

Effectively administering the ARIS/Oracle BPA tool:

The question of who should manage it.

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The Establishment

What do you mean by “the question of who should manage it”? Isn’t it by default for the office of BPM to manage it, as they own the tool? NO! The tool administration is highly technical and IT related and to be managed by the IT team, who already handle the server management system. How about outsourcing the complex administration work to the experts?

These preceding questions and statements are inherent for any BPM implementation project. The ARIS/Oracle BPA tool administration is a critical factor to successfully realise the implementation of BPM in an organisation. It goes along the journey of BPM maturity in an organisation. The organisation may have successfully established the office of BPM with the ARIS/Oracle BPA tool server up and running. The users are trained, and the BPM engine is churning it services with the anticipation of many new projects to come on board – but the question remains. This editorial is an exploration to further narrow the question through understanding the ARIS/Oracle BPA tool administration components, and using multiple scenario modellings.

The Separation

The ambiguity about who should manage the BPM tool administration arises when it comes to the bridge that crosses the business/IT domain. In some contexts, this can be a “push-pull” situation between the business and IT teams to administer the tool. It needs to be clear that the separation between business and IT is on the administration components at the software level of the tool, and not the hardware piece (i.e. ARIS/Oracle BPA server). The server management, including the hardware maintenance and database application backups, remains with IT.

Predominantly, the business operation drives the organisation at the strength of its IT capabilities and, more often, the administration of the application system falls under the realm of IT. This can be true because of the natural complexity of most software applications; or it may be simply due to internal IT policy requiring the centralisation of IT-related operations into a single entity. However, this is not the case for the ARIS/Oracle BPA tool administration. As technical as it may sound, to administer the ARIS/Oracle BPA tool requires in-depth training on the Business Architect modules. The conceptual understanding of the tool’s functionalities, from the business perspective, is as essential as the technical skills needed to tweak the tool. In light of this, it is very important to first recognise the components of ARIS/Oracle BPA administration in the BPM space.

What are the ARIS/Oracle BPA Administration Components?

This diagram illustrates the key administration components of the ARIS/Oracle BPA tool. Also, keep in mind that these are the integral components that were set during the initial or start up phase of the BPM tool. It is necessary to effectively administer the tool as the office of BPM progresses.



The following table further outlines the administration components with their details in order to understand the scope of the tool administration.

Administration Components	Tasks
Database Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User management – creation and maintenance • Quality checks • Consolidate database objects • Merge databases • Manage import library objects
Configuration Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage method and evaluation filters • Manage template • Manage method (symbols, attributes, model and object types) • Update convention
Evaluation Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage semantic checks • Manage queries and macros • Import report scripts on server and publisher
Business Publisher Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User management for publisher • Physical generation of business publications • Provide direct links to models for intranet/documentations
License Key Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • License key assignments for user/projects • Report licence key usage/status • Reclaim licences (post projects for reuse)
General Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reset user password • Tool support on its capabilities (to projects/users) • Training information • IT liaison on server operations – services, physical database backups, logging files, hardware/software maintenance & network architectures.

The list of tasks is overwhelming, especially if the office of BPM is limited in resources. The number of resources required to carry out the ARIS/Oracle BPA administration very much depends on the size, number of projects, and the business model of the organisation. These, again, can be the factors that determine “who should manage the ARIS/Oracle BPA tool administration”. Refer to Roger Tregear, 2010, *Establishing the Office of Business Process Management – Resourcing the Office of Business Process Management*, as this chapter describes how the resources can be configured internally and externally to the office of BPM or the organisation. This is modelled according to the workload on the office of BPM and the services rendered while managing the centralised repository.

Insights on who should manage the ARIS/Oracle BPA tool administration are provided in the following section, which focuses on various models using business or IT to manage ARIS/Oracle BPA tool administration and their advantages and disadvantages.

The Paradigm of ARIS/Oracle BPA Tool Administration

Model 1: Administration solely by IT

The IT team, which is external to the office of BPM, manages all the administrative components. This is typical if the IT team governs both the hardware and software in the server. The IT team includes a dedicated department or personnel for:

- system applications/helpdesk
- server management (hardware/backup)
- network management (connectivity/IT network architecture)
- security management (user management/access)

In this structure, the administrative role is distributed internally into many pockets within the IT envelope. This scenario commonly exists in large multinational companies (e.g. financial institutions, retailing, and manufacturing industries).

Advantages:

- ARIS/Oracle BPA administration is treated as any other application governed by the IT framework, and the same team can cost-effectively manage it as an add-on server to their existing server/application system management.

Disadvantages:

- Requires extensive communication between the office of BPM (business) and the IT team to make changes to the administrative components.
- Diversified “change request” needs to be channelled to respective IT departments.
- One-stop solution model is diluted.
- Many IT personnel need to be trained on the administrative component relative to their role, which will incur higher costs and effort.

- Reduced “agility” in terms of BPM, as “change request” management has a lengthy turn-around.
- Poor support to the business users due to organisational/divisional separation of IT.
- IT personnel need to be trained on business processes operations to understand their needs to fit the administration components.

Model 2: Administration by an individual project team and IT

This is a large BPM initiation (such as a system replacement project that involves business process and technical modelling from an “as-is” analysis to a “to-be” state). A project of such a scale may require differing methods and settings than the established conventions. In this case, a dedicated project team member is trained on the ARIS/Oracle BPA tool administration to cater for the needs of the project. Meanwhile, IT takes on a reduced role, from hardware and backup perspectives, of server management.

Advantages:

- Access to an ARIS/Oracle BPA administrator within the project environment gives an upper edge, cutting all the “change request red tape” – hence, shorter turn-around times.

Disadvantages:

- Many projects may develop and use non-standardised methods.
- The governance control is potentially reduced, as the changes to components of the administration are not documented at the office of BPM.
- The trained resources may become redundant at the end of the project lifecycle.
- The office of BPM may lose valuable knowledge and experience, as they are not directly involved in the projects, especially at the lower level of BPM maturity.

Model 3: Administration by the Office of BPM

In this model, the office of BPM centrally manages all the administrative components. The ARIS/Oracle BPA tools administrator plays a pivotal support role in the office of BPM. This is in line with the purpose of BPM implementation, which gives an organisation the agility and efficiency to meet the business challenges. The continuous engagement in the tool administration provides leverage along the BPM maturity curve by tweaking the settings to meet the needs of the business users as of the office of BPM expands with the maturing organisation.

Advantages:

- Superior governance, as the method and setting changes are done within the purview of the office of BPM.
- Changes to the administration components can be done almost instantaneously without any dependence on external parties.
- No extensive communication channels are required between business users and IT.

- Increased opportunity to explore and learn by being directly involved in projects.
- Support services can be rendered directly and accurately from the SME (subject matter expert) source to the users instead of IT, which may handle applications other than the ARIS/Oracle BPA tool.
- The office of BPM can multitask the administrator role to support many of its activities. This not only gives the administrator an opportunity to learn new things, but also enable the office of BPM to operate with lean resources.

Disadvantages:

- The high specialisation of the administration role in a single person may pose an increased operational risk if that person leaves the organisation.

Model 4: Shifting the Paradigm – Outsourcing

Outsourcing has become a common model in the new business frontier. Organisations are moving their routine and complex activities to the managed service provider by the mean of SLA (Service Level Agreements) that mandate quality deliverables against the standard established in the SLA. So, instead of managing the complexity, the organisation manages the SLA levels. This may appear that the organisations are transferring their “pain” from the process to the managed service provider, which is absolutely not true!

What can be outsourced in the ARIS/Oracle BPA administration? Basically, the whole suite of administration components can be outsourced. Next question would be: how does the outsource mechanism work? The ARIS/Oracle BPA project team comes to an agreement with the managed service provider with a SLA outlining the components to be administered, together with their respective frequency and maximum response time. The frequency can be on a weekly or monthly basis. Meanwhile, the maximum response time indicates the allowable time for the task to be carried out, normally in hours. The communication to make any changes to the administration components is done via a service request by the ARIS/Oracle BPA team to the outsourced company. The outsourced company may also provide helpdesk services packaged into the SLA.

Advantages:

- The operating costs of having an FTE (full time employee) can be reduced, as charges incurred with the number of service requests during the SLA period.
- Highly experienced and skilled personnel do the administrative work, and work quality is assured.
- The organisation can then focus on more value-creating activities, instead of trembling in the non-expertise area of ARIS/Oracle BPA administration.
- The performance and progress of the office of BPM can be indirectly measured using the key metrics reports outlined in the SLA.

Disadvantages:

- The outsourced administrator has full access to the ARIS/Oracle BPA databases, and this can pose increased security risks to the intellectual assets in the databases.

Who should administer the ARIS/Oracle BPA tool?

The various models discussed in the preceding section illustrate how the ARIS/Oracle BPA tool administration scenario can exist in an organisation. Models 1 and 2 clearly show the “diluted” governance and control in the office of BPM. In fact, this situation can be a serious threat to the success of the BPM implementation itself.

It is ideal for any organisation to have the governance and control span within the office of BPM. This is demonstrated with even more advantages in Model 3. This is the more efficient model compared to 1 and 2, but now the question further boils down to the effectiveness. Organisations can achieve both efficiency and effectiveness by outsourcing as in Model 4 – it value adds to the BPM implementation efforts. The office of BPM can maintain the same level of governance and control that is drafted in the SLA with the managed service provider. Outsourcing the ARIS/Oracle BPA tool administration will reap economies of scale in cost, and will be operationally effective with the support of expert services. To make the outsourcing successful, the office of BPM needs to treat the service provider as a partner rather than an external contractor. This is important, because both parties share the unified values to grow together with the implementation of BPM ARIS/Oracle BPA tool.

Note: *This case study requires further evaluation, and we would welcome your feedback and information from any industry-use cases of ARIS/Oracle BPA tool administration management.*

About the Author: Raman Muniandy commenced his professional career in mechanical and electrical engineering, specifically in control systems. For five years he was an equipment maintenance manager with Matsushita-Toshiba in Malaysia. During this time he gained extensive project management experience and first developed his continuing interest in business analysis, improvement and management.

His passion for process improvement, and his experience in using the ARIS process modelling platform, has further encouraged him to continue his career in the BPM field as a member of the Leonardo Consulting team.

On completion of his MBA studies, Raman joined a regional bank in Malaysia as a quality specialist and worked in that position for three years. He completed Six Sigma studies to Black Belt level and further Lean Six Sigma training. During his time at the bank, Raman completed many process improvement and re-engineering projects, mainly in Consumer Banking Operations. Raman can be contacted at R.Muniandy@leonardo.com.au or 07 3831 5511.