

UN/CEFACT's Business Collaboration Framework (BCF)

“what is it, and where does it fit”

UN/CEFACT's principal focus is facilitating international trade. UN/CEFACT does this by creating world standards through the simplification and harmonization of business processes, procedures and information flows. In short, UN/CEFACT's vision is to provide “simple, transparent and effective business processes for global commerce”.

At the center of this vision (e-Business Strategy) are three fundamental elements:

- Cross industry and government sector analysis (to promote business level interoperability and synchronicity for all parties in the value chain);
- Business process and information modeling (to formally describe business requirements in Business Collaboration Models);
- Leverage new technologies (e.g., extensible markup language (XML), Web Services, etc.).

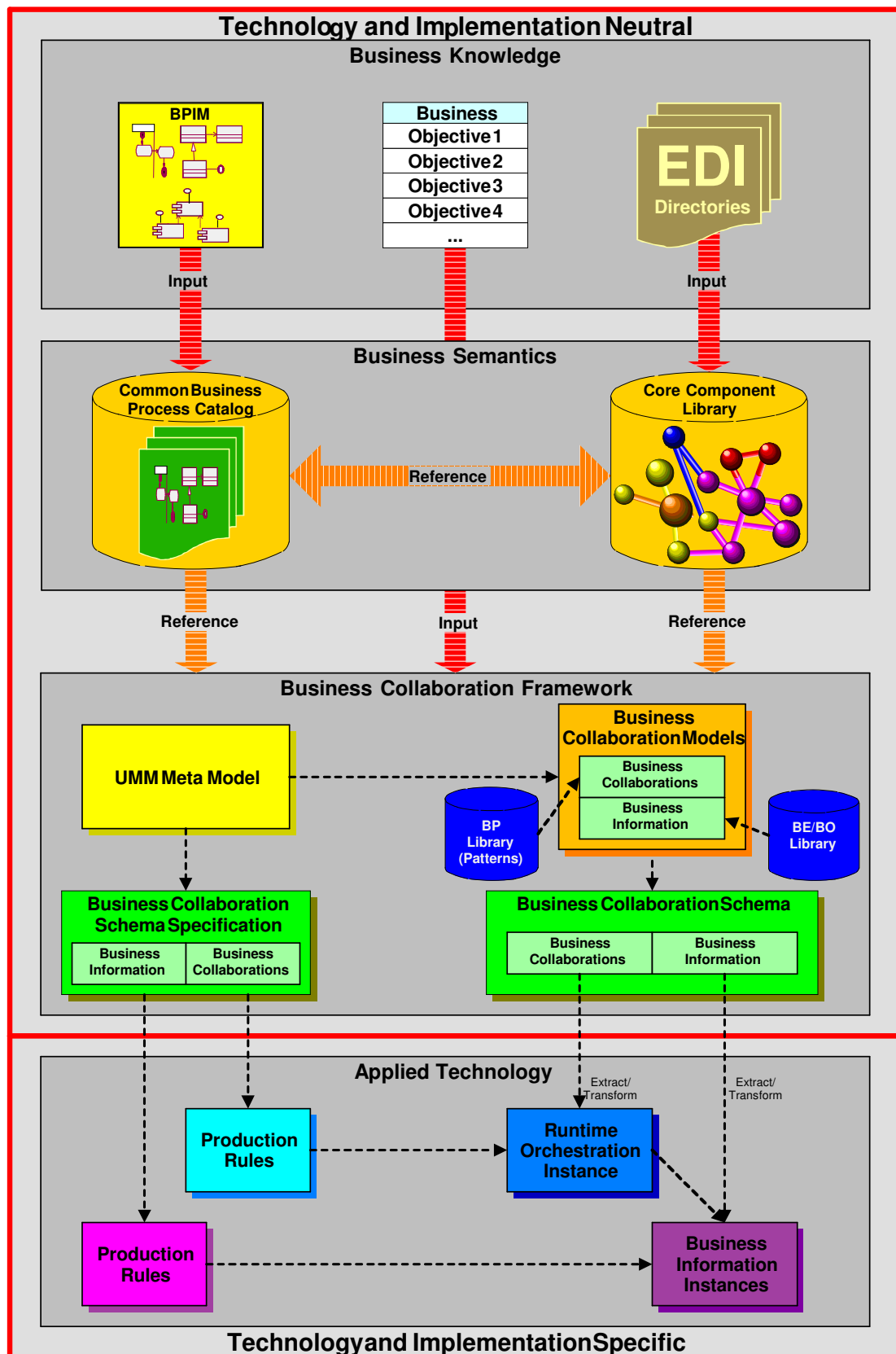
By combining these elements of the vision, UN/CEFACT is able to utilize the same business process models and information definitions in a technology neutral syntax fashion using the Business Collaboration Framework (BCF).

UN/CEFACT developed the BCF as a “top-down” approach to realize a legally binding business commitment and fulfillment interchanges between 2 or more parties. The BCF can be described in four steps.

1. **Knowledge Transfer.** Guided by the UN/CEFACT Modeling Methodology (UMM), a UMM knowledgeable Business Analyst facilitates a process where Business Domain Experts define the boundaries of their business problems, identify affected business processes, define their business objectives, describe the stakeholders, and the business constraints. UMM worksheets (a forms based modeling approach) are used to guide the business knowledge capture process; and also assemble other relevant business objective requirements.
2. **Create the Business Model.** Using information gathered in the Knowledge Transfer step above, Modeling Experts (with the help of UMM worksheets in software tools) create a complete Business Collaboration Model. The Model involves at least two trading partners, is UMM compliant, and is technology and implementation neutral. Whenever possible, Models (or fragments of Models) already developed are available for re-use within BCF libraries (repositories such as Common Business Process Catalog Library).

During Business Model creation, existing Business Semantics can be applied. A Common Business Process Catalog stores non-UMM models which may serve as guidance for creating UMM compliant and reusable processes in the Business Collaboration Model.

UN/CEFACT's E-Business Vision



The Core Components Library (from industry proven information definitions in EDI directories) is used as reference to create reusable business information structures; which are also input to the Business Collaboration Model.

3. **Transform the Business Model.** The Business Collaboration Model above is a complete (including worksheets and graphics) expression of all business requirements, but it is not in a syntax that can be directly interpreted (for business operation runtime) in software. Using the Business Collaboration Specification Schema (BCSS), the Model is transformed into a technology and implementation neutral structured syntax format.
4. **Implement the Business Model.** At this last stage the technology-specific production rules are applied to the Business Collaboration Model in its BCSS form. Specific technology rules include EDI, ebXML, Web Service based business objects, or other production rules with new technology.

Conclusion

UN/CEFACT's vision is to provide "simple, transparent and effective processes for global commerce". In order to realize this, UN/CEFACT researched advances in information and communication technology (ICT) and adopted new approaches to trade facilitation based on simplification and harmonization of business processes. That vast breadth of knowledge captured in Business Collaboration Models (containing all business requirements related to business processes and associated information exchanges) and the United Nations Recommendations UN/CEFACT creates a world standards infrastructure for current and future trade facilitation needs. Commitment to this strategy, through the BCF, will take UN/CEFACT into the next era of international trade facilitation.