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ECM and BPM -- What About KM?

On February 9, Alfresco announced that it was "aligning our ECM and BPM solutions" to "advance the integration of content, people and process." We tried to parse the announcement, which requires peeling off heavy layers of marketing jargon.

First, remember that Alfresco made a name by offering an open-source, cheaper and simpler document management solution than the key players (IBM, Documentum, EMC and later on Microsoft with SharePoint). Of course, "document management" is a bit too mundane, and Web pages have become as important than traditional documents if not more, so these solutions are now called electronic content management (ECM).

In 2010, Alfresco launched the Activiti open-source project to add a business process management (BPM) engine to its offerings. Until now, the main ECM product, Alfresco One, and Alfresco Activity were evolving separately. The recent announcement says that the two products will have synchronized updates... and gives zero information on what forms of integration will be provided to benefit customers.

Now, the fact that most business processes involve documents, and that there should be some integration between the execution of the workflow and the management of the documents isn't exactly news. This is, for example, why you can relatively easily construct simple workflows based on SharePoint "out of the box" (using permissions and views). Thus a simple interpretation is that Alfresco is catching up and trying to counter the aggressive commercial message from Microsoft and its workflow add-on partners like K2, Nintex, Bamboo Solutions and many more.

But in the end, the part that concerns us most is that there seems to be no awareness that when you combine people, process and content, what you should really aim to achieve is not just managing workflow documents, it should really be *knowledge management*. After all, a lot of the knowledge that needs to be retained and shared in an organization is precisely knowledge about processes. If Alfresco wants to resist the Microsoft bulldozer, it needs to have a clearer vision than it is currently showing.

Hybrid Cloud Computing

The Cloud Standards Customer Council (CSCC) has just published its Practical Guide to Hybrid Cloud Computing. This is available for free, as all CSCC publications are.

On Thursday, March 3, at 11:00 a.m. Eastern US time, the paper's key authors will present the guide in a complimentary hour-long webinar. Register here.

OMG Standards for the Industrial Internet of Things

The program of this half-day meeting, held in Reston, Va., on March 17, has been published. Claude Baudoin will facilitate the meeting, which will include:

- an overview of OMG standardization efforts by the Technology Director of the OMG;
- a promising panel featuring representatives from the three main suppliers of Data Distribution Service (DDS) software;
- a talk on the Bosch "Track & Trace" IIC Testbed for tracking of manufacturing tools on a factory floor;
- and a talk on software security issues affecting the Industrial Internet.

The afternoon of the same day will be a public information meeting about the work of the Industrial Internet Consortium. Together, those two meetings will provide a lot of information on the state of the Industrial Internet. As a bonus, people who wish to attend can be invited to the OMG member reception on the evening of March 16 by contacting us.

LASER 2016

This year, the theme of the 13th LASER School, organized by the Chair of Software Engineering at the prestigious ETH university in Zurich and held as usual on the island of Elba off the coast of Italy, will be *Software for Robotics*. The school will run from September 11 to September 17 inclusive. Detailed information, a list of speakers and registration are available at the above link.

Seen Recently...

"Leadership today also requires a set of attributes that many managers usually do not yet have today: Knowledge of and skills with modern digital collaboration tools, and their techniques and strategies."

-- Dion Hinchcliffe, social media and collaboration expert, in
" The Strategic Role of Digital Networks in Corporate Leadership Today"