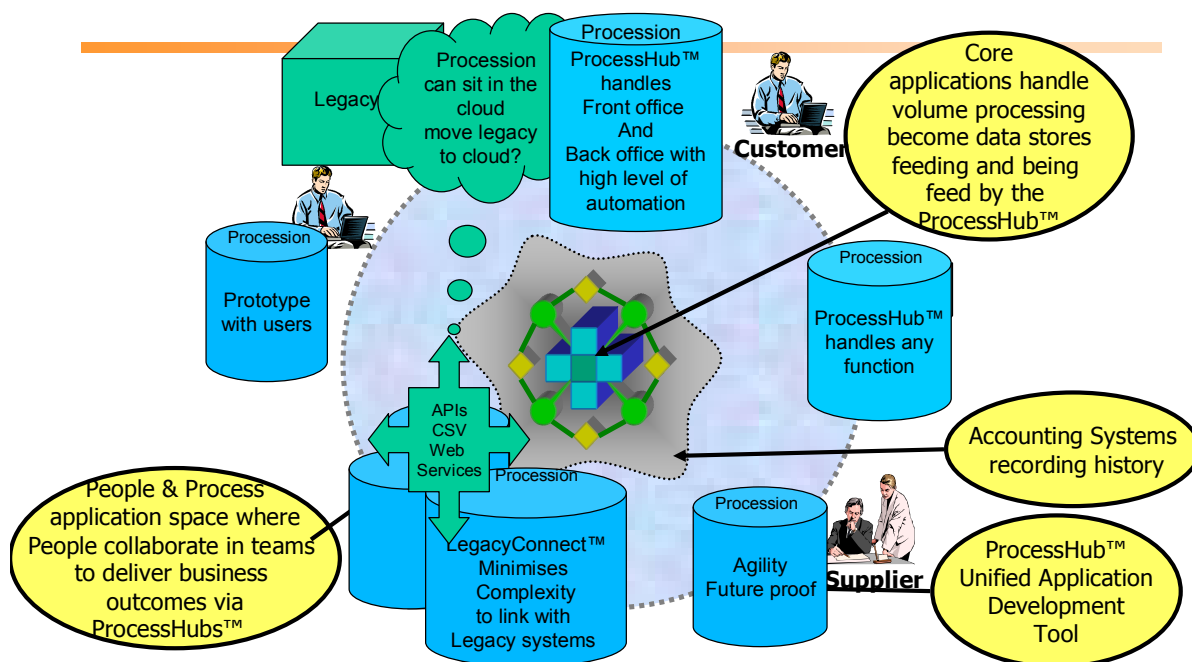
Additionally, Procession's unique approach supports high levels of process automation, with the attendant cost savings, and has the inherent capability of being easily modified to support continuous improvement in operating efficiency.

People and Process drive all activity

The IT industry has generally failed to embrace the fact that People are the source of all information. As such any new dynamic system development should focus where improvements in both service delivery and efficiency can be meaningful and measurable. Any new capability must now engage users at an early stage

Procession's approach is to use its unified toolset to build a ProcessHub™ that orchestrates a powerful "people driven business process" at the very core of any business requirement. From this ProcessHub™ all business activity is managed and the rules of operation ensure that the right information is in the right place at the right time, with full transparency and full accountability. This is achieved by the ProcessHub™ being able to handle front and back office in its unified toolset that addresses all business logic.

People Create **All** Source Information Supported by the Procession ProcessHub™



**Applications are simply implementations or expressions of process
A platform that allows build of any business application without recourse to custom coding.**

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Customer Centric Systems

Today systems need to be customer centric which can often require a “one-to-many” design philosophy to ensure that the “one” applicant is allocated “many” options according to availability. In technical parlance, this is in effect a sophisticated “configurator”, driven by an assortment of inter-dependent rules. The “business process system” should take an operator along the path of clear decision making to deal accurately with the specific circumstances of each “customer”.

Procession has built both complex product and pricing configurators for Rank Xerox as one of its early adopters. Further, Procession has built for UK Sport a comprehensive process to “means test” all athletes, within their end to end management of the UK’s top athletes.

Agility in the Software

Any new system should be able to implement quickly changes to both the process and the rules, without undermining the essential structure of the system. This is an absolute pre-requisite; changes to the business process and rules occur all the time and the business must always be supported exactly as required.

Above all, such agility will make any such dynamic system a future proof investment. Systems thus designed do not have a limited shelf life; they are continually updated.

Procession’s software has run UK Sport for 10 years, has undergone constant updating and change, and maintains a high level of automation with low running costs.

Legacy Systems

Existing legacy systems often provide the ultimate challenge to the development of new applications; existing complexities can often deter the addition of new capabilities.

This is where a deep understanding of the legacy issues is required with a collaborative approach involving all stakeholders. The use of the ProcessHub™ as described above is to use the power and information found in existing legacy systems without in any way disrupting the business.

Procession has a LegacyConnect™ capability within its tool set whose design allows the collection of information from legacy systems with minimal requirement imposed upon the legacy.

Duplication of data

One of the biggest challenges is the volume of data that requires secure storage. However much of this is a result of the old legacy silo based systems where replication of data has resulted in large investment in hardware storage. Whilst there is merit in looking at the offers to rationalise energy efficient data centres the real challenge is to stop duplication and work on a strategy to remove and archive such inefficient legacy systems.

Procession works on the core principle of once only entry of data, which is updated as it flows through the business. Data can be stored in this manner within the Procession environment and can therefore over time remove dependency on those inefficient legacy systems.

Technology Platform

Procession is itself a complete business software platform using the Oracle database, and as such is as scalable as Oracle. However Procession technology is not resource demanding and would result in a very efficient use of infrastructure requirements.

Procession supports a wide choice in browsers, operating systems and application servers including open source.

Methodology

Procession can be some 80% cheaper than using traditional approaches with old disconnected technologies as currently supplied by the 3 global players IBM, Oracle and Microsoft. Such savings start at the specification stage where the focus is on what people need to do their jobs and to achieve an outcome which collectively makes a business. From this a working prototype can be built quickly to capture all of the steps and rules that apply to business. This is a business analyst's job and, to be most cost effective, is best undertaken internally to allow freedom of access to the right people. This also allows the end users / operators to be involved in the system design.

For Procession, this is the relatively easy part and such a prototype becomes the first pass of the deployable solution. Procession is iterative in development and users/customers can see tangible progress as each agreed milestone is reached. With Procession's flexibility for quick change there is no need for a detailed "final" specification; Procession also recognises that new ideas will emerge as users give feed back.

Becoming the intelligent buyer

There is growing awareness of the IT deficiencies of the current position and a recent article in ZDNet titled "*IT today: Unsustainable, unhealthy and just plain screwed?*" sums up the problem that large organisations face. It concludes that IT is a mess and poses "the big question: What are you going to do about it? Where do we even start?" To be a learning society has never been more relevant than today in addressing just how to sort out the IT mess. Very few buyers of software are asking the business driven questions that allow a deeper understanding of capability. Given that in reality there are only three dominant global players who supply all underlying software technologies and tools, it is an easy task to ask a few relevant questions e.g.

1. Agility in software to support change

2. Ability to produce quickly prototypes reflecting the end user/business need to engage early feed back
3. How much custom coding is required to build custom solutions and is it accessible
4. Does any model capability reflect what is actually deployed
5. How many proprietary software tools are required to address the following the business driven requirements

- BPM *focus on people and their processes*
- Process engine *to ensure all works to plan*
- Rules engine *reflecting real world of compliance*
- Calculation engine *automating system work*
- State/ instance engine *Real time feed back*
- Workflow *everything connected in right order*
- Audit trail, events, escalations = *supporting control = empowerment*
- Time recording *supports activity based costing*
- Real time reporting *become predictive*
- Build the user interface *the interaction with people*
- Build mash ups *one screen multiple data sources*
- Linked Ajax Grids *faster access to related data*
- Roles and performers *people and machines*
- Management hierarchy *who sees what*
- E-mail and correspondence control *tracking external communications*
- Collaboration by accessing remotely required files = *efficiency in storage*
- Data storage *link between front office and back office*
- Create the help files *created as solutions built*

Procession now challenges those dominant players with a complete and unified tool that addresses the questions raised; answers are available at <http://www.procession.com/partners/index.html>

Summary

These views are based upon a deep knowledge of Procession's attributes and capabilities that challenge established ways of managing the complexities of different business software technologies. Such a breakthrough gives a new and simpler option for all organisations, big and small.

We believe that using Procession to update large organisations systems will be at a fraction of the time and cost of existing methodologies and technologies, and will result in very much more efficient and transparent systems. Procession has pioneered a new way with "people and process" at its core, and it is both proven and highly suited for deployment within in any organisation. Procession maybe the first but others will follow as evidenced by futile attempts by such as Microsoft to patent what Procession has created.