Mobile Center of Excellence: An Enterprise Playbook

As many organizations move to a mobile-first mindset, the establishment of a mobile center of excellence can ensure that they develop and enforce best practices of IT architecture, user experience, security policies and standards across the enterprise.
Executive Summary
The transformative impact of mobility on enterprises has been acknowledged by business leaders for some time. Over the past few years, in fact, the increased use of mobile devices has transformed the way companies interact with their customers. But business leaders are now discovering the value that mobility can offer to internal applications, as well.

The growth of mobility is apparent for all to see. According to Pew Internet, nearly all adults in the U.S. (91%) use a cell phone, and more than half (55%) own a smartphone.1 By the end of 2013, the number of mobile-connected devices exceeded the global population, according to the Cisco Visual Networking Index, and by 2017, Wi-Fi and mobile devices will account for more global IP traffic than wired devices.2 Not surprisingly, enterprises across industries are preparing for a mobile-centric future. In fact, recent studies reveal that investment in mobile projects is growing. Companies are increasing their development staff and creating app stores with hundreds of custom apps. This unrelenting shift has resulted in a complex mobile environment, with multiple operating systems, versions of operating systems and device types. As a result, organizations looking to accelerate mobility adoption are contending with fragmented solutions, a situation that increases implementation and maintenance costs and results in nonstandardized mobile solutions across the enterprise.

In this context, the concept of a mobile center of excellence (mCoE)3 – embedded within a larger IT-centric organization – is emerging as an effective way to create and execute a centralized enterprise mobility strategy, complete with governance and standards, at scale. We believe that an mCoE will not only address the challenges of a mobile strategy, but it will also introduce best practices for architecture, user experience, security policies and standards that can streamline a company’s mobility implementation in the long run.

An mCoE can help tackle the challenges presented by mobility, including the following:

- Effectively crafting business scenarios with targeted mobile revenue models.
- Staying ahead of the mobile technology curve.
- Addressing the enhancements that are required of the existing IT architecture.
- Avoiding the overlaps and costs that can result from different divisions dealing directly with vendors.
- Managing mobile lifecycles effectively within the enterprise.

Mobility Changes Everything
Mobile devices used in enterprises have come a long way since the 1990s, when Palm Pilot dominated the market. Today’s landscape is starkly different, with smartphones and tablets of different sizes cascading across the consumer market and into the enterprise. Employees and consumers have enthusiastically embraced these devices as a conduit for their always-on, ubiquitously connected lifestyles – from listening to music and looking up information, to engaging in social media and reading e-mails. Understandably, this has prompted a radical change in the way organizations deploy and manage mobile devices within their enterprise IT architectures.

For enterprise IT, mobility holds the potential to boost productivity and drive business value. To make the most of the move to mobile, enterprises need to put in place a comprehensive mobility policy that can work as a holistic blueprint, encompassing everything from mobile app usability and content, to security and connectivity.

The change management required for this mobile-driven enterprise transformation is no small matter. Early adopters favored an ad hoc approach to enterprise mobility, but that proved effective only in the short run. As the number and scope of mobile enterprise projects increase, the need for a more streamlined approach has become apparent. At this juncture, organizations perceive the need to break the boundaries of short-term enterprise mobility thinking and leapfrog the competition. Enter the mCoE.

Level-setting the mCoE
The concept of a center of excellence is not new. Traditionally, CoEs have been instrumental in driving organization-wide initiatives by providing leadership, best practices, evangelization of and training in an emerging focus area. Organizations typically embrace an mCoE model after dipping into enterprise mobility by developing mobile Web sites, mobile apps and providing information access from legacy applications to mobile devices.
Before implementing an mCoE, organizations need to develop a documented mobility strategy. Just as a business strategy addresses market changes and opportunities, a mobile strategy should align with user expectations and plot out a roadmap for reaching the enterprise’s mobility goals. This mobile strategy roadmap becomes the charter for the mCoE.

**Kickstarting an mCoE**

Enterprise mobility is a cross-discipline practice that extends far beyond IT. Few organizations can offer the full spectrum of mCoE services from day one; instead, the extent and maturity of the mCoE’s offerings increase over time. It is important to ensure that the payoff from each additional investment is sufficient for maintaining high user satisfaction and executive sponsor confidence (see Figure 1).

To obtain funding for the mCoE, organizations need to define the business drivers and develop a solid business case. A stewardship team is usually established to define the planning activities and governance model. The governance model should ensure that mobile efforts are:

- Aligned with the overall mobile strategy.
- Based on industry mobile best practices.
- Pursued with clear ownership and cross-discipline participation.

The mobile stewardship organization forms the core team of the mCoE (see Figure 2), overseeing all aspects of the mCoE model, including HR, legal, corporate and business operations, sales and marketing, etc. To succeed, each element of the governance process, including the mobile architecture, mobile development, mobile partners and mobile platforms, must be agile and dynamic, unrestricted by traditionally hard-coded IT change management processes.

**Choosing an mCoE Service Model**

The role that an mCoE plays in an organization is defined by the needs and preparedness of the enterprise. Therefore, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to setting up an mCoE. The organizational changes mandated by the mCoE vary according to the responsibilities assigned to it. The forces that shape the mCoE’s approach include the level of leadership involvement, maturity with mobile technology, organizational culture, available resources and budgets. Various models of mCoEs are being used by enterprises today (see Figure 3, next page).

**The Mobile Change Agent**

The mCoE setup process is not for the faint-hearted. A range of mCoE models exists because of the variations in commitment among the many divisions in the organization. Operating a full-service mCoE involves significant cross-organization leadership, from the C-suite through core

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**The mCoE Charter**

- Define standards, governance and security policies relevant to mobility.
- Be a trusted advisor to business & IT leadership.
- Provide technology expertise by authoring best practices.
- Provide thought leadership on mobile technologies.

Source: Cognizant

Figure 2
line-of-business functions, including communications, marketing, sourcing, security, HR, legal, app development, infrastructure and finance. Gathering the necessary commitment requires a key change agent in the organization who understands mobility and can evangelize its strategic importance to the business.

Many mCoEs are, therefore, usually spearheaded by a “chief mobility strategist,” “head of digital” or “chief mobility officer,” for example. Critically, these individuals are tasked with building not only the relationships within the key segments of IT, but also between IT and the executive branch and the wider lines of business. They understand real-world IT delivery, can make build-vs.-buy decisions and understand back-end infrastructure, middleware and mobile architecture to drive governance, reusability and the business case for mobility.

Organizational Responsibilities of the mCoE
The mCoE is responsible for the execution of the enterprise mobility program and is the mobile touchpoint for all departments and lines of business. Its objective is to ensure user satisfaction with enterprise mobility services, including the employee productivity and operational efficiencies that result from mobile workflow-based processes. The mCoE helps prioritize mobile initiatives and rationalize existing processes, portals and applications that can be enhanced with mobile. In doing so, the mCoE can set mobile standards for existing digital assets to adhere to, such as content, interactions and security. The facets of the mCoE cover four major areas:

- A program management office that connects various stakeholders of the organization.
- An innovation management function that manages new mobile business ventures.
- An app management function that spans areas related to solutions development and audit functions.
- A governance and operations function that provides day-to-day lights-on operations and tracking.

Key responsibilities of the mCoE are depicted in Figure 4 (next page).

The Program Management Office
Although the mCoE’s focus is on new technologies, the fundamentals of program management, customer service and cross-functional communications still apply. The program office of the mCoE plays three roles:

- **Defines standards and mechanisms by which outside stakeholders engage the mCoE.** Stakeholders include executive sponsors, whose interest lies in periodically updating the performance of the mCoE, and project requestors, who manage services from the mCoE for solution delivery and solution

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### Types of mCoE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>mCoE Type /Required Commitment Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge mCoE</td>
<td>Low-cost; driven usually by IT or a business unit to ensure standards and best practices in a community model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BYOD mCoE</td>
<td>IT-budgeted; enables mobile office functions such as e-mail, calendaring, document access and basic apps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audit mCoE</td>
<td>IT-budgeted core architect group; audits in-flight mobile projects for conformance with mobile standards and best practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile testing mCoE</td>
<td>Enterprise-funded; common mobile testing lab that provides testing capabilities for multiple form factors; no centralized development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business mCoE</td>
<td>Funded within the business unit and usually serviced by boutique vendors to develop consumer apps; very little need for IT involvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprise mCoE</td>
<td>Operated with a clear mandate and driven by mobile strategy; spearheaded by a key leader in the organization who is part of the larger digital strategy; funded for full-service operations with a 25- to 100-member team, cross-pollinated by several organizational units.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Cognizant
Figure 3
guidance. Alliances with various mobile solution vendors are also managed within the PMO office; project delivery is managed either internally or by service partners. As such, the PMO ensures that vendor-sourced deliverables are subject to the quality and compliance standards as defined by the mCoE.

- **Continuously measures customer satisfaction with the services rendered by the mCoE.** The PMO carries out regular stakeholder communications throughout each solution’s lifecycle, and all the way into production operations.

- **Reports back to the executive sponsor community on the value being delivered to the organization from mCoE investments.** Executive reports aggregate project delivery metrics, short- and long-term innovation impact, and stakeholder satisfaction measurements.

**Innovation Management**

As a cross-discipline practice, enterprise mobility involves not just IT resources but also employees across the business, in areas such as product development/management, marketing, public relations, operations and customer service. As a result, individuals or groups may have unique viewpoints on “the next great app.”

An innovative idea pipeline should be maintained with business-relevant apps; the mCoE must own the task of collecting ideas from a variety of internal and external sources. These include competitive analysis, device manufacturer advances, regulatory changes and opinions sourced from professional analysts (e.g., Gartner, Forrester, etc.) and regular inputs from strategic mobility solution development partners and vendors.

The company’s employees also represent a valuable source of innovation. Opportunities for idea submission should be marketed to employees outside of the mCoE on a regular basis (see Figure 5, next page). All of this helps to ensure that an innovation culture is engrained within the enterprise.

All ideas, regardless of how they are sourced, should be entered into the mCoE’s online portal. As ideas move through validation cycles, their progress and status should be available to all interested parties. All business-relevant ideas should be continually evaluated for payoff potential. Innovation organization management can choose to take the most promising ideas to market - either by turning them into reusable application assets that can be incorporated into

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**Varying Responsibilities of the mCoE**

**Program Management Office**
- Engagement SLAs with project requestors
- Satisfaction metrics from end users
- Overall KPI reporting to executive sponsors
- Internal marketing and effectiveness

**App Solutions & Audit Management**
- Solution development
- Mobile technology audit
- Mobile security audit
- Mobile experience audit
- Project prioritization

**mCoE Responsibilities**
- Consumer satisfaction
- Employee productivity partner
- Partner workflow

**Innovation Management**
- Business transformation
- New digital experiences
- Concept validation with mainstream apps

**Governance & Operations**
- Methodology updates
- Environment changes
- Production support
- Defect resolution
- Metrics collection and analysis

Source: Cognizant
Figure 4
regular projects, or spurring innovative activities across the enterprise.

Since the mobile experience shelf life is short, mobile management organizations must make long-term plans for innovation. In the pharmaceuticals industry, for instance, many pharma companies are finding more agile ways to work with their partners, including their suppliers, distributors and resellers. They are doing this by adopting an API development model, managed with a software as a service (SaaS) approach, in which partners consume services on demand. In doing so, they are enabling a fast pace of change without the associated cost and complexity.

Lacking the burden of legacy systems, “digital native” companies such as Amazon and Facebook have demonstrated a greater focus on mobility innovation compared with their peers in other industries. Amazon’s mobile-first strategy focuses on high-quality content delivered through tablets, apps, media and mobile ads. Amazon’s app store has been a success thanks mainly to the sales of its Kindle tablet. Moreover, its unique data trove gives it an edge by enabling more targeted ads. Similarly, Facebook’s mobile ad revenue has grown steadily, even as desktop ad revenue has dipped.

Nevertheless, companies from traditional sectors have taken mobility seriously, as well. General Electric, for example, has set up a mobility center of excellence that builds apps and solutions designed to work with iPhones and iPads for functions such as electricity transformer monitoring, railway track monitoring and hospital management.

Meanwhile, tablets are helping to clear bottlenecks in hospital operations, such as patient discharges, by allowing staff to enter data related to a patient’s stay into servers, thus reducing the time it takes to create discharge summaries. Wearable devices, such as smart bandages and plasters, are being used to transmit vital signs, ECGs and oxygen saturation data to smartphones or the cloud for analysis. The success of the U.S. Patient Protection Affordable Care Act (PPACA) will depend greatly on care being provided through mobile devices and apps. In fact, mobile health, or mHealth, is expected to create savings worth $1.96 billion and $5.83 billion by 2014, with top beneficiaries including the U.S. and Canada. (For more on this subject, read our paper “Connected Care: Heightened Imperatives.”)

App Solution and Audit Management

To support a culture of enterprise mobility excellence, the mCoE must provide a repository of self-service collateral (reusable artifacts) that helps mobility project teams perform at optimal levels of quality and efficiency. Examples include user interface templates for commonly used mobile search functions, as well as certified third-party libraries for standardized charting components, barcode scanning and Wi-Fi printing functions. When it comes to the mCoE’s engagement with projects, there are two areas that must be addressed from the user viewpoint:

- Am I doing the right thing? (Audit services)
- Help me do the right thing. (Augment services)

At the most basic level, project staff will deliver the solution outside of the mCoE, leveraging self-service governance collateral. When approval is required for project scope and approach (e.g., regulatory compliance), the mCoE would facilitate the stakeholder approval process as warranted by the intent of each project. The mCoE would typically employ approvers with technology oversight.

Driving Mobility Innovation

Evaluate current capabilities against competitors’ mobile solutions and look at possibilities to gain competitive advantage.

Explore disruptive trends that mobile has caused in other markets.

Model the mobile experience by using personas developed through analysis of mobile behavior, focusing on utility, convenience and user motivation.

Assess projected mobile growth, platform trends, target devices, etc., within a business context.

Source: Cognizant
Figure 5
(e.g., software and infrastructure architects) and broker requests to outside approvers, such as product management, legal and compliance.

To alleviate review and approval bottlenecks, project requestors should be given the opportunity to self-certify the proposed solution’s intent, scope and approach, and adhere to the presently acceptable set of enterprise standards and best practices. If the mCoE determines that additional review and/or approval is required because of deviations, a targeted approval process can be initiated. The number of approval steps should be determined automatically. As acceptable standards and practices evolve (e.g., when technology previously considered novel becomes mainstream), rules for approval cycles should be modified.

At a higher level of mCoE project involvement, mCoE staff would join forces with the project teams to augment their resources. Project leadership would retain accountability for overall delivery, and mCoE personnel would assume responsibility for deliverables and tasks requiring more specialized or higher level qualifications. Staff augmentation opportunities should follow a typical progression of deliverable focus: from business case to requirements, to solution architecture, to detailed design, to coding and testing. This is an internal consulting model with charge-back mechanisms to be determined by company preference.

The mCoE should offer standards verification services with a menu of deliverable-centric consulting offerings (e.g., software architecture review or test plan creation), with price points corresponding to different service levels (e.g., 24-hour vs. five-business-day turnaround). Typical bundles would include review of all project deliverables as they are produced (e.g., business case, requirements, software architecture), coupled with review of later-stage deliverables (e.g., code, test plans, test cases).

Governance and Operations

Leading mobile enterprises are adopting flexible device management policies. Mobile information management is emerging as a key technology in this regard. Given the fragmented nature of the current mobile landscape (devices, operating systems and carriers), organizations must be flexible in how they manage mobility. A recent survey by Citrix® found that while 48% respondents are using mobile device management, 47% have adopted mobile application management, which is a more flexible approach for exercising control over devices and ensuring security. Enterprises are also implementing file sharing, sync and storage to support mobile users.

A typical mCoE does not need to own all the necessary infrastructure, environments and tools (e.g., version control, build automation, change management). Nor does it need to employ all approvers (e.g., product management, legal and compliance). Moreover, it can often be faced with project requests that lack detail and are not clearly translated into implementable solutions. Modifications usually include extended user interface (UI) prototyping activities to gain project requestor clarity, architectural proof-of-concept work to crystallize areas of technological uncertainty, and responsibility for refusing or shelving a project if it is deemed unsuitable for delivery at the time of request.

Hence, projects are best operationalized through an intranet Web site that provides process methodology (phases, milestones, activities, tasks) and deliverable- and role-centric views into the methodology collateral. Tools such as Eclipse Process Framework (EPF)7 and Rational Method Composer (RMC)8 represent ideal open source and proprietary tools, respectively, for software methodology configuration. In addition to housing deliverable templates, task and role definitions, the methodology must include a knowledge repository covering the following categories:

- Deliverable samples corresponding to each template.
- Effort estimation guidelines aligned with selected methodology.
- UI design best practices for each targeted hardware platform.
- Architecture and design guidelines for each software development platform.
- Coding guidelines, naming conventions and best practices for each supported programming language.
- Continuous assessment of application integration best practices.
- Testing guidelines covering the use of physical and virtualized devices, as well as software device emulators.
- Handover guidelines for transitioning the project from development to operations.
• Infrastructure and operations best practices for customer support, enhancement request management and metrics collection.

Throughout the project lifecycle, communications with external stakeholders – starting with the project request and continuing with regular status updates and satisfaction surveys – should occur using an online portal such as Microsoft SharePoint and a workflow engine to facilitate simple requests. Stakeholders should have near-real-time visibility into the status of their requests and any other pertinent project-related information.

An important aspect of the mCoE is its day-to-day operations, which consist of environment maintenance, software and hardware upgrades, patches, etc. While almost invisible, an mCoE’s environment management organization is of extreme importance. Management of the environment must be driven with a communication mechanism for operational updates. Such updates are short, purpose-driven messages and are not meant to be overly explanatory of update rationale and impact.

In cases where the mCoE is tasked with operating mobile solutions in production, an environment management organization is responsible for various levels of production support, end-user feedback collection and gathering of production usage and performance metrics. Industry-standard infrastructure and operations best practices (e.g., an Information Technology Infrastructure Library or ITIL framework) should be followed closely.

Some organizations use the mCoE as a mechanism for increasing mobile awareness within the organization as to how their enterprises are embarking on new ways to enhance their business services. External observers should also be kept informed about the value that the mCoE delivers to the enterprise. A monthly newsletter should be sent to company employees to showcase the latest mobile advances, with article content that is suitable for a reasonably non-tech-savvy audience. The information presented should be valuable and not easily obtained online. The mCoE can partner with external entities (e.g., system integrators, software platform vendors, etc.) to source appropriate articles.

Benefits of the mCoE

An mCoE is critical to any organization serious about outperforming in the digital economy. At a minimum, the mCoE should offer methodologies, best practices and solution accelerators that can be used by solution delivery teams to create higher quality applications at a reduced cost and on an accelerated schedule. Economies of scale can be achieved by extending the knowledge repository role of the mCoE with a full-fledged solution development mobile organization. A fully functional mCoE should contain human resources and enterprise assets required to take a project from business idea inception to a fully-supported production solution that is subject to continual enhancements.

Establishing an mCoE offers many long-term benefits to the organization, including the following:

• Improved alignment. At a time when different business units pursue their mobile programs independently of the enterprise IT team’s jurisdiction, the mCoE helps reduce overlaps and ensure consistency in mobile technology adoption.

• Agile development. The lifecycle of mobile solutions tends to be much shorter than traditional applications. Typically, apps require regular updates in features and bug fixes. With an mCoE in place, enterprises can move to a mobile solution factory model that streamlines and accelerates the process.

• Consistent offerings. Mobile solutions deployed on employee-, customer- or partner-owned devices need consistency in terms of design and features. An mCoE can enable this by acting as a checkpoint for all solutions. It can create common capabilities that are distributed enterprise-wide.

• Data privacy and security. Information security and privacy top the list of enterprise mobility implementation challenges. According to a study by Dimension Data,5 67% of devices across 300 enterprises had at least one vulnerability, and only 27% of respondents felt they had a well-defined network policy in place. Moreover, only 32% respondents have taken steps toward conducting security audits of applications touched by mobile devices. It is imperative for enterprises to implement comprehensive security policies and back them up with regular checks and audits. An mCoE can help reduce the
Quick Take

The mCoE In Action

We have helped numerous companies establish and/or extend a mCoE. Here are descriptions of two representative examples.

- **A diversified global pharmaceuticals leader:** This U.S.-based, global life sciences client operates a shared IT services organization responsible for, among many functional areas, a mobile CoE. The mCoE operates via a SharePoint-based portal, with approximately 12 pieces of self-service collateral on application design and technology usage best practices. Many of the customer’s mobile solutions are subject to HIPAA regulatory compliance, as the apps use personal health information that can be subject to information privacy.

  Every mobile application project request must be manually “decisioned” by mCoE employee per a 16-page questionnaire. Review and approval requests involving product management, legal and regulatory are routed manually via e-mail.

  We devised and implemented a set of improvements to the existing mCoE:

  » An expanded self-service collateral set covering all SDLC disciplines through a typical project lifecycle.
  » Offshore-based design review process for technical deliverables.
  » Project submission automated through SharePoint forms, allowing the requestor to self-certify a project as adhering to acceptable standards, and triggering approval when self-certification is not permitted.
  » An automated approval workflow, with real-time approval status visibility to all stakeholders.
  » Improved mobile solution testing with two service levels: a self-service, cloud-based test environment set up by the mCoE and turned over to the project’s testing staff, and a complete outsourcing of test planning and execution to the mCoE’s testing organization.
  » Outsourced mobile solution testing.
  » Review and preparation of the application to deploy to the app store on a 24 x 7 basis.

- **A large commercial health insurer:** A U.S.-based commercial health insurer with a global presence currently operates a large set of mobile applications for international users and has a limited domestic mobility footprint. The insurer is rapidly growing by acquisition with a number of newly-acquired units using a variety of mobile solutions. These solutions target sales force agents, plan sponsors, plan participants and the public at large. The solution scope ranges from viewing of plan participant claims and benefit data to general wellness advice.

  The customer initially asked us to create a multi-channel center of excellence, tasked with standardizing all mobile applications and mobile-enabled Web sites to a single mobile application development platform (MADP), a suite of products for mobile technology. As the engagement progressed, the technology scope increased to include governance for native solution development for iOS and Android platforms, as well as hybrid applications and mobile-enabled Web sites.

  So far, we have delivered the following mCoE features:

  » Project request process.
  » Multi-channel solution development factory staffed with offshore resources, operating on an Agile scrum method, modified per the client’s constraints.
  » EPF-based configuration for factory software development lifecycle and innovation management workflows.
security risks associated with mobility projects because it sets technology standards, which enable centralized governance.

- **Mobility innovations.** The mCoE is ideally placed to identify new capabilities that can lead to value-added offerings. For example, a simple banking payment app can be offered as an integrated mobile payment service for requisite third-party apps, thus creating a new revenue stream while saving development costs.

- **Vibrant ecosystem.** Enterprises looking to create an ecosystem with a large number of apps need to keep pace with new innovations from device manufacturers. The mCoE offers a place where knowledge can be continuously transferred to partners when rapidly building and deploying new mobile features to meet user requirements.

- **A mobile-first mindset.** Mobile is fast becoming a primary channel, in which solutions and applications will be developed first for many enterprises. Regardless of where an enterprise's mobility initiative stands, an mCoE with an integrated approach to solution development is crucial to a successful mobile-first strategy.

Given mobile's potential to transform industries, enterprises need to embed enterprise mobility apps deep into their go-forward strategies. The mCoE is the best approach for enterprises whose business success is predicated on always-on, virtually connected employees, partners and customers. Done right, the processes and standards set by the mCoE at the beginning of an enterprise's move to mobility will deliver a winning hand over the long term. By eliminating the risks created by a fragmented approach, the mCoE can set in motion a virtuous cycle that delivers value as enterprise mobility becomes the default platform of the future.

**Footnotes**


3. Research from Forrester’s CIO Mobile Engagement Playbook defines a mobile center of excellence as a coordinating “force majeure,” comprising approximately 25 to 100 technology and business staff under the leadership of a senior executive and a supporting mobile architecture council.


7 The Eclipse Process Framework (EPF) is an open source project that is managed by the Eclipse Foundation. It aims at producing a customizable software process engineering framework.

8 Rational Method Composer (RMC) is a commercial product by IBM (built on top of Eclipse) for authoring, configuring, viewing and publishing processes.


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About Cognizant

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