



Business Rules Development Practice (BRDP)
Building Sustainable Business Rules

**A Holistic View of
Business Rules and the Business Rules
Approach:**

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Business rules are not new. They exist in businesses whether some or all of the business is automated or not. Not all business rules may be automated. The generally accepted definition of a business rule comes from Ron Ross and is presented in more detail in this paper. In a nutshell, Ross writes "a statement that defines or constrains some aspect of business intended to assert business structure or to control or influence the behavior of business." The approach, the Business Rules Approach, is new and emphasizes the business and not the systems implementation. The business rule is a distinct asset and a specific artifact. The systems implementation is easier if the up-front work on the business side is emphasized. The Business Rules Approach extends current systems development life cycle methodologies rather than replaces them.

Business Rules in many systems are often buried in programming code. Automated business rules with a Business Rules Approach will occur most likely in a combination of:

- a business rules engine (BRE),
- multiple business rules engines (BRES),
- user interface,
- business objects and methods,
- databases,
- in code
- other means

The best design approach implements a rule without redundancy. For instance, static rules may be better off in code rather than through a BRE. This is one of the design decisions that must be made for business rules.

Business rules engines (BRES) are often enablers of business rules implementations. The overall development time for a project using a BRE is usually faster than programming the rules in conventional languages. The rules written in a rule language are separated from complex programming

code and written in business terminology. A BRE also allows reuse of the rules across multiple systems and user interfaces. The development process becomes more flexible by allowing the rules to be changed without impacting the rest of the application. The business application coding will interact with the BRE as follows:

Interactions between Applications, Data, and Rules (source: How Blaze Advisor Works)

Generally, business applications invoke a rule service for a decision just as they would invoke a database for data. The results of the decision process can be used to drive further operations and interactions. When invoked, a rule service uses the application data (referenced as any combination of Java objects, database records, XML documents, Microsoft COM+ objects, or custom-defined objects) to make decisions based on the application data and business rules. The decision results can be passed back to the calling application or can be defined as actions taken in the decision process. Actions might include database update messages, calls to external applications, or use of Java methods on objects.

Most BREs support web services, J2EE, EJB, .Net, COM. Some BREs also run on mainframes, and can integrate with legacy systems as well as supporting both interactive and batch systems.

However, all business rules need to be identified regardless of where or whether they are automated. All business rules need to be discovered at some point in the development process. The real key is getting at the “what” not the “how”.

On the following page, I have relied upon the Business Rules experts to provide more substance on the definition of Business Rules as well as a closer look at the Business Rules Approach. At the end of the following page, I have included several leading industry approaches on how to get there.

“Business rules are really a familiar concept. When viewed then from a different perspective, however, one can center them and then bind them with existing elements and goals of software applications – separation, flexibility, business ownership, model-driven development, reengineering, rapid development, and enforcement. Business rules can now be seen in a new light. Paradigm shifts do not necessarily provide new answers. They represent new frameworks which enlighten our existing notions and help us to raise better questions. In this sense, a business rule approach enable better questions, a redefinition of application design constructs and the eliciting of business requirements in new and innovative ways” [Gottesdiener].

Resources:

Definitions of Business Rules:

1. The Definitions of 'Business Rule' and 'Rule' Ron Ross
Source: <http://www.brcommunity.com/b140.php>
2. What are business rules ?
Source: <http://www.brcommunity.com/faqs.php>

What is a Business Rules Approach?

1. What are the principles of the business rules approach ?
Source: <http://www.brcommunity.com/faqs.php>
2. Business Problems Addressed by the Business Rule Approach_*By Ronald G. Ross*
Source: <http://www.brcommunity.com/b123.php>
3. Business Rules Today: A KPI Position Paper
Source:
http://www.kpiusa.com/Publications/Archived_WhitePapersArticles/Business_Rules_Today.doc
4. The 6 Points of a Genuine Business Rules Approach from Why Some Business Rule Projects Fail
Source:
http://www.kpiusa.com/Publications/WhitePapers_Articles/Why%20Some%20Business%20Rule%20Projects%20Fail.doc

Some other interesting perspectives

1. How do rules and knowledge management relate ?
Source: <http://www.brcommunity.com/faqs.php>
2. How to get there:
Source: <http://www.kpiusa.com/ProductsAndServices/Flagshipservice.htm>
http://www.brsolutions.com/prod_free.php

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