Case Study

USDA FS Inventory and Monitoring Institute
2000 Planning Rule

Context

In the Fall of 2000, the USDA FS Inventory and Monitoring Institute (IMI) initiated an internal project to explore the use of the BusinessGenetics proprietary Business Process Analysis methodology in extracting and understanding of requirements set forth in the New Planning Rule, released November 2000. This New Planning Rule implements the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 and guides the revision and amendment of Land and Resource Management Plans on National Forest System (NFS) lands. The new rule is as wide-ranging as it is complex in its discussion and direction on a variety of current topics including Collaboration, Use of Best Available Science, Adaptive Management and the concept of Sustainability, set forth as an overall goal.

The Challenge

The application of our approach (or any other business modeling approach) deployed for the purpose of dissecting and translating government regulation into comprehensible, executable business requirements had never been tried before. In fact, we were skeptical of our ability to sufficiently succeed in this kind of application when approached by the Director of IMI to accept this engagement, but it was a challenge we could not resist.

The Engagement

Over a period of weeks, BusinessGenetics consultants worked with a number of subject matter experts (SME's) from the IMI, all knowledgeable, with general to specific understanding of Forest Planning. The business model content was developed during Business Co-formulation™ (BCF ™) work sessions. Three project objectives were established:

1. Evaluate the BusinessGenetics (xBML™ and BCF™) approach for development of business requirements and use of such requirements for business process analysis, business planning and management of business processes as they pertain to Laws and Regulations.

2. Determine and better understand the business impact of new business requirements set forth in the New Planning Rule.

3. Build a foundation for common understanding and use as a Program Management Decision Tool by senior USDA FS Management responsible for implementation of the Planning Rule.

The Results

In applying our formal methods, structured, targeted discussions facilitated the separation of 'noise words' and 'soft' language from discernable business activities and new legal obligations. Use of the xBML ™ notation provided for meaningful organization and graphical representation of this remaining guiding direction. In working through and modeling the regulation, the workshop participants gained critical understanding and comprehension of the potential impact to current business process.

Before the first model was completed, the power of this business modeling methodology began to reveal itself. This approach in fact proved extremely applicable to the task. Over 560 unique business activities were identified in the purpose activity diagram, reflecting varying degrees (levels) of detail. The workshop participants very quickly determined the immense challenge facing Forest Service personnel for a consistent interpretation and appropriate implementation of the rule.

Connectivity and dependence on other related legislation became apparent. The need for accommodating logistical considerations relating to information development, legal time constraints and an enhanced requirement for collaboration was identified. Highlighted deficiencies and efficiencies provided insights to the need for additional implementation direction, new training programs, and new types of technical support. So compelling were the results of this application of the method against the planning rule that it gained the attention of the highest levels of USDA FS Management, both in the Agency and the Department.

As the May 2001 transition timeline for the new rule approached, one key question weighed heavy on the minds of the Agency and Department leadership teams; Was the Agency sufficiently prepared for an effective transition of all new Land and Resource Management Plans on NFS lands to the new rule? Given the pioneering initiative and investment by the IMI, the question could now be asked and answered, from an unbiased, logical, analytical, practical, purely business perspective. The representation and evaluation of regulations by means of commercial business modeling methods had proven to be a groundbreaking concept within the USDA Forest Service.

In May 2001, the USDA temporarily suspended the requirement for the agency to transition to the 2000 Planning Rule. The Forest Service has been granted an opportunity to re-evaluate the requirements of the 2000 rule and set forth recommendations for an amended regulation.

Figure 1

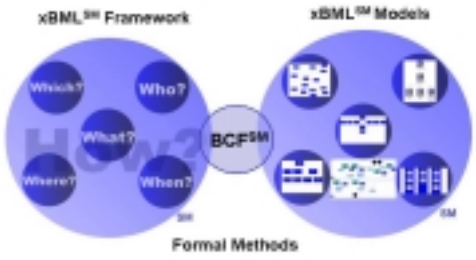

Figure 1 represents the BusinessGenetics Methodology Framework.