

## IBM® developerWorks WebSphere®

Online chat transcript, August 21, 2008

Topic: *What's new with IBM WebSphere BPM V6.1.2 product suite*

### Hosted by:

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**tomyoung:** Hi all, thanks for joining the chat today. I'm Tom Young with developerWorks, and today we have Eric Herness, Christina Lau, and Michael Gilfix to talk about the WebSphere BPM V6.1.2 product suite. I'd like to give the moderators a chance to introduce themselves, and then they will be open for questions. We'll be ending the chat at 2 p.m. Eastern.

**christinalau:** y, i think we had chatted sometime before

**Lori Small:** just wanted to renew our contact

**mgilfix:** Hi all - I'm Michael Gilfix. I'm a lead architect in the BPM suite, with a focus on web technologies. I'm a lead architect for the new business space feature.

**christinalau:** Lori - we are working with Verizon business as well to get their EOM appl over to WPS. Are you involved with that?

**EricHerness:** Hello, I'm Eric Herness, Chief Architect for all of the WebSphere BPM products.

**christinalau:** Hi, I am Christina Lau, work on BPM Ad Tech - i.e.. cool stuff.

**christinalau:** Check out my blog, <http://www.ibm.com/developerworks/blogs/page/clau>. It is probably the best source on what we are working on.

**mgilfix:** Hi all - How many people have played with the new business space feature that we've added into our BPM products as of our 6.1.2 release? This is new feature that we think is a very exciting development as part of our continued efforts to deliver an integrated stack.

**skean:** I have.

**mgilfix:** That's great - We're interested in your feedback and any questions you might have. We can also talk through some of our strategy in this space.

**skean:** Okay

**skean:** Will there be a repository of different space designs and widgets? Maybe?

**christinalau:** Hey Glenn!

**t russell:** Will business spaces replace the need for WebSphere Portal?

**christinalau:** Glenn - using our BPM Repository yet?

**mgilfix:** @skean Great question - We shipped a set of templates out of the box (those are what you can quickly create a business space from) as well as widgets. We are going to continue to grow what we deliver out of the box here to make it fast to assemble new applications.

**glenn coward usaa:** Not yet, but would like to. You need to understand our governance and collab features. Pretty cool.

**mgilfix:** @skean - We are also looking at integrating with MashupHub, so we can fit in with the enterprise content story.

**mgilfix:** @t russell - Another good question. The business space is not aiming to replace portal.

**christinalau:** Glenn - We will love to have you use the Repository and then come and tell your story next year at Impact.

**mgilfix:** Portal has deep features in scaling a Web portal, around multi-tenancy, management, policy-based control of content, and more.

**christinalau:** I am working on the next cool thing - Web-based BPMN authoring 🤖.

**mgilfix:** We are working on evolving an integration story where the business space can be used to rapidly build new content that can be integrated into portal.

**glenn coward usaa:** Well, I would also like that, but we have some work to do and change management is no easy road at USAA.

**christinalau:** BTW - anyone here thinking about BPM and Mashups? Was talking to Ovum yesterday.

**mgilfix:** This lets us address a range of customers: those who want smaller scale Web interfaces, those who have existing investments, but still want to leverage new Web technologies, etc.

**christinalau:** I see..well you have my Sametime or email if you want to talk more.

**christinalau:** Anyone into mashup yet? e.g. serena on business mashup.

**glenn coward usaa:** We need a built in governance workflow and the collab is essential. Keep in mind that for now, we still have 90% Visio.

**mgilfix:** One exciting aspect of this is our upcoming support of the iWidget specification. This is an IBM led specification that we have donated to OpenAJAX to help promote widget interoperability.

**mgilfix:** We are starting to see support in different software group products, which lets you better reuse content.

**skean:** That is what we are looking into the business space, we have a new business for remote workers and I have used it to quickly create a task workflow for both remote and in house.

**christinalau:** Glenn - Visio is cool..with bpmn2.0 there will be more options using different tools (bpmn is like xml or like air)..it can interchange.

**christinalau:** Glenn - also RAM has a governance built-in. Once the humans figure out what they need, it should be able to codify it.

**mgilfix:** That's great - What kind of additional content would you like to see out of the box?

**mgilfix:** @skean - also, are you looking to rapidly assemble applications you were building with other Wb technologies before (like JSPs or portlets), or do you have any collaborative scenarios led by business end users as well?

**glenn coward usaa:** Yes, I know and I like. I do think we should chat more and conf about the things our process owners, librarians, and business people like in the enterprise process library. You guys could easily do all this still with the tools you have.

**skean:** I like the modularity (? ha) of adding designed or pre-designed widgets to develop a UI, deploy it quickly, and the ability to fix quickly as well.

**christinalau:** Yes, let's do that.

**mgilfix:** @skean - Where do you work?

**skean:** @ mg Yes

**skean:** Zirmed

**christinalau:** skean; Have you tried Lotus mashups and iWidgets?

**skean:** We started with Lotus forms.

**christinalau:** Take a look at the Lotus Greenhouse.

**Lori Small:** Speaking of lotus - business space really seems to fit their goals.

**skean:** And as we got deeper into developing the UI for the remote users, we realized we needed to deploy quickly.

**christinalau:** <https://greenhouse.lotus.com/home/login.jsp#none>

**Lori Small:** Any chance of collaboration with the Quikr products?

**glenn coward usaa:** Christina, the issue is really about building in governance that allows the business folks to take ownership of their assets in the repository. It must be super easy workflow and business terms, etc. The librarians are all business people, not IT. More on this when we conf.

**christinalau:** Yeah business space, mashups all are trying to make things more usable and easier.

**skean:** ty christina

**mgilfix:** @skean - That's a key use case that we were really targeting. Reducing the upfront development to just focus on the forms and allow out-of-the-box assembly to quickly be productive.

**mgilfix:** Do you see the need to create your own custom widgets as well?

**EricHerness:** Glenn, in addition to development time governance, we are working on runtime governance as well. I'm not sure if that is in your scope, but it is on our radar.

**christinalau:** Yes.. agree the business people should not be building it They can mock it up using Visio 😊.

**skean:** I am not a true programmer, but I have dabbled around in it as needed. I am a sys analyst, which is why I love the widgets.

**glenn coward usaa:** We need a pre-built process mashup space. Greg Yarbrough (USAA), ex-IBMer, mentioned that you guys did something like this in the past. I tried to explain it to Davis.

**christinalau:** Glenn - that is my incubation project.

**skean:** @mg yes, that is one of the avenues that this product seems to be going toward.

**christinalau:** I should show you a demo and get your feedback.

**mgilfix:** @skean - that's great feedback. We have been trying to address a variety of audiences: making it easier for business users to work without IT involvement, and also accelerating the IT led developments.

**glenn coward usaa:** Please demo.

**mgilfix:** @skean - Well, we're always interested in understanding what content would help you with this process, or what additional scenarios you think we need out of the box

**christinalau:** But Glenn - you didn't invite me to USAA to watch basketball/baseball or something 😊.

**skean:** Well, my feeling is this is where IT needs to be, build widget libraries, deploy quickly, because most tasks are useable in a variety of UI environments.

**glenn coward usaa:** Ouch!!!! I didn't get to go either. Pablo and Jennifer have all the fun. I got called away at the last moment. Argh.

**Lori Small:** I am all for the library approach.

**christinalau:** Glenn - I was jealous 😊.

**Lori Small:** Is there a plan for something similar to the Bowstreet portlet product?

**mgilfix:** What do you think about the template concept and how you can create a customized instance (space) from that?

**Lori Small:** And the more widgets provided to start, the better.

**Lori Small:** Rich startup lib.

**glenn coward usaa:** What's the latest on the Design to Deploy. We were going to jump up to Toronto and help. Is it in hold mode?

**skean:** Widgets specifically designed for certain business environments, like health care, insurance, and like credit card remits, are basically the same in a lot of ways.

**Lori Small:** Templates are great, but I am also interested in easily building custom widgets,

**EricHerness:** Glenn, do you mean 'Direct to Deploy'? I assume.

**skean:** I love the space templates.

**mgilfix:** @Lori (Nice to see you again - we met at a summit in Raleigh): Absolutely. This is a big area of investment for us and we are continually growing that library (and improving the usability and function of what we have). You can help us prioritize.

**Lori Small:** I found out that our executive dashboard is an asp page that is essentially excel graphs.

**glenn coward usaa:** Yes.

**Lori Small:** But with a lot of supporting details.

**Lori Small:** In other words, a basic monitor would be nice.

**mgilfix:** @skean - That's great - we are looking at providing a way that you can better manage templates, and create your own for your own UIs.

**Lori Small:** Since we do not use IBM infra.

**christinalau:** Actually, the Lotus Greenhouse is a way to help facilitate developing a widget community.. check it out. I thought there was some price last month for the best mashup built.

**glenn coward usaa:** Are the widgets being discussed in the other conversation based on IFW /IAA or the CBM?

**christinalau:** No. I am talking about iWidget. It is a spec by IBM and others.

**EricHerness:** Glenn, we are continuing to work on Direct to Deploy as part of our future plans. As you know, we have improved the story for going from Modeler to WID to WPS and had definitely continuing that move. Things like the storyboarding support in Modeler 6.1.2 and the BPMN shapes support in 6.1.2 are also setting us up for more of this direct to deploy direction we're pursuing.

**skean:** @mg - And the ability to color them is a nice touch, may not seem like a lot, but when I have a lot of end users that I can say to "when you are in your purple workspace, you can do these functions" they grasp the concept more quickly.

**UY Julio A Larrechart:** Hello, I have one doubt about if there are any differences between Portal Dashboard accelerator and Monitor?

**christinalau:** Sort of like having Google widget a new component model.

**christinalau:** Re IFW - those are enterprise assets.

**christinalau:** Hi Julio - Portal Dashboard is not Monitor.

**christinalau:** Monitor, however, can run in Portal.

**mgilfix:** @skean - That's great feedback. We had some debate on whether you should be able to switch the skin at the space level. For customers who want strict control, they can just have one default.

**mgilfix:** @Lori - What did you mean by basic monitor? How would you like it to integrate in the environment you describe, if these are excel?

**glenn coward usaa:** So, I am wondering if the widgets under discussion are the monitoring views for processes that underlie them and are these processes pre-built based on some sort of framework standard like an industry specific CBM? Make sense?

**Lori Small:** I mean a dashboard widget that is not dependent on being exported from WBM or IBM infra.

**Lori Small:** data analysis

**Lori Small:** basic

**Lori Small:** like excel, but more

**christinalau:** Glenn - in business space - there are some pre-built widgets for process, human task etc.

**Lori Small:** I have to find out more about ours to be clear.

**mgilfix:** @Glenn: The monitor widget we provide out of the box can be configured by the end user to point to any monitor model created in the product. Customers can define

their own monitor model that allows them to measure KPIs, metrics, etc. for their environment. The choice is set through widget configuration when adding into a page.

**christinalau:** However, in general, there are other widgets that we can have.. and there is now a common API (language) to describe widgets.

**Lori Small:** No, I mean just data values - not necessarily tied to the process and we do not use human tasks (no WPS).

**Lori Small:** I need to play with Monitor, maybe we can use it.

**Lori Small:** I am just worried it is too complex 😊.

**mgilfix:** @Lori - The Monitor product supports exporting instance data to excel for analysis.

**mgilfix:** And you can then mix into the spreadsheet functions.

**Lori Small:** Yes, I know, but not importing, right?

**Lori Small:** We get our data in the form of spreadsheets now.

**skean:** @all - In the Web site widget, I am pointing to an html file with hyperlinks on it, will there be a widget that I can add in hyperlinks via text and also command how they open, like in a tab or new window?

**mgilfix:** @Lori, meaning, feeding the results of your spreadsheet and crunching back into Monitor?

**Lori Small:** We would like to move to standard event-based input, but that is a long time off, if ever.

**glenn coward usaa:** Lori, Monitor 6.1 was a big improvement for us and the users are finally getting it. Some of this was just a learning curve on our part in what to show them but the UI is greatly improved. The ops folks don't seem to be struggling with it.

**Lori Small:** Yes, just use Monitor to display.

**christinalau:** Monitor supports REST interfaces and you can use those interfaces to get to your BAM data and display them in excel or other viewers.

**Lori Small:** I want to go the other way.

**mgilfix:** @skean - The Web site widget basically opens a frame (an iFrame actually) that renders the URL inside. If you navigate within that page, it's within the constraints of that frame.

**Lori Small:** Import from excel.

**glenn coward usaa:** As far as the event based input. We are using the CBE/CEI and it's working well for us.

**christinalau:** Glenn - are you guys using Cognos?

**skean:** @mg ty

**glenn coward usaa:** Yes and BO. We are all over the place.

**skean:** I have the html opening the links in a new tab using a \_blank and a MS browser option now.

**christinalau:** Glenn - lol just like us. So we are always working on these integration points between products.

**mgilfix:** @skean - Yes, the \_blank target trick works to open in a new browser tab. This is irrespective of the frame on the page 😊.

**skean:** @all - What are some of the next widgets you are thinking about?

**Lori Small:** More granular publisher widgets.

**glenn coward usaa:** Lori, have about 1.5 years experience with Monitor. I am going to say that using Monitor as the view is probably not the best use. It's much more about real-time, actionable views.

**Lori Small:** We may want to build our own page instead of the standard 4 pane, etc.

**Lori Small:** I agree, Glenn.

**mgilfix:** We've been looking at providing some widgets to help with managing the BPM system, including system health, governance of changes, and more. We have also been looking at adding more monitoring visualizations and improving our existing publishing server capability. Finally, we are exploring more business user centric tooling for describing processes to the system.

**Lori Small:** But I hate that we are using ASp and Sharepoint 😞.

**mgilfix:** I'm interested in what widgets you want to see.

**christinalau:** What do you think of the Cognos dashboards? Are they more intuitive?

**Lori Small:** I wanted to customize publisher 6.0/6.1 by just using the project tree and model portlets.

**mgilfix:** Do you guys like the widget model: the idea that you can substitute one of our widgets with your own? We are going to officially allow custom widgets soon and release our events as an API, so you could replace "parts of the page" with your own custom widgets.

**Lori Small:** Just browse - did not need attributes, comments, or outline.

**mgilfix:** @Lori - You mean, configure the trees so they filter out those attributes.. or just eliminate some of those other things from view (if they were their own widgets).

**glenn coward usaa:** No, I don't think so. They are still targeting a BA type role. Then again I am no Cognos expert. Can check.

**Lori Small:** Sounds good, but we don't always have time to build our own, so I am trying to think about library components that would be useful.

**skean:** @mg Well, none that I can think of at the moment, but I would like to be able to manage the size and configuration of the widgets.

**Lori Small:** Treat each as a separate widget.

**Lori Small:** We asked for them to be separate portlets in Portal.

**Lori Small:** But, there was hardwiring involved.

**Lori Small:** And the size would not adapt to fill the area, etc.

**mgilfix:** @Lori - we are trying to improve the way we deliver the publishing server widgets, to be both more useable and more componentized. This will take a bit of time, but it's high on our radar.

**christinalau:** Yeah - we are struggling with the UI designs in many places, from UI tech of choice to the user metaphors, so this is a very interesting discussion.

**Lori Small:** Also a way to do communication between widgets like portlet wiring.

**mgilfix:** @skean - Improvements in layout management are on the way 😊.

**Lori Small:** or C2A

**christinalau:** Anyone want to say something about Flex, Flash, Dojo, etc? 😊

**Lori Small:** Exactly - true componentization without unnecessary coupling.

**mgilfix:** Do you guys like the idea of implicit wiring (what we have today)?

**mgilfix:** Or do you see the need to always explicitly make these couplings?

**christinalau:** Lotus Mashup support widget wiring. Try it out - they are really quite nice, a lot more flexible than C2A. I love it!

**Lori Small:** I still struggle with IBM's focus on technology (no offense, Christina).

**Lori Small:** I want to focus on making things easier to customize and providing out of the box components with business value.

**christinalau:** Lori - yeah that is why we like the iWidget model.. small.

**Lori Small:** I guess you can tell I am not a developer anymore.

**Lori Small:** I do not even like the term widget 😞.

**Lori Small:** Too techie - it is just a component.

**Lori Small:** But mg knows that from the customer summit 😞.

**christinalau:** Lori - re IBM's focus on tech - well... they told us we now have 390K people with 70% or more tech folks.. so we can't help but focus on tech 😊.

**Lori Small:** I know.

**mgilfix:** That's great feedback though - we are constantly evolving our approach to presentation technologies and how we deliver content to better address the business user. The business space is a major push in that direction - but there's lots more to follow.

**christinalau:** I think Google invented widget.. we just added the "i".

**skean:** @mg Please elaborate on explicit wiring.

**mgilfix:** Heh.. that "widget" name is sticky.

**Lori Small:** But instead of just throwing our technical terms, put it in the context of how it can be leveraged.

**christinalau:** Do you like the mashup story?

**Lori Small:** I do not even know what mashup is.

**mgilfix:** @skean - Like in Portal, you can decide how events flow between widgets. So, widgets can declare what events they send and what they receive. Then, on a given page, you can control which send events get linked to which receivers.

**Lori Small:** Again, so many terms.

**christinalau:** Mashup is actually a music heritage, I think.

**mgilfix:** Today, we just broadcast those events on the page.

**Lori Small:** I like keeping things general.

**Lori Small:** Is that communicate and potentially trigger data population based on events?

**glenn coward usaa:** Thanks all. I am checking out. Eric, I did give Davis a list of enhancement suggestions for the Modeler Forms integration. I like the concept, but it's not quite tuned in and integrated enough to compel adoption at USAA. I hope these made it to the team. Travis Russell at USAA can comment on Flash, Flex, etc. We lost him in the middle of this discussion. Later.

**Lori Small:** No new architectures - just new implementations 😊.

**christinalau:** See you Glenn.

**EricHerness:** Thanks Glenn

**christinalau:** Lori - that is correct - the arch is still SOA.

**skean:** @mg So like an instant refresh of a widget if something is done in another one?

**mgilfix:** Yes, we've been talking about how to approach this wiring. One model in the Lotus Mashups product has a simple data mapping that occurs during wiring of widgets. We think this is a bit much for business users and wanted to just do matching of events that are compatible. Since we control a lot of the content, we can ensure that the events match up so you don't have to think about mapping. There will still be a need for some mapping with third party widgets.

**christinalau:** Just more modern ways to work with SOA via the Web using REST interfaces, etc.

**mgilfix:** @skean - That's correct. Interactive rendering in widgets happens today (like in HTML widgets), but the behind the scenes sending of events happens automatically. When I select a task, it gets broadcasted to all widgets on the page. In some cases, you want to control how the flow goes.

**Lori Small:** The ultimate would be to use the product without knowing about what underlying IFs were there - unless you had to build custom ones, of course.

**skean:** @mg As a somewhat pseudo programmer, yes, I would like that ability on my level.

**Lori Small:** But even then, something like Bowstreet was a nice way to componentize things so you bring things together as building blocks.

**Lori Small:** Someone who is REST-savvy builds that building block.

**mgilfix:** @Lori - that's our goal. For third party content integration, like say, some Google content, you'd have to do some basic mapping though so that the widgets can share their different event "languages".

**Lori Small:** I think they are called builders.

**mgilfix:** That's correct. They have a series of builders that can produce a portlet, and they are also going to be producing iWidgets natively too.

**skean:** That way from the admin logon, I could make a change while possibly having the end user on the phone, and make a fix instantly.

**Lori Small:** I also like the idea of publish subscribe IF that would allow you to wire easily.

**mgilfix:** Which is the Web format that we use to have the widgets show up in a Lotus Mashups, Connections, or Business Space environment.

**christinalau:** Bowstreet has a huge learning curve too.

**Lori Small:** I agree - the hardest part of simplifying things is hiding the complexity.

**mgilfix:** @Lori - We're thinking that we could let you do implicit wiring by default, unless there's an "ambiguous" situation, in which case, you can switch to manual wiring mode, or unless you explicitly ask.

**mgilfix:** Amen

**Lori Small:** But I liked Bowstreet before we acquired it.

**christinalau:** Anyone has any thought about the IBM BPM Suite thought?

**mgilfix:** Would anyone like to ask some questions about some other BPM topics as well?

**mgilfix:** We love business space, but good to open the floor.

**christinalau:** I mean we are now offering 2 suites as a foundation. Do they make sense?

**Lori Small:** What do you mean 2 suites as foundation?

**skean:** I have used the Modeler, would there be a way down the road to see a change quickly without deploying it. Like maybe a lite virtual server on my pc.

**EricHerness:** skean - So things like Human Workflow Storyboarding in 6.12 are a first view.

**Lori Small:** We tend to use Modeler and not the downstream deployment at all.

**christinalau:** Here is the IBM BPM Suite: <http://www-306.ibm.com/software/info/bpm/offerings.html>

**skean:** okay

**Lori Small:** Static and dynamic analysis and basic documentation/standardization of our business processes.

**christinalau:** We have two Foundation suites: Dynamic Process Edition includes Fabric, Modeler and Monitor (remember Fabric includes WID and WPS).

**skean:** It is a bit confusing at first, the BPM suite. I personally would like to see it all in one tool.

**EricHerness:** skean - So yes, we are working on a number of ways to "see changes" quickly. I wouldn't assume exactly how we would do it, but "quickly" is the goal and we understand that.

**skean:** @eric ty ty

**christinalau:** Filenet content Edition includes Filenet BPM, BAM, eForms, and BPF.

**christinalau:** Right, so all in 2 tools.

**christinalau:** Depending on whether you want to focus on content or integration.

**skean:** Well coming from being on the other side of the fence for 10 years, meaning I was purchasing applications, to working at a company that now develops apps, I like the component and widget design.

**skean:** It was very frustrating to see a manager of a department buy a product that was not going to be used 100%.

**Lori Small:** I struggle with suites

**Lori Small:** when we only use a small portion.

**christinalau:** skean - Agree absolutely - and we have a new solution. It is called SaaS or we are calling it the Web Delivery Platform!

**christinalau:** Have you guys heard about Bluehouse?

**skean:** And with the widgets and templates, I foresee a way of letting users having access to just what they need.

**christinalau:** Yes - there is a Greenhouse and a Bluehouse.

**skean:** I like the KISS method.

**christinalau:** Green and Blue are my favorite colors.

**Lori Small:** I know Sandra Kogan who is working on Bluehouse, but I have not had time to review.

**christinalau:** Bluehouse is IBM's first attempt to go to the SaaS as a delivery model approach.

**christinalau:** It is in beta right now.

**christinalau:** Let me get the URL. It is very cool.

**christinalau:** <https://bluehouse.lotus.com/#>

**mgilfix:** @skean - Yes, we do this today with how we enable new widgets and integrate with each additional product in the suite. This is an interesting idea for the future, to control enablement of features through widgets.

**christinalau:** Check it out. The idea is that there are services hosted on Bluehouse, and you pay by use.

**christinalau:** So there are a bunch of services such as chat, activities, email, store and share, forms, etc, and we are now working on adding some BPM as services for all to use.

**tomyoung:** We're down to our last 5 minutes or so, so if anyone has any last questions or comments, please jump in now.

**Lori Small:** SaaS is an interesting concept.

**Lori Small:** But we are all so used to having those types of services being unlimited internally.

**christinalau:** Yup.. together with cloud and green 😊.

**Lori Small:** It will be interesting to see how it adapts.

**Lori Small:** How cost is managed from a customer perspective?

**Lori Small:** Do you limit usage due to cost?

**Lori Small:** Does it force more efficient usage?

**Lori Small:** I still like paying extra for unlimited usage like with my cell phone 😊.

**christinalau:** Customers do like the pay by use model. It will be interesting to see what kind of apps folks are comfortable with this model. Gartner just released a new report on this.

**skean:** When will business space be officially released or has it?

**Lori Small:** Yes, it all depends upon the service.

**Lori Small:** It has 6.1.2, right?

**Lori Small:** You have to get it from Passport Advantage?

**mgilfix:** Business space was officially released as part of 6.1.2.

**mgilfix:** It ships as a common component with our BPM runtimes.

**mgilfix:** You get it when you install one of the products.

**skean:** Ah okay.

**Lori Small:** Not Modeler 6.1.2, but with Publisher, right?

**tomyoung:** Okay, that's about all the time we have. Thanks for joining, everyone! We'll post a transcript here:

[http://www.ibm.com/developerworks/websphere/library/chats/0808\\_bpmchat/0808\\_bpmchat.html](http://www.ibm.com/developerworks/websphere/library/chats/0808_bpmchat/0808_bpmchat.html)

**mgilfix:** Please play with it and give us more feedback

**skean:** Will do.

End of transcript