

BUSINESS PROCESSES

Most people intuitively understand a *business process* to be a *procedure* or *event* with the purpose of reaching a *goal*. When looking at our UML Airport we can find many different business processes and goals:

- The goal of our passenger is to go on vacation. To achieve this goal, he has to book a flight and hotel, pack his bags, drive to the UML Airport, check in and board his airplane, exit the plane at his destination airport, go to the hotel, move into his room, and unpack his bags.
- The owner of the newsstand at the UML Airport wants to sell her goods. For this, she buys items inexpensively and sells them to her customers at a higher price.
- In order for passengers to check in at the UML Airport, an employee of passenger services accepts their tickets and luggage, inquires about their seat preferences, and uses an IT system. By the end of the procedure, the passengers receive their boarding passes on which their reserved seats and the appropriate gates are marked.

As you can see, business processes are often completed in several steps. These steps are also referred to as *activities*, and have to be completed in a predetermined order. The newsstand owner cannot sell any goods unless she has purchased them beforehand.

A passenger packs his or her suitcase before he or she drives to the airport. The employee of passenger services at the check-in counter can only issue a boarding pass after check-in is completed (Figure 3.1):

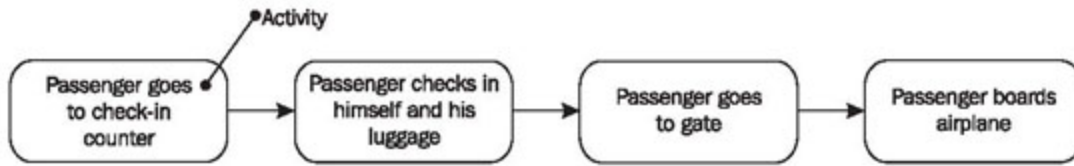


Figure 3.1 Activity of the business process "Passenger Services" (simplified)

Activities can run *sequentially* or in *parallel*. Thus, a passenger can buy a bottle of whiskey in the duty-free shop, while his or her luggage is being loaded into the Airbus 320 to London.

Individual activities can be organizationally *distributed*. The check-in procedure takes place at the check-in counter and is performed by an employee of passenger services, while the subsequent boarding occurs at a different location and is performed by different employees of passenger services.

Usually, the activities of a business process are interdependent. This interdependency is created by the interaction of all the activities belonging to a business process that pursue one common goal.

Think about which of the following activities are not interdependent with our case study, because they do not pursue the goal of our passenger to go on vacation in an Airbus 320:

- Loading of the Airbus 320 with food and beverages
- Fueling of a Boeing 737
- Cleaning of the UML Airport restrooms
- Promotion of a UML Airport employee to vice-president

Definition of the Workflow Management Coalition

Official definitions of the terms *process* and *business process* were adopted by the *Workflow Management Coalition*. The following definitions can be found in the glossary of the *Workflow Reference Model* of the Workflow Management Coalition:

"A process is a coordinated (parallel and/or serial) set of process activity(s) that are connected in order to achieve a common goal. Such activities may consist of manual activity(s) and/or workflow activity(s)."

According to this definition, a process is a set of activities that occur in a coordinated manner, either in parallel or one after another, and that pursue one common goal. These activities can be performed manually or when supported by an IT system.

"A business process is a kind of process in the domain of business organizational structure and policy for the purpose of achieving business objectives."

Source : <http://sourcemaking.com/uml/modeling-business-systems/business-processes-and-business-systems>