This report assesses the capabilities of Oracle’s BPM technology platform, and also examines the partners and intellectual property that Oracle can offer customers exploring Business Process Management (BPM) implementations.

This assessment report forms part of a series of reports from MWD Advisors which assesses BPM technology offerings – technology-related capabilities which support organisations adopting BPM to design, develop, deploy, monitor and optimise partially- or wholly-automated business processes.

We strongly encourage you to read this report in conjunction with the accompanying report BPM Technology Review: Assessment Framework. The report provides background on the assessment framework and terminology used here and is freely available on www.mwdadvisors.com.

Find out how to access related research at http://www.mwdadvisors.com/ec/membership.php.

MWD Advisors is a specialist advisory firm which provides practical, independent industry insights to business analytics, process improvement and digital collaboration professionals working to drive change with the help of technology. Our approach combines flexible, pragmatic mentoring and advisory services, built on a deep industry best practice and technology research foundation.
Summary

In a nutshell

Oracle’s BPM technology heritage may be principally in automating application integration flows, but in recent years the breadth of applicability of the Oracle BPM Suite has been steadily extended. What’s more, a new companion service, the Oracle Process Cloud, has been released: this cloud-based service uses the same underlying technology as the Oracle BPM Suite, but is packaged and delivered in a way that significantly simplifies the experience of designing, building and deploying process applications (taking its lead from the web-based Process Composer design toolset that Oracle had already been working on for some time). Taken together, the current releases of the Oracle Process Cloud and the Oracle BPM Suite deliver a very wide range of capabilities that you can employ whether your requirements are for rapid results with comparatively straightforward projects, or for involved application development work to support complex programmes.

Support for different types of work

Automated work is Oracle’s heritage in the BPM space, and the ease of combining with the Oracle SOA Suite (on-premises) or the Oracle Integration Cloud Service makes for a strong foundation. Sophisticated error handling rounds out the picture.

Transactional

Separation of process management from model-based task management makes for a sophisticated platform for transactional work. The ability to drive data definition from form definition, and vice versa, is a nice touch; ‘Business Process Guides’ are another bonus.

Exploratory

Oracle’s design-time and runtime features for Case Management applications – which are available both on-premises and in the cloud – create a very capable foundation for these kinds of work scenario. Oracle has some impressive capabilities here.

Engagement scope and scale

At design time, if you take advantage of Process Composer (within the BPM Suite) or use the Oracle Process Cloud then you’ll have solid collaboration features at your disposal through discovery and modeling exercises. If you’re using Oracle BPM Suite then to drive social engagement in operation you’ll need to integrate with other Oracle products – namely the Oracle Event Delivery Network (EDN) and Oracle Social Network – but the capabilities are there. With the Oracle Process Cloud, social collaboration features are available ‘out of the box’. Oracle’s BPM-specific support for mobile devices is less mature than its social collaboration capabilities today, but a dedicated mobile client application (available on iOS and Android) is a good starting point, and ADF Mobile provides a platform if you want to design and develop targeted native mobile client applications. If you use Process Cloud then you have access to the Mobile Cloud Service to create custom mobile apps; Process Cloud also makes use of Oracle BPM Suite’s native smartphone and tablet apps for iOS and Android.

Change management

Oracle provides an environment for process automation projects which goes a long way to helping you minimize the costs associated with designing, deploying and changing processes. With the release of 12c the change management capabilities on offer are further improved, due to the removal of reliance on Oracle’s Meta Data Server and the integration of sophisticated facilities across both Studio and Composer.
Inside Oracle’s BPM technology offering

Oracle’s BPM technology offering spans its Oracle BPM Suite product bundle, and the new Oracle Process Cloud Service. In recent months the bulk of Oracle’s development effort in the BPM space has been focused on the launch of Oracle Process Cloud, which the company has packaged using the Oracle BPM Suite base technologies but also significantly simplified in terms of both design/development and operation.

Key products

If you choose to work with the current version of Oracle BPM Suite you’ll receive:

- Process Composer. A web-based process design environment aimed at helping non-technical stakeholders (for example business analysts) participate in process improvement and collaboration with IT directly without having to use developer tools. As well as mapping processes, Process Composer can also ‘play back’ incomplete process application designs in the browser interactively; perform process simulations; and be used to design task definitions and forms, business objects, simple integration specifications and business rules. New in 12c, Process Composer also includes some business architecture capability for customers wanting to model the ‘bigger picture’ that provides the context for BPM projects and programs.

- Studio. An integrated Oracle JDeveloper-based process design and development toolset which offers process, organisation, and information model and user interface design and simulation functionality along with Oracle Business Rules definition. Whereas Composer is optimized for the needs of non-technical specialists, Studio is optimized for developers needing to specify advanced integration functionality and other functionality particularly required for automated work scenarios.

- Enterprise Manager. Oracle BPM Suite 12c, just like all other Oracle technologies, uses Oracle Enterprise Manager (EM) as its technical administration and monitoring tool. From within EM, administrators can monitor and manage the BPM runtime engine and its components, together with deployed projects.

- Process Analytics. An analytics environment for exploring standard historical process metrics as well as process specific business indicators (modelled as part of process definition). It also enables process participants to create their own dashboards on top of these cubes. Process Analytics is integrated with Oracle Business Activity Monitoring (BAM) for real-time event based dashboarding.

By purchasing Oracle BPM Suite, customers will also gain access to the following:

- Oracle Business Activity Monitoring (BAM). This provides a graphical environment for administrators and analysts to use to explore real-time process and case performance, and has been significantly enhanced in its new 12c version. It’s designed to work across Oracle’s broader middleware and applications portfolio and is not limited to use with Oracle BPM Suite. A new design tool, BAM Composer, significantly eases the process of designing BAM dashboards.

- Oracle Business Rules. A business rules definition tool, repository and runtime execution engine. With Oracle Business rules in place alongside Oracle BPM, customers can design a clear separation between business rules and business processes, and drive independent change cycles for each. As of Oracle BPM Suite 11g, the design environment for Oracle Business Rules is now an integrated part of both Composer and Studio.
Oracle SOA Suite. Oracle’s Enterprise Service Bus (ESB) product is found here. This provides JDeveloper-based tooling to enable you to expose, manage and co-ordinate communications between existing systems, databases and applications exposed as services. SOA assets (existing SOA services, bus instances, and so on) are easily discoverable and usable within Oracle BPM tools; and Oracle BPM processes can easily be published to Oracle SOA Suite with automatically-generated service interfaces.

Oracle WebCenter. A limited-use license of Oracle WebCenter is provided as part of the Oracle BPM Suite. As well as providing the Oracle Portal that by default will host your process applications’ user interfaces, it includes Web content management (via the 2011 FatWire acquisition), document management, digital asset management and records and retention management (via the 2006 Stellent acquisition in 2006) and these capabilities can be easily exposed through your process application user interfaces to enable documents managed within Oracle WebCenter to be associated with process instances and cases.

If you choose Oracle Process Cloud, the toolset you use will be significantly simplified. There are just two separate environments:

- Composer. This is the same technology as found in Process Composer above, and is used by designers to specify and build process models, rules, forms and dashboards for cloud-based process applications.

- Workspace. Like Process Spaces (above), this technology is built on Oracle WebCenter Spaces technology. It provides the hosting environment for process participants to select and complete tasks, and for administrators to administer, monitor and fix running process instances. A Workspace mobile app delivers Oracle Process Cloud applications’ responsive web user interfaces to mobile devices, and adds offline working capabilities.

Using the products

Core capabilities

Mapping, modeling and design

If you use Oracle BPM Suite and you need to carry out significant custom design work then you will likely use two different tools for different aspects of mapping, implementation modelling and design. The web-based Process Composer is designed for non-specialists to use within collaborative process analysis and design; whereas Studio is based on Oracle’s more general-purpose JDeveloper development toolset, and provides more options for developers to specify process application implementation details. If you use Oracle Process Cloud Service then you’ll use Composer, which is a hosted (and streamlined) version of Process Composer.

Process Composer has been significantly extended in its support for ‘upstream’ analysis and architecture work. You can now document abstract enterprise process maps and hierarchies of value chains, and link those to process definitions that are implemented in Oracle BPM Suite. There’s also the ability to create ‘strategy maps’ that link corporate goals to lower-level objectives, strategies and value chains. You can define KPIs for value chain steps or individual processes, and also define ‘rollup KPIs’ that aggregate KPIs from lower levels in a hierarchy. Note, though, that these capabilities aren’t available as part of Process Cloud Service.

Two types of analysis reports are enabled from the models you can create in Process Composer: ‘impact analysis’ reports (that enable analysts and architects to quickly understand the broader impacts of making changes to a process, a strategy, a goal etc); and ‘process criticality’ reports (that show KPIs in the context of high-level process architecture and strategy maps, using data gathered from Oracle BPM Suite, external Oracle applications such as Oracle HCM or ERP, or manually-entered KPI data). Importantly, KPIs that you define either in business architecture models or in more detailed process models can be used to drive Oracle BAM dashboards and Process Analytics dashboards (see below). Note, though, that KPI capabilities found in Process Composer aren’t available in the Process Cloud Service.
In both Composer and Studio you can model all the usual business process element types – swimlanes, activities, gateways, timers, events, exceptions, and so on. The tools support BPMN 2.0 and allow designers and developers to see only as much of the very extensive BPMN 2.0 symbol set as they want. Composer/Process Composer in particular makes the abstract design of processes very straightforward, with a context-sensitive palette that helps guide analysts to create models that comply with the BPMN standard.

It’s straightforward within both Composer/Process Composer and Studio to import BPMN process maps from XPDL-compliant third-party tools, Microsoft Visio, and Software AG’s ARIS. In addition, Studio and Composer/Process Composer share the same meta-model, BPMN diagrams, and related process application artefacts.

The design-time repository servers as the system of truth and facilitates collaboration across business and IT tools. The BPM Studio provides integrated check-in, check-out, branching, merging and other versioning capabilities.

Operation and execution

Oracle’s core BPM runtime platform utilises the Service Component Architecture (SCA) standard to provide a pluggable set of specialised runtime engines that are designed to execute BPMN processes, BPEL processes, human tasks, and business rules. The BPMN and BPEL execution engines share a common ‘process core’ that provides one deployment and administration environment.

When it comes to testing and debugging of process applications before deploying a new or changed process, Oracle’s general-purpose development tools heritage brings some useful capabilities – particularly if you’re using Oracle BPM Suite. There’s a full process tracing (debugging) facility in Studio that works down to the level of individual activities and functions; there’s also a unit test automation capability (based on the open-source JUnit testing project). Quite separately to this, and working at a much more abstract level, the Process Player functionality delivered by Composer/Process Composer is very useful as a component of User Acceptance Testing as well as earlier-stage iterative design work – and this is available for customers of both Oracle BPM Suite and the Oracle Process Cloud.

With Oracle BPM Suite, multiple options are supported for deploying processes and moving them from development to test to production. The two most likely are Ant-based scripting, and use of Oracle Enterprise Manager. Enterprise Manager provides sophisticated deployment capabilities, especially in a clustered environment. With Oracle Process Cloud, deployment to both test servers and live production servers is accomplished through a simple graphical administration interface.

Monitoring and improvement

Within both Oracle BPM Suite and Oracle Process Cloud, Workspace provides the default work management portal that process participants use to locate and perform tasks. It’s also the tool process owners and participants will use to monitor work as it unfolds; those with sufficient permissions can create their own dashboards from within Workspace. You can view performance bottlenecks superimposed on process models themselves; this visualization distinguishes between queue-related performance issues and time-related performance issues.

Under the covers, process monitoring data can be fed from the runtime environment to either or both of two separate databases: a monitoring database (responsible for holding information for tracking events emitted by individual instances, according to configuration you set against individual activities, activity groups and processes at design time) and a Process Analytics cube (responsible for holding information used in analyzing historical activity, again based on the publication of events you configure in process models at design time). Process Analytics dashboards now come with pre-built dashboard components for analyzing the historical performance of tasks, processes and cases; and these components now allow those with appropriate permissions to take actions right from within a dashboard. Designers can customize the pre-defined metrics or the pre-selected visualizations of those metrics.
If you’re using Oracle BPM Suite, Oracle BAM’s scope isn’t solely limited to monitoring events emitted from the BPM Suite runtime; it can also subscribe to events from other platform elements and applications (such as Oracle Event Processing, for example), and present performance dashboards showing the bigger picture of end-to-end business process performance if you configure it to do so. With the Process Cloud Service you get a number of out-of-the-box reports for standard process metrics (workload, cycle time, and so on); custom analytics is on the Process Cloud Service release roadmap.

In version 12c of Oracle BAM, a graphical BAM Composer tool provides a non-technical way for analysts to specify BAM dashboards – defining KPIs (or importing them from Process Composer); specifying actions and alerts for KPI values that cross ‘high’, ‘medium’ and ‘low’ thresholds; and selecting visualizations. There’s the ability to set up predictive monitoring that will highlight jeopardy conditions with simple traffic-light indicators; and what’s more, there’s also the capability to visually assemble continuous queries, using pre-defined continuous query templates as the foundation, so that new time-based types of metrics (such as rolling averages or aggregates) can be included in dashboards.

Automated work

Mapping, modeling and design

It’s straightforward to define process applications that are completely automated using the Oracle BPM Suite – where processes have no end-user interaction steps. If you want to create automated process applications then the Oracle Process Cloud is going to be less suited to the task, because you’ll likely want to carry out extensive integrations with existing systems.

In the Oracle BPM Suite there’s a flexible approach to error handling that’s very useful in automated scenarios. At the Project level in Studio, you can specify that you want the runtime to automatically handle errors; in this case, steps and roles to do this are automatically added to each process. Or you can specify that you want exceptions to be propagated to parent processes; or that you want to explicitly handle exceptions.

Through the inclusion of Oracle Business Rules (OBR), which is integrated into the Oracle BPM Suite, it’s straightforward to define business rules in a way that clearly separates policy decisions from flow logic. Although OBR is also a standalone product, process information models are seamlessly made available within the business rule dictionary. Designers can specify rulesets directly from within Studio, either using decision tables or the traditional if-then-else format. Business rules can also be authored from the web-based Process Composer (which appears as Composer in Oracle Process Cloud), but analysts here are limited to using decision tables.

If you’re using Oracle BPM Suite then when it comes to integrating process flows with external systems, applications and databases you will use the BPMN service task and adapters that come with the Oracle BPM Suite, or alternatively use the Oracle Service Bus (OSB) as an intermediary (in more complicated situations). The OSB integration is principally provided by an automated importer for OSB services, which allows you to browse OSB instances and the services managed by those instances, then select services you want to use as External Components in a Business Catalog. OSB’s support for a variety of communication protocols and message formats means that it can be responsible for technology-level integration of existing assets as homogeneous services; however semantic integration (making sure that message datatypes match those expected by BPM processes) is something you will have to deal with using specialized transformation tools in OSB. These tools allow you to specify XSLT transformations on XML messages, or call out to specialized transformation services for more complex requirements.

If you’re using Oracle Process Cloud then the default option you have to hand for integration is a generic Web Services (SOAP/WSDL) adapter that you can configure within Composer. However you can use Oracle Process Cloud Service in conjunction with the Oracle Integration Cloud Service.
A detailed discussion of this offering is out of scope of this report, but in brief the Oracle Integration Cloud Service provides a compact graphical toolset that makes it straightforward to connect SaaS applications at both the interface level (connecting APIs to APIs) and the semantic level (message transformation). The service also ships with pre-configured connectors to all Oracle’s SaaS applications.

Operation and execution

With Oracle BPM suite, the runtime platform is integrated with its event processing engine, Oracle Event Processing (OEP), via the Oracle Event Delivery Network (EDN). Processes can act as both event sources (publishing events when certain thresholds are passed or states reached) and sinks (consuming events to kick off or progress process instances). Using this capability, you can build and deploy event-driven networks of processes which cater for highly dynamic business situations which require fast, sophisticated responses. Event-based integration also extends to Oracle Real Time Decisions (RTD), enabling RTD’s predictive analytics capabilities to generate action recommendations that can be surfaced within human tasks.

You can model event-based synchronization between process instances (and between instances of different processes) through the use of notification wait activities. These activities can wait for multiple separate events. Events can be sent and received by processes and pass via (and are processed in) the OEP engine.

As mentioned above, the concept of Activity Groups implements transaction control for groups of related process activities, which can be particularly useful in automated work scenarios primarily directed at integrating existing systems. From a scalability perspective, there’s good support for load balancing across multiple process servers and for clustered server environments.

Transactional work

Mapping, modelling and design

Organizational models are ‘first class citizens’ in both Oracle BPM Suite and Oracle Process Cloud. Designers or business analysts can use Studio’s tools to define models based on external databases (LDAP directories or HR applications) that lay out relationships between roles and groups, skill levels present in groups, and so on. If you’re taking models forward into a process automation project, those models can actually be used to determine runtime processing.

Tasks are defined through the BPMN concept of Human Tasks; a standard approach used by many vendors of BPM and SOA technologies and the same approach used by the Oracle SOA Suite. Human Tasks are defined completely independently of the processes with which they interact. It’s Human Tasks that define the roles and individuals who can perform tasks and any delegation or escalation actions that will be allowed; a simple wizard is provided, but as an alternative in Oracle BPM Suite you can define more complex policies for work assignment is possible using Studio’s specialised Human Task Editor.

Drag-and-drop task form design tools make it easy to specify quite sophisticated multi-part, interactive form structures and behaviours without the need to program. Composer/Process Composer’s form editor makes it possible either to design a form in the browser by dragging and dropping structures from a palette onto a design canvas, and then optionally creating a Business Object definition that mirrors the logical structure of the form; or, an analyst can select an existing Business Object definition and immediately create a first-cut form that presents data from that object to a process participant.

Process Composer and Studio provide a tool for building ‘Business Process Guides’, which provide guided documentation that acts as a ‘helper’ for process participants at runtime as they work with tasks – highlighting what information needs to be gathered for a task, the current state of progress through the process, and so on. Note, though, that Business Process Guides aren’t supported in the Process Cloud Service.
Operation and execution

Oracle’s technology is very capable in the way it can direct work distribution and monitoring based on models (rather than scripting – though Groovy-based scripting has been introduced as an advanced option in release 12.1.3, in both Composer and Studio). Organizational models that specify calendar and holiday definitions, roles and access permissions, management relationships and skills can drive task assignment, re-assignment and collaboration at runtime; role-based access to portals, dashboards, reports and worklists; and task deadlines and escalations.

Oracle provides other features to help with common work assignment patterns. A special kind of Human Task implementation called a Task Flow can be used to act as a container for the individual tasks; in this situation each individual task will be presented to a given participant to complete in one integrated user interface – though at runtime individual tasks in a Task Flow can be delegated from one user to another. Within Task Flows, you can also employ a design time concept that Oracle calls ‘sticky user’: here, you can specify that any set of two or more tasks within the flow should always be assigned to the same individual.

Since version 12.2.1, Oracle BPM Suite promotes a single principal technology through which process participants and stakeholders can interact with process applications: Oracle WebCenter Portal. For those choosing Oracle BPM Suite, Oracle WebCenter can also be configured to provide a long-term electronic document and content store for business processes executed by the BPM runtime. It doesn’t take much work to configure process flows to respond to state changes in Oracle WebCenter via events, nor is it complicated to configure process models so that running applications can store, retrieve and edit documents managed by Oracle WebCenter.

For those choosing Oracle Process Cloud, integration with Oracle Documents Cloud is seamless, with each business process instance in an Oracle Process Cloud instance being allocated its own unique Oracle Documents Cloud folder where documents can be easily stored, searched and retrieved.

For Oracle BPM Suite customers using WebCenter, as well as being able to take advantage of the document and content stores therein you also have the ability to use WebCenter’s collaborative workspace technology as part of the user experience that process participants have. In the design environment you can specify that a task should be collaborative, without programming; if you do this, the Instance Space provided for each instance of a process, delivered by Oracle WebCenter, will feature a collaborative workspace that’s automatically provisioned in support of collaborative work on that task by a team. If you choose Oracle Process Cloud, these collaborative features are available in the context of your process applications’ tasks by default.

Monitoring and improvement

The Process Analytics tool within the Oracle BPM Suite can help you to explore historical work performance in the context of individual activities, activity groups or process participants – so giving either a process perspective or an organizational perspective.

You can also create your own custom measures (‘business indicators’) in order to capture contextual information (such as the value of customer orders flowing through a process over time). However, at the moment, it’s not possible to visualize and drill into historical performance in the context of graphical process or organizational models.

When it comes to using analytics in an operational context, for example to guide human process participants by suggesting likely choices based on historic evidence, Oracle can support this if you employ Oracle Real-Time Decisions (RTD) alongside Oracle BPM Suite. With limited integration work, you can configure Oracle RTD’s predictive analytics capabilities to generate action recommendations that can be surfaced both within social activity streams (see Engagement scope and scale below) and within the context of running processes and tasks. These capabilities are currently not provided by Oracle Process Cloud.
Exploratory work

Mapping, modeling and design

In Oracle BPM Suite, Oracle has assembled some strong capabilities in support of designing case management applications. Designers and developers can create multiple Case definitions within any given Project, which in turn specify:

- Case categories and priorities.
- Relationships with other case types (for example you can specify cases as sub-cases of others)
- Attributes (structured datatypes) and documents (via integration with Oracle Unified Content Management).
- Sets of case activities and sequences (available at runtime to appropriately privileged users).
- Policies that constrain which activities are mandatory, and which activities are available for selection/processing in which circumstances (defined in Oracle Business Rules).
- Milestones that identify ‘checkpoints’ in the lifecycle of each case instance and represent points at which deliverables or sets of related deliverables are made.
- Events that case instances can signal when milestones are reached, activities are started or completed, and so on.
- Stakeholders, roles and permissions that shape which individuals can see and interact with which aspects of case instances.
- Links to Oracle WebCenter Content structures, with the ability to specify case-related content permissions and retention policies.

Operation and execution

The case management functionality on offer brings a strong set of operational capabilities to exploratory work scenarios. With case objects deployed as part of your projects, your process applications gain the ability to dynamically create and manage tasks, processes and their associated information at runtime; the platform has the ability to execute work using flow structures that are made available by the system and selected by individuals at runtime, guided by system events and rules. Cases can also be linked together through associations. Activities can be reconfigured at runtime, for example (so a required activity can be made optional, or vice versa; a non-repeating activity can be made repeating; a manually-invoked activity can be made automatic; and so on).

Case owners and other stakeholders have the ability at runtime to perform ‘people searches’ for individuals who might be qualified to help perform a given task or process and assign them as collaborators on that task or process. Searches can be rich, if your organization has put the requisite work into developing its organizational model; searches can be based not only on roles, but also on social connections (see Engagement scope and scale below) or skills.

Events created within case instances are recorded within each case instance, creating an audit trail that case workers with the right permissions can easily explore; on case closing, the platform can check and enforce that all required activities have been completed. Although today there’s no in-built feature that enables the runtime to automatically archived closed cases for later auditing or analysis, with a small amount of work, it’s possible to script behavior that will serialize case information and history and archive it to a Records Management system.

In the context of the Process Cloud Service, generation of a process archive to include process history, participants, referenced documents, and process conversations, automatically archived to Documents Cloud Service upon process completion, is on the immediate roadmap.
Monitoring and improvement

In Oracle BPM Suite, the ability to monitor the progress of cases – individually and in aggregate – has been improved with the re-architected implementation of Oracle BAM. It’s now possible to quickly configure case performance reports and dashboards that hook into your runtime case management environment.

At the moment there’s no ability to mark completed work patterns as templates for future use and types of case, though Oracle is aiming to address this in a future release. There is quite a lot of dynamic case management capability in the product in this release, though – at runtime case workers (with the right permissions) can make significant changes not only to the activities pre-populated into a case model; but also to the stakeholder model that determines which individuals, roles and groups can carry out which case activities.

Change management

With the introduction of the Process Asset Manager (PAM) as part of the foundation of Oracle BPM Suite, as well as the foundation of the Oracle Process Cloud Service, Oracle has significantly improved the ease of use of very solid change management facilities that have been available for some time. Oracle provides an environment for process automation projects which goes a long way to helping you minimize the costs associated with designing, deploying and changing processes.

With PAM, the capability differences that previously existed between Composer/Process Composer and Studio have now been eradicated, and both tools now use a central design repository that no longer relies on Oracle Metadata Store (MDS). In the context of Oracle BPM Suite you use PAM to store projects and manage their deployment to runtime servers and their exchange with Eclipse-based Studio development users; With PAM, regardless of whether you’re using Composer or Studio you can now create and store multiple ‘snapshots’ of entire projects, which is a very easy way to perform configuration management atop artefact-level versioning. There’s also the ability to create inheritance hierarchies for entire BPM projects – meaning it’s straightforward for a central design authority to create a ‘base project’ containing important reusable design artifacts, and have individual project efforts all inherit from that base project, as long as all projects are stored in the same repository.

Further, you can specify that only certain users or roles can deploy new processes or changed processes. You can also define publishing control workflows, which ensure that process publication always follows the same rules and includes the same reviews.

Finally, within both Oracle BPM Suite and Oracle Process Cloud, the splitting of process provisioning into two tasks – publication and deployment – means that it’s comparatively straightforward to stage rollout of new processes, and deploy them consistently in multiple locations in highly distributed organizations (or even across organizations). Oracle provides a number of tools that makes it easy to transfer assets from one deployment environment to another. Lastly, there’s support for versioning of deployed process models with the ability to ‘hot-deploy’ revised process versions, so that any currently executing instances of the previous process version continue to run while new instances start with the new process version. Furthermore, you can take process applications you create in Process Cloud Service and deploy them into the BPM Suite runtime environment.

Engagement scope and scale

In the design environment, Composer/Process Composer provides solid support for online collaboration as part of modelling – you can share models online within teams, and anyone with rights to access a model can add comments to it online. Analysts can also ‘play back’ complete or incomplete processes interactively with other project stakeholders online.

From a deployed application perspective, there are a number of social collaboration and mobile deployment capabilities that have the potential to extend the scope and scale of engagement in your deployed processes.
The underlying capability that enables both Oracle BPM Suite and Oracle Process Cloud to support broad scope and scale of engagement is the way that its tools and infrastructure are event-enabled almost pervasively. Running processes, activities, human tasks, cases, and (for Oracle BPM Suite customers) Oracle BAM implementations can all generate events which, via the Oracle Event Delivery Network, can be shared with the Oracle Social Network (Oracle’s own social collaboration platform) or integrated with other third party social collaboration platforms. Oracle Social Network users can therefore easily keep track of work status, get alerted about problems and obtain task notifications within the social network environment. In the context of Oracle Process Cloud the integration of Oracle Social Network, and its collaboration capabilities, into the user experience is transparent.

For Oracle BPM Suite customers support for collaboration in the completion of tasks, processes and cases is also explicit and rich, through the integration of WebCenter’s collaboration features as part of the use of WebCenter Portal for running process instances. Here users can not only access process tasks and data but can also collaborate with each other via wikis, discussions, documents and activity streams. Users can also synchronize their business calendars with process calendars for better management and tracking of process related work. The Oracle BPM platform can also automatically provision relevant stakeholders so they can engage in task collaboration.

Automatic correlation of individual posts/messages with process instances means that external users of the Oracle Social Network can also receive updates regarding the progress of cases, processes and tasks (including alerts about unmet SLAs and other important events), and those with sufficient permissions can ‘loop back’ directly from such messages to instigate actions within process instances themselves.

For Oracle Process Cloud customers, collaborative task working is enabled as part of the user experience, as long as you also license the Documents Cloud Service.

In release 12c Oracle built on the previously-available ADF Mobile framework to deliver a generic mobile client for your Oracle BPM Suite process applications (BPM Workspace, today available on iOS devices). This provides task list and form user interfaces, integrates with devices’ native capabilities (cameras, geolocation etc) and also – critically – provides an ‘offline mode’ that enables process participants to launch and complete tasks even when there’s no mobile connectivity. Support for other popular mobile device platforms is on the way.

In the context of Oracle Process Cloud, you can use the Oracle Mobile Cloud in conjunction to achieve the same results; Process Cloud also ships with native smartphone and tablet apps for iOS and Android platforms that provide baseline capabilities (the ability to select and work on tasks, access work documents, and collaborate with others).
Reference information

Regional capabilities
As a global technology provider Oracle has local representation in all countries across North America, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, the Asia-Pacific region and Japan.

Industry capabilities
In the BPM area specifically, Oracle has specialized industry teams serving financial services and the public sector; Oracle Solution Accelerators are offered as freely available assets to these industries (currently only for deployment to the Oracle BPM Suite).

Oracle Solution Accelerators are designed to be deployable out-of-the-box yet easily extensible though the Oracle BPM Suite. They’re built on functionality from Oracle BPM Suite, Oracle WebCenter Content, Oracle WebCenter Imaging and Oracle WebCenter Portal. Solution Accelerators include best practice process models, business-rules, UI and dashboard definitions, and make use of other Oracle applications as required. Example targets include Financial Services Loan Origination (FSLO) and Public Sector Incident Reporting (PSIR), as well as horizontal processes, such as Internal Service Request (ISR) and Employee Onboarding (EOB).

More Solution Accelerators, including solutions for Oracle Process Cloud, are currently under construction. Process Cloud solutions will be made available through the new Oracle Cloud Marketplace and will enable customers to automatically provision software from Oracle partners into their own Process Cloud instances.

Partners
In the BPM area specifically Oracle cites over 200 consulting partners - including Accenture, Capgemini, Avio Consulting, Keste, Link, eProseed, PwC, CSC, Deloitte, Infosys, and Opitz. A full list is available at the oracle.com website.

Oracle also provides its BPM suite as an embedded component to www.frevvo.com.

Platforms and connectivity
The Oracle BPM Suite runs on Oracle’s WebLogic Java application server. You can, if you want, use an Oracle BPM Suite license and deploy the product to the Oracle Java Cloud – leveraging hosted WebLogic services and creating your own hosted full Oracle BPM capability.

A very wide range of application adapters is available as chargeable extensions to your core Oracle BPM Suite licensing: these cover all popular packaged business application suites, middleware and data transfer standards, database stores and more. You can find a complete and up-to date list at http://www.oracle.com/technetwork/middleware/adapters/overview/index.html

For situations where you need to coordinate the exchange of information between organizations you’ll currently need to deploy Oracle BPM Suite and then use that in conjunction with Oracle B2B, which can be deployed as a chargeable extension to the runtime platform. Note that you’ll also require separate adapter licenses if you want to deploy EDI, Healthcare-specific, RosettaNet or ebXML related functionality.