
Business Rules Market Adoption Survey Results: Best Practices

Sponsored by: Lambert Technical Services – Business Rules Development Practice

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About the Survey

The Business Rules Market Adoption survey was commissioned by a U.S.- based Business Rules (BR) implementation vendor: Lambert Technical Services - Business Rules Development Practice. The survey takes a snapshot of Business Rules (BR) implementations via verbal and written responses to a survey questionnaire. It covers business and technology topics related to Business Rules (BR) implementations. Business Rules implementer's experiences and feedback on a give-to-get basis in several industries and segments were solicited. The survey results were compiled and documented by Whitespace Consulting of Harvard, Ma, USA

Common Best Practices

The following best practices were identified by as common by several companies in the survey. Candid remarks (in italics) on best practices best reflect the spirit respondents held in this area.

- **A joint business and IT effort instituting a BR approach provides the best results**
Business driven rather than IT driven
Business rules as a component of the overall including business process management, knowledge management – separate rules from processes
Understand business changes and benefits
Know business model and existing architecture
IT need to lead users to water if they don't discover on their own
Don't slam a business rules approach on subject matter experts and process owners.
Get buy-in from highest level – show quickfixes and positive results early on
Do a horizontal proof to show benefits to all organizations rather than silo.
The implementation of rule engine is best accomplished if it is supported by the business but implemented by IT. IT must understand architecture before a good implementation can take place. (Not many really understand architecture)
Remember a rules approach requires the business to know about their business. With rules there is no match box requirements
- **Selecting the appropriate SDLM is key, and should be done prior to any rule engine decision**
Bring in BR methodology vendor first before rules engine
Select a methodology for gathering rules, before you select a rule engine. The benefit of a rule approach is NOT about implementation but about design!

- Using a high-level BR Consultancy assisting with the cultural change necessary as you transition to any new BR approach is key**
Bring in rules specialty vendor to guide process
Focus on rules governance, methodology, and culture and then think about technology
Cultural shift towards business and IT sharing responsibility
Forces organization changes and user process – business customers must take on rules updates like systems analyst world in the past
BR consulting companies critical
Change management is key – people need to embrace new roles
Use a consultant to introduce your rule methodology to the company.
There will be great resistance from the data centric folks for using a rules approach.
Remember this is not about IT.
- Limiting the amount of change and technology you introduce to the culture at any given time is a consideration**
Limit amount of new technology at same time (absorption rate an issue)
Start small
Move towards SOA
IT has to find appropriate staff - OO and java
User change as well
Experienced people hard to find
Don't over analyze- pick something that fits and you can afford and go for it
- Train your staff thoroughly on the new BR approach. Pay particular attention to defining the new role of business rule analyst**
Business people need logic training to successfully write rules. Combination rules and business analyst works best. Beware, vendors oversell ease-of-use for users to author rules.
You can't assume business logic competency at user level
Always advocate and educate on BR –analysts, QA, DBA and users
Educate IT thoroughly at onset – don't just hand them books
Train you business analysts lavishly and keep them in the business (and you don't need any system analysis a good business analysis does the trick). Systems analysts may be needed for testing
- Integrate your SDLM with your BR approach. Current methodological alternatives do not define or accommodate BR approaches**
You must integrate your SDLC with your rule approach. Current SDLC (RUP) do not understand rules.
Start rule mining and documentation immediately –business users should accomplish this
BR and Data modeling – capture BR separate
Understanding data (terms) paramount –define words uniquely
Test extensively
Use FACT modeling.

Define your terms...all of them.. I mean all of them.

Put your rules in a database

*Use cases work well with a business rules approach. They are row three deliverable
(Zachman)*

*Trace rules to a project number which is tied to a requirements document. This would
allow QA to integrate into test cases*

Document heavily for rules traceability

Pursue “persistence of rules repository” into Data Warehouse.

Focus on rules that change often

- **Consider using visual metaphors like decision tables and decision trees when appropriate to express, document, and change similar rule patterns and families.**

Looking into it

Look like they will be quite beneficial – trying to incorporate decision tables into requirements gathering. I believe this will resolve many of the problems we have with incomplete rules and rules that are not thoroughly thought through.

Lambert Technical Services and Whitespace Consulting again thank all who participated in this survey and shared their knowledge, successes and pioneering experiences with Business Rules approaches. We hope to stay in touch with you further soliciting your experiences, issues and best practices in this promising new development environment.

Rules users or those interested - do you have other information to share? Vendors of products or services - are you interested in discussing the candid BR responses regarding BR issues and concerns?

Contact information at **Lambert Technical Services, LLC** to discuss
<http://www.lambert-tech.com/brdp.htm>

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