

Keeping Balance up Sisyphus Path: Thoughts on Bringing Innovation in BPM through Agent Technology

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ABSTRACT

This talk presents and discusses an overall perspective on the challenges, opportunities, and constraints faced by Whitestein while trying to leverage Agent Technologies ideas and techniques to bring substantial innovation to the Business Process Management market through the novel approach of *goal-oriented, autonomic BPM*.

Faithfully to the original spirit of the AT2AI workshop series, special care is devoted to highlight the interplay of matters theoretical vs. practical, as well as business vs. technical, novel vs. established, and other relevant dialectic pairs. Moreover, the overall Whitestein activity in the area is placed in the context of the conceptual framework proposed by the current edition of the workshop.

As a concrete token that seeded most of the considerations, the *Living Systems[®] Autonomic Business Process Management (LS/ABPM)* product is used. Customer communication, business partnerships, product conception, product development all presented valuable lessons to be learned, some of which are reported here as a hopefully stimulating contribution to the discussion.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

I.2.11 [Artificial Intelligence]: Distributed Artificial Intelligence – *Intelligent agents Multiagent system*. H.4.1 [Information Systems Application]: Office Automation – *Workflow management*.

General Terms

Management, Design, Economics, Standardization, Languages.

Keywords

Business Process Management, Technology Transfer, Business Innovation, Theory Application.

TALK OUTLINE

A company that focuses on being an innovative technology provider while keeping a sustainable business model faces many challenges that can be expressed as keeping proper equilibrium between opposite excesses while continuously struggling to push new approaches through their technology life cycle curve (and being ultimately prepared to render its own technology obsolete in the long term through the introduction of even further advancements).

The first part of the talk considers the concrete case of Whitestein, whose long lasting connection to Agent Technology need be considered in the ever-changing business landscape. From the company mission to the target markets of choice, to the product portfolio and business partnerships, all these factors contribute to depict a strategy seeking a delicate and multi-faceted balance to deploy successful business through technological innovation.

The second part of the talk zooms in on the latest addition to Whitestein's product offering. LS/ABPM is an integrated environment to support goal-oriented autonomic BPM, based on Agent Technology. The characteristics of the Business Process Management technical challenges, the market structure as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the currently leading commercial offers, all suggest ideas on the product scope, features, and most importantly the differentiating and most innovative product traits, and what is the role of Agent Technology in enabling and supporting all the above.

Finally, a series of thoughts is presented, which were inspired by the activity around LS/ABPM and the Whitestein Autonomic Technology Platform (the overall software infrastructure that also includes the LS/TS agent middleware) at large. These thoughts, partly lessons learned, partly empirically motivated conjectures, and partly wishes for the future, will be submitted to the audience as input for reflection and discussion.