

## When is a Door Not a Door?

### *The Business Rule Difference*

by Ronald G. Ross

Co-Founder, Business Rule Solutions, LLC

One of the interesting things about consulting with different organizations on business rules and publishing a *Journal*<sup>1</sup> on that subject is that a lot of really silly rules cross my desk. Sometimes it feels like a Dilbert® parade!

One of our readers recently forwarded a rule that raises some interesting questions. He observes that in his apartment building the doors to the stairwells all have signs on them saying, *Door must be kept closed at all times*. His question was, "Is a door you must never open really a door?" If the rule is followed religiously, he observed, the door might as well be considered part of the wall.

Well obviously not quite! Before addressing that tongue-in-cheek question, however, let's do some analysis of this rule.

I think we can safely assume that the rule as stated is actually a shorthand. A more complete and accurate version might be, *You may use this door for entry, but it must be closed behind you*. If we wanted to be very complete, we might explain the basic motivation for the rule by adding, *Fire Door*.

Further analysis of this simple rule reveals fundamental aspects of the business rule approach, as follows.

The rule was posted; that is, *written down*. Why? The answer lies in the motivation for the rule — its purpose is to protect the inhabitants against the dangers of fire. *When a rule becomes important enough, it is always written down*.

The rule was written in plain English. If the rule were difficult to understand, or encoded in such a way that many of the inhabitants could not readily interpret it, it would not serve its purpose very well. *A rule important enough to write down is worth writing down plainly*.

A *procedure* for this situation is not really needed. We could write one, of course, but in this case, it would probably be trivial (*approach door; grasp doorknob with hand; twist doorknob is clockwise direction; pull/push carefully ...*). Nonetheless, the rule is still crucial. *Rules can exist independent of procedures*.

This rule — like all rules — serves to shape behavior. The posting of the rule reminds inhabitants, staff and others to close the door, and presumably they are therefore less likely to forget, or perhaps even block the door open. *The purpose of a rule is always to guide or influence behavior in desired ways*.

The rule serves a purpose — it is neither frivolous nor arbitrary. Fire is a deadly risk, and all reasonable measures must be taken to protect against it. Business rules never arise in a vacuum; *there are always identifiable and important business factors motivating them*.

<sup>1</sup> *Business Rules Journal*, [www.BRCCommunity.com](http://www.BRCCommunity.com).

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*Navigating Your Organization's Future*

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The rule was posted right where the action is — that is, where actual entry can occur. This proximity to the action helps ensure the rule is followed as events actually unfold. *The best way to ensure rules are followed is to get them right in front of people at the exact point where the guidance is relevant.*

The rule is undoubtedly part of a larger body of fire code rules for buildings. Even though the rule may be posted thousands of times for enforcement purposes, these postings arise from a single source. This ensures consistency. *If rules are important enough to be enforced, they are important enough to be single-sourced.*

The body of fire-code regulations was undoubtedly produced by experts experienced in the field, and is backed by the political authority of the city or state. Changes must be reviewed, incorporated, and disseminated carefully. Because new dangers and liabilities can be discovered at any time, this process should be streamlined and efficient. In other words, the *rules must be managed.*

These common sense observations represent the main ideas of the business rule approach. Your business undoubtedly has literally hundreds or thousands of such rules guiding its various business processes. Yet in practice, these basic business rule principles are seldom followed. In many organizations, the problem is so severe that the overall *governance* process has just about broken down.

Can you do something about it? *Yes!* The business rules approach offers proven solutions.

Now back to that question, “Is a door you must never open really a door?” The answer is obvious — *yes, of course it is.* A wall *without* a door will always just be a wall. If you need a door sometime in the future, you must remodel, and that means time and money (not to mention disruption for the inhabitants). If you have ever remodeled your home, you know exactly what I mean.

The wall *with* a door acts like a wall until such time that the *must-remain-closed* rule is discontinued. Then, with relatively little delay, expense or disruption, it becomes a functional door.

Think of the business rule approach as a relatively inexpensive way to build potential doors for your business in all those many cases they might one day be needed. That way you can avoid walling yourself in. In a world of constant and accelerating change, *adaptability* is the name of the game. That is why your company should focus on business rules today!

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**Ronald G. Ross** is Co-Chair of the Business Rule Forum Conference, to be held October 21-25 in Orlando, FL ([www.BusinessRulesForum.com](http://www.BusinessRulesForum.com)). He serves as Executive Editor of [www.BRCommunity.com](http://www.BRCommunity.com) and its flagship publication, *Business Rules Journal*. Mr. Ross is recognized internationally as the “father of business rules.” He is the author of eight professional books, including his latest, the popular handbook *Business Rule Concepts* (2nd Ed.). He is Co-Founder and Principal of Business Rule Solutions, LLC ([www.BRSolutions.com](http://www.BRSolutions.com)), which provides public seminars, consulting services, publications, RuleSpeak® and the Proteus® methodology.

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## The Business Analyst Certificate Program a Huge Success

*“[Business Analyst] skills are some of the hardest skills to master in the whole IT profession. And companies need good business analysts now more than ever if they are going to thrive in our fast-changing global economy.”*

— Michael Hugos, Computerworld

The Business Analyst Certificate Program kicked off this summer at the University of Texas. We are pleased to report the initial seminars (Enterprise Analysis and Gathering & Documenting Requirements) were both well received and well attended. Indeed, because the latter class attracted so many participants, the University opened up a second session in August.

According to BPMInstitute.org, business analyst practitioners are poised to have a dramatic impact on organizations’ ability to create more responsive business models, while addressing the business/IT divide that plagues so many companies today. Responding to this critical need, Orion has teamed with the University of Texas, the University of North Carolina – Charlotte, the University of Delaware and Rutgers University to create business analyst certificate programs.

These programs are aligned with the International Institute of Business Analysis (IIBA) Body of Knowledge and deliver critical skills, techniques and tools to:

- Understand and define the organizational need
- Gather the information needed to clearly define the requirements
- Document requirements for use by all stakeholders
- Analyze, verify and validate requirements
- Create a framework for successful requirements management and communication

Each university offers a unique structure to best serve its local customers. Seminar dates are listed at [www.odgroup.com](http://www.odgroup.com). Individual seminars and customized versions of the certificate programs are also available as onsite training programs. Please call 800-510-2117 to explore how we can best bring this timely training to your facility.

# Orion to Author Process Management Memory Jogger

The world-renowned Memory Jogger™ series of booklets has been a staple of quality and process management practitioners for more than 20 years. Orion Development Group has been asked by publisher GOAL/QPC to author a new addition to the series: *The Process Management Memory Jogger™*.

A Memory Jogger™ is a concisely written booklet that enables people at all organizational levels to learn and apply tools, methods and processes that are critically needed to attain world-class organizational excellence. With over 8,000,000 copies in circulation, the Memory Jogger™ booklets are used as:

**Stand-alone learning resources:** With its trademark “What it is,” “What it does,” “How do you do it?” format, users can acquire basic skills in such techniques as project management, problem solving, innovation and more.

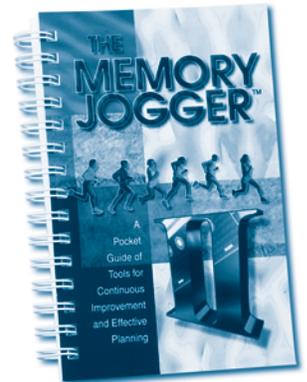
**Training Reference Books:** Many organizations have integrated our Memory Jogger booklets into their training and development programs.

**Handy Performance Support Resources:** In keeping with its name, Memory Joggers are used over and over as a performance support tool. Customers repeatedly tell GOAL/QPC that they “pulled out their Memory Jogger before going into a meeting, leading a team, or scoping a new project.”

Orion is proud to partner with GOAL/QPC on this new product that will prove valuable to process managers and owners, process improvement team members, business analysts and trainers. *The Process Management Memory Jogger™* will include tools and procedures that address:

- Process and Customer Requirements
- Process Design and Governance
- Process Mapping and Modeling
- Process Measurement and Analysis
- Process Improvement and Transformation
- Strategic Performance Management

*The Process Management Memory Jogger™* is scheduled to be released in January 2008.



## The Evolving Role of Process Management

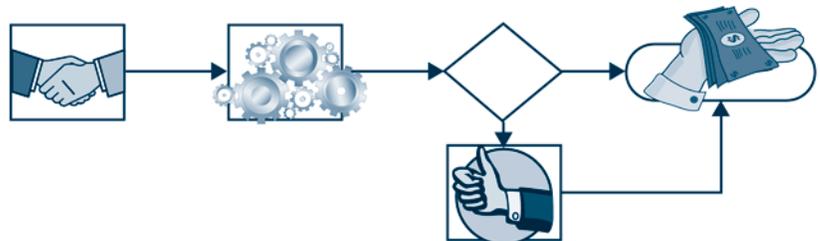
Ten years ago, forward thinking companies were struggling with and sometimes failing at defining the role of the process manager and optimizing cross-functional process performance.

Today, with the greater emphasis placed on cross-functional collaboration, enterprise processes and strategic differentiation, the discipline of Business Process Management is evolving. Orion's *Process Management Certificate Series* is evolving to keep pace.

These seminar series meet the new and emerging needs of process-oriented and customer-focused organizations in all industries. Critical skills include how to:

- ✓ Identify core processes and clarify their real objectives
- ✓ Identify customer requirements and evaluate which process activities add value
- ✓ Use process maps to document, analyze and streamline business processes
- ✓ Select the right measures that will focus all links of the value chain on cross-functional performance and customer outcomes
- ✓ Make data-driven process improvement decisions
- ✓ Link strategic objectives to process management
- ✓ Plan, launch and manage improvement or reengineering projects

For more information about these seminars or to register for individual seminars or a complete Process Management Certificate Series, please contact Orion at (800) 510-2117 or visit our website at [www.odgroup.com](http://www.odgroup.com).



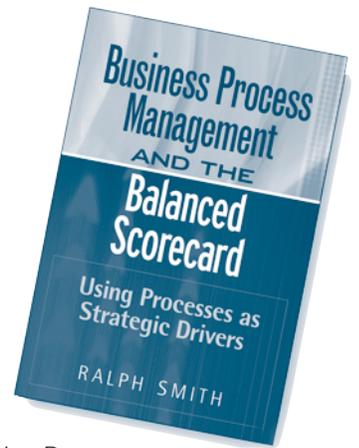
# Ralph Smith to Teach Masterclass at BPM Summit in Las Vegas

Ralph Smith, Orion's Vice President of Strategic Services and author of *Business Process Management and the Balanced Scorecard*, will teach a post-conference "Masterclass" at the 7th BPM Summit in Las Vegas on October 18, 2007.

The Summit will run from October 15-18 at The Venetian Resort. (Register at [www.iqpc.com](http://www.iqpc.com).) Mr. Smith's class, using BPM and the Balanced Scorecard to Deploy Processes as Strategic Weapons, will be based on his highly successful text that was published this year by John Wiley & Sons.

With today's companies facing perhaps the most competitive period in history, rising costs and escalating customer demands make it essential for corporations to improve internal processes and focus them on strategic objectives. *Business Process Management and the Balanced Scorecard: Using Processes as Strategic Drivers* shows managers how to deploy processes as strategic weapons and optimally use the balanced scorecard to achieve and sustain strategic success even as the business environment changes. Using a "how to approach with multiple real world examples, Mr. Smith helps readers identify and target the fundamental processes that drive and detract from the strategic performance of their companies.

*Business Process Management and the Balanced Scorecard* is available at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com), [wiley.com](http://wiley.com) and major bookstores. It retails for \$45. Wiley has translated the text into Japanese, Korean and Thai.



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