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Stamford, Conn., Businesses Join Business Performance Management Consortium

By Richard Lee, The Stamford Advocate, Conn. Knight Ridder/Tribune Business News

Apr. 7 - Three Stamford businesses have joined a consortium of business performance management firms with the goal of accelerating the adoption of performance management practices throughout business and industry. The BPM Standards Group, which includes BPM Partners, META Group and Hyperion Solutions, hopes also to provide consistent thought leadership and set standards for vendors, service providers and consultants, as well as users. The consortium represents all major categories in the BPM Industry - application vendors, tools vendors, implementation consultants, information technology/data warehousing experts, industry analysts, management consultants and system integrators.

Other members include Applix, IBM, IDC, SAP AG and the Data Warehousing Group. The consortium is inviting customers or users of BPM technology, as well as other BPM providers to join the forum. BPM is a set of technology-based management and analytic processes that address financial, as well as operational activities. The process also helps businesses define goals and measures and manages performance against those goals.


The consortium emanated from a discussion at an informal dinner during an industry event in December 2003, and seeks to set a high standard. "As a group, we've agreed upon the term 'BPM' for business performance management," said John Decker, vice president of technology research services at META Group.

"Others may use CPM (corporate performance management) and EPM (enterprise performance management) as equivalents. The other BPM (business process management), BAM (business activity monitoring), BI (business intelligence), EIS (executive information system) and analytic applications are not equivalent to this definition of BPM, but may represent a portion of what BPM provides," Decker said.

Group participants see the global adoption of business performance management as a way to benefit both users and providers of services, said John Colbert, vice president of BPM Partners.

"There are different groups watching over each other's shoulders," said Colbert, whose company helps businesses understand the benefits of business performance management and leads them through the evaluation of vendors and implementation of the right system.

Core BPM processes include financial and operational planning, consolidation and reporting, modeling,

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analysis and monitoring of key performance indicators linked to organizational strategy.

According to figure released by META Group, the PBM industry grew to about \$1.1 billion in 2003 and is expected to grow 15 to 20 percent in 2004. A recent META Group study showed that, within the next 18 months, 85 percent of firms surveyed will work on a BPM project. A September 2003 study of 450 chief financial officers from 35 countries completed by IBM Business Consulting Services showed that 65 percent of survey respondents rated business performance management as a top objective.

Based on the popularity of business performance management, the idea of forming the consortium was a natural step, said Craig Schiff, president and chief executive officer of BPM Partners and founder of Hyperion.

"Performance management is such an important part of individual, corporate and global business success that we felt compelled to do what we can to support the industry's growth," he said. "Agreement on such basics as a definition and various standards are only the first step."

Business performance management must go beyond finance to impact operations across business functions, said Henry Morris, group vice president for applications and information access at IDC.

"The definition of BPM points out several critical success factors for BPM projects," he said. "Though BPM begins with measurement and analysis, a successful BPM initiative must result in changed actions."

DEMAND FOR BUSINESS PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS GROWS

Demand for business performance management applications is apparently spreading around the world, as evidenced by a decision by Stamford-based BPM Partners to open an office in the United Kingdom.

The Stamford company has established BPM Partners Ltd., in Herts, a London suburb. The office, led by Ivor Herman, a veteran industry expert, is staffed by about a half-dozen service providers and salespeople. Herman spent 12 years at Hyperion Solutions in consulting management roles providing consulting services in the BPM marketplace. His staff will focus on British companies' needs, but until other offices are established elsewhere in Europe, it will service the continent, said John Colbert, vice president of BPM Partners.

BPM Partners advises clients on selection of business performance management vendors. Its consultants guide companies through their BPM initiatives, helping companies attain the maximum value from their initiatives.

Vendors in the business performance management field include Applix, Cartesis, Cognos, Geac, FRx Software, Hyperion, Longview Solutions, OutlookSoft, PeopleSoft, SAP, SAS and SRC Software.

Compagnie Generale de Geophysique, a French provider of oilfield services and geophysical equipment, recently signed a contract with BPM Partners. "Based upon the level of inquiries that we receive from European prospects, we are confident that forward-thinking European organizations have a similar perspective on what true performance management can do to help the competitiveness of their organization," said Craig Schiff, president and chief executive officer of BPM Partners.

"By expanding our team and adding local experts, we can more quickly help executives at these companies achieve their goal -- completely understanding their business."

In today's fast-moving business environment, Schiff said, it is vital that executives be aware of the true nature of their business at any given point. Business performance management is a combination of business processes, metrics, key performance indicators and systems that enable an organization to influence its business performance and is a growth area in the global business and technology communities, Colbert said.

Budgeting, planning, consolidation, scorecards, business intelligence and analytic applications all fall under the BPM umbrella, said John Van Decker, vice president of technology research services at Stamford-based META Group. BPM Partners' expansion into Europe is an indication that companies everywhere are searching for new ways to analyze their businesses, he said.

"It demonstrates something we've known at META Group all along," Van Decker said.

--By Richard Lee

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