**Business Process – over rated and over stated NOT the real opportunity**

By Dr James Robertson PrEng

In recent years we have been barraged with talk about "business process" and business process is touted in ways that suggest that it is the most important thing in ERP implementations

Many years ago the systems we now call "ERP" were called "Management Information Systems" yet today that is not a frequently used term

Why?

Well firstly, because Management Information frequently does not happen, a survey by Gartner a few years ago suggested that "most organizations are not making better decisions than they did five years ago". In my own experience executives are frustrated because they cannot get the management information they need from their massively costly investments in ERP, BI, etc. Recently the CEO of a very large corporation in Johannesburg rated his executive information systems at 3 out of 10 (0 = non-existent) and told me he would rate them at 1 out of 10 if it were not for the fact that he had excellent staff who provided him with the information he needed.

Examination of his big brand ERP revealed that it was configured in such a way that electronic summarization of key measurements was technically impossible and that human intervention was unavoidable. His dilemma is widespread and was summed up by the Financial Mail some years ago when they reported "19 out of 20 ERP implementations do NOT deliver what was promised".

Then, of course, there is the dilemma of other surveys that report high levels of satisfaction with ERP – why?

The bottom line is simple – if you put in an ERP expecting it to improve management and executive information and decision support you have almost certainly been frustrated and disappointed BUT, if you put it in to manage workflows you may well be reasonably satisfied, even if it has cost much more than expected.

BUT there is a challenge here

Some years ago I was taken to task by a client who insisted on putting process before executive information and who insisted on speaking about "the strategic process" – when I tried to point out the points above it was to no avail.

If we take the word "process" to be synonymous with "workflow" then there is NO such thing as the "strategic process" – unless discussions and decisions are to be classed as workflow.

The REAL problem facing business today is to get value out of their massive ERP and BI investments in a way that supports high value decision making.

This is entirely achievable, a method that I term "Strategic Engineered Precision Taxonomies" (SEPT) leading to "Precision Configuration" opens the door to major overhauls of your ERP, Data Warehouse or Business Intelligence investment in order to support high value decision support information delivery.

This is by far the biggest opportunity facing business today in the information technology space and I will be talking more about this in my presentation to the BPM Summit with examples of what causes the problem and what is required to fix it.