



Decision Management: Circa 2009 – Part I

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Introduction

When we consider the level of success in the adoption of Decision Management, history shows that adopters fall into one of three categories:

- I Those with little success – projects either failed or were cancelled
- II Those with moderate success – projects localized to a particular business process or functional silo, but no enterprise scope.
- III Those with great success – multiple successful projects across the enterprise.

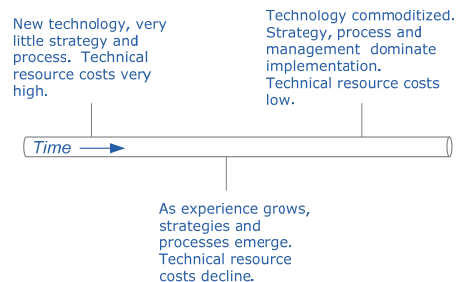
Decision Management: Circa 2009 is a 3-part series discussing Decision Management with a focus on each category. We discuss barriers, challenges, strategies and best practices for Decision Management adoption, and provide key consideration points for companies in each category.

This document serves as Part I of the series, and focuses on companies that fall into category I.

Decision Management: Evolution of the revolution

As with every technology-oriented discipline, its evolution can be traced to a time when the technology itself was at center focus. Resources were tasked with learning what the technology could do, and how it could do it.

As experience grows and companies begin to develop repeatable implementation guidelines, technologies mature to include strategies and processes for maximizing the ability to succeed: technology becomes *technology management*.



Decision-based technologies such as business rules, score cards, decision tables, and predictive analytics have experienced a similar evolution. Initially these technologies were raw – they were capable, however the strategies and processes involved were not

developed to a point of implementation value. Although companies could perform successful implementations, many struggled with managing them to a point where the struggles outweighed the benefits. ROI calculations were not favorable, and projects were inevitably deemed not viable and ultimately cancelled.

As the technologies matured, so did the strategies and processes. Implementers could draw on past experiences – successes and failures – to develop roadmaps, blueprints and adoption strategies to guide their implementations. Decision technology became *Decision Management*.

Category I adopters

There are generally a few reasons that companies fall into this category:

- Technology limitations (actual and perceived)
- Unclear business reasons
- Incomplete understanding of Decision Management
- Lack of resources

Some would say that these reasons may solely be the effect of poor guidance from “expert” resources. However, they may also be attributed to the fact that the adoption initiative occurred at a time when there simply was not enough strategic knowledge about managing decisions. In either case, category I adopters found themselves on the losing end of a battle to overcome challenges, solve problems and deliver value.

Decision Management: Circa 2009

Today, managing decisions is perhaps one of the most important strategic and technological tasks within a successful organization. The development of Decision Management as a discipline has followed suit. Decision Management in 2009 provides robust strategies, processes and technologies to help companies harness and leverage their decision-making assets.

Many category I adopters still show belief in this idea, yet convincing an organization to “give it another try” is difficult to say the least. The good news is that showing the value in managing decisions is much easier with the availability of proven, robust strategies, processes, utilities and technologies.



If you thought you could, you probably still should

If you once thought you could improve your business with Decision Management technologies, you were probably right. Category I adopters never reached a significant level of adoption and ultimately abandoned the technology as a viable option. The reasons vary, but what remains true is that no matter what your past experience was (or when), Decision Management has developed to a point at which we can more easily address challenges, mitigate risks and overcome the various reasons for failure in the past.

Reason: The technologies were not mature enough

Decision Management technologies have matured and now support many deployment options (web services, EJB, .NET, COBOL), runtime environments (Unix, Windows, Linux, mainframe) and integration options (Java, .NET, XML, Copybooks). Robust APIs also enable customizations for specific implementation requirements. Finally, Decision Management technologies enable robust authentication and authorization, allowing companies to secure their competitive and strategic decision-making assets.

Reason: We didn't understand it

Many companies were never given proper guidance from vendors and independent resources on the adoption of Decision Management. The result is an organization that is aware of the benefits of Decision Management, but has a misunderstanding of how, where and why to implement it in their business. Today, in addition to proven resources, adopters can gain knowledge from a growing Decision Management community including blogs, forums, websites and conferences.

Reason: We lacked a good strategy

For early adopters, the lack of strategy was a failure point for Decision Management integrations. Without a guiding light for answering questions such as "why", "when" and "where", resources had little chance to successfully mitigate risks and address challenges. Now more than ever, strategy is at the forefront, and the ability to succeed has greatly increased.

Reason: No sense of urgency

In the earlier days of decision-based technology implementations, companies recognized the value in the technologies, and sought to create greater

competitive advantage. However, the sense of necessity to be agile, flexible and consistent was much less than it is today.

Now, the ability to be more agile, flexible and consistent is of critical importance to the success of an organization. Companies that do not embark upon Decision Management initiatives will struggle to compete in an economy that is both faster and more complex. Competitive advantage is at stake, and in some cases, survival is as well.

Reason: The technologies were too expensive

Many organizations cited cost as a major factor in their decision to discontinue their Decision Management initiatives. License fees, maintenance fees or the cost of resources are a few of the reasons.

As with any technology, costs decrease over time, and Decision Management technologies are no different. Open source projects with robust, proven solutions are available, and the availability of non-vendor, lower-cost resources has increased as well (though not all lower-cost solutions and resources are proven and trustworthy).

Reason: Organizational challenges

Due to the technical orientation of early decision technologies, the responsibility for authoring, testing and deploying decision entities was primarily the responsibility of an over-worked, over-utilized IT group.

Today, strategic and process knowledge have taught us the best approaches to align an organization for success. In addition, business users have access to tools that allow decision maintenance through English-like syntaxes. As a result, Decision Management is no longer primarily an IT responsibility. Today's Decision Management solutions enable business and IT to support the organization by doing what they do best.

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Now more than ever, managing decisions is a key factor in the ability of an organization to succeed. And for category I adopters, now more than ever, Decision Management deserves a second look.

Contact Technology Blue for more information on this topic. The next part of our series focuses on category II adopters.

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