



Universal Process Notation:

A simple solution for complex process diagrams

TIBCO Nimbus™ is a business application for process documentation that presents an easy-to-understand visualization of how people, processes, and systems should interact. Nimbus uses Universal Process Notation (UPN), a simplified approach to describing process flows using visual diagrams.

UPN alleviates complexities that can lead to gaps in communication and threaten collaboration between business users and IT staff, a situation that can then compromise the effectiveness and completeness of requirements.

This paper explains some of the features and benefits of UPN and how it solves problems associated with complex process diagrams.

NOT SHAPES, TEXT

UPN, a simplified system of symbols and rules, shifts the emphasis from a multitude of different shapes that must be memorized by all audiences to easy-to-understand text descriptions of each object. The result is that the typical business user can easily follow process flows and notations with little or no reference to standards.

When applied correctly, UPN allows business users to document and describe processes quickly and clearly in collaboration with each other. Without the need to understand and remember complex notations, they can clearly visualize process flows and immediately identify inefficiencies, bottlenecks, and other process issues.

INTERACTIVE CONTENT DELIVERY

The notation also relies on supporting technology to assist with content delivery. For instance, instead of describing various documents and supporting tools (such as non-automated systems that still require human interaction to complete tasks), documents and tools are attached directly to the step at which they are required. To support this interactive approach, a suitable business process content management system (BPCMS) is employed to create, manage, and deliver the content.

BENEFITS OF UPN

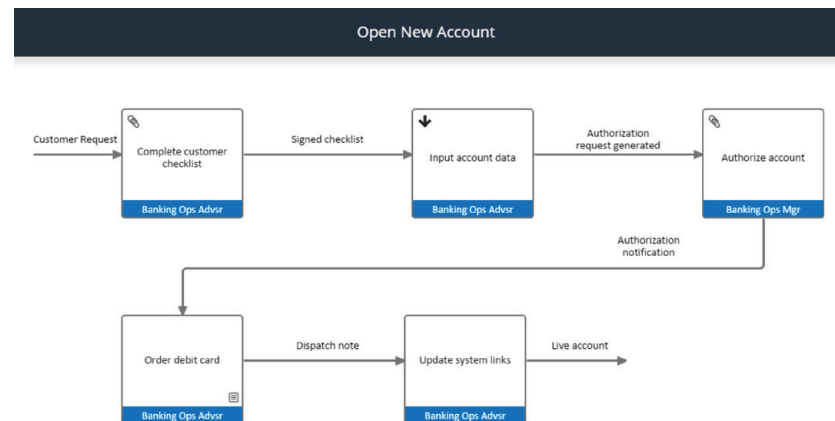
- Easy for business users to understand with little or no prior knowledge of the notation and without referring to a list of predefined symbols
- Focus on outcomes rather than inputs and outputs of minor steps
- Easy to identify inefficiencies and potential issues
- Focus on process flows rather than actors

FOCUS ON BUSINESS GOALS

Using UPN, emphasis shifts from having to provide a description of every single input and output for every activity, no matter how detailed or high level, to documenting business goals. After all, activities and process steps are merely enablers to help business users identify and focus on their objectives. By focusing on outcomes, it becomes easier for owners and consumers to recognize the need to evaluate and improve activities that enable and produce them.

CROSS FUNCTIONAL

UPN is a truly integrated cross-functional approach to process definition. Resources responsible and accountable for activities, and therefore outcomes, are displayed against the activity. This is the reverse of the often used swim lane approach, where activities are displayed in the context of the resource. With UPN, rather than the focus being on the actors involved in execution, it is on how the output is delivered to the customer, and how that is achieved.



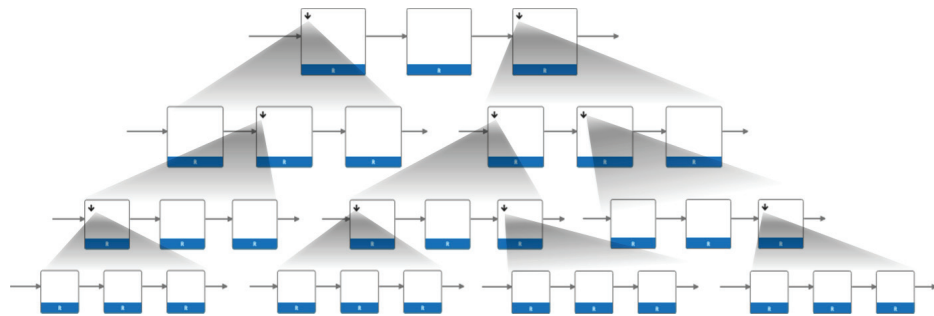
Process diagram for opening a new account.

SIMPLE COMPONENTS

UPN uses simple physical attributes designed to make access to content as easy as possible for the majority of process consumers. The main purpose of these components is to facilitate applying rules. A good understanding of both is required for an author of process content.

PROCESS MAPS

End-to-end process maps are made up of a collection of process diagrams. Each diagram should conform to the rules laid out in this specification. Except for the top level, each diagram represents a deconstruction from a higher level process step. The initial input and final output on each diagram represents the input and output of the higher level, or parent, process step.



End-to-end process map.

DIAGRAM OBJECTS

The following is a list of all diagram objects users can expect to find on a UPN diagram:

Activity Box

Describes a process step. Processes are made up of activities, therefore the activity box is always described using a verb and a noun.



Activity Box – Noun-verb description.

Lines

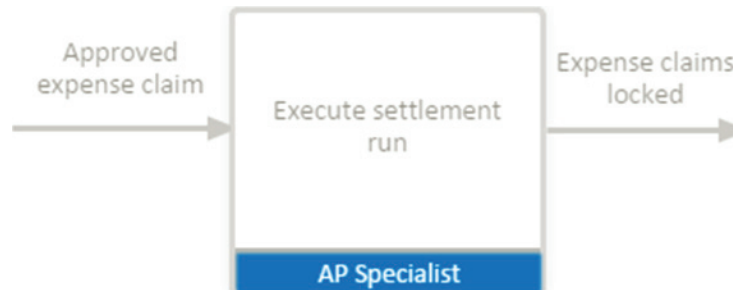
Denote activity inputs and outputs. The direction of the arrow head indicates whether the line is an input or output relative to a specific activity.



Input and Output Lines – Start and end of each process step.

Resources

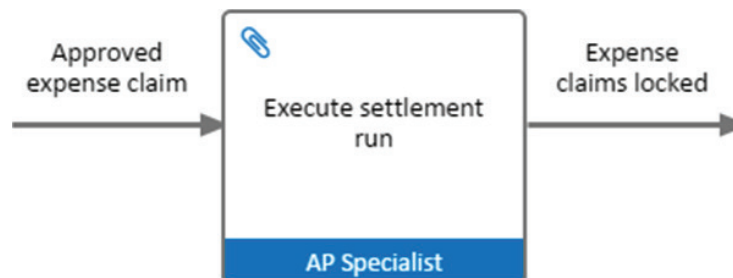
Display people or systems that are either responsible or accountable for the execution of an activity.



Resources – Roles and systems.

Attachments

A suitable icon must be displayed inside an activity box that provides access to any associated documents, tools, templates, or other information related to the specific step.



Attachments – Icons such as paperclip, pin, or computer disk.

Drill Downs

Displayed inside an activity box, drill downs are used to navigate down to the next level in the process, transporting the user to a more detailed view of the process step.



Drill Downs – Navigate to the next level down.

Learn more about TIBCO Nimbus and Universal Process Notation at www.tibco.com.



Global Headquarters
 3307 Hillview Avenue
 Palo Alto, CA 94304
 +1 650-846-1000 TEL
 +1 800-420-8450
 +1 650-846-1005 FAX
www.tibco.com

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