

## Business Rules: “To Embed or Not to Embed”

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Business rules are key in making logic decisions in business processes and applications. Rules provide a consistent answer based on the variable input passed to it. An example would be the need for branding a product (logo) based on who the audience is using the process or application. The business rule would have a set of input data supplied to it, and after running the data through the ruleset, it would supply back an answer of what brand to use.

Most times that same ruleset could be used elsewhere in the enterprise for branding. What happens quite often is the developer ends up embedding the business rules in the business process or application. This does not allow for reuse and makes it difficult to change the rules without having to redeploy the business process. As a consequence, there becomes more than one way to determine branding, as each business process or application has its own ruleset and doesn't necessarily produce a consistent result across the enterprise. Embedding is fine if we have "one off" rules that will never be used by any other business process or application and are rarely changed. An example would be simple: an if-then logic that uses the same variable. If we determine that the business rule is changed often and/or will be needed in more than one place, exposing those rules as a Decision Service separate from the business process or application, allows for reusability and easier maintainability... change it once fix it everywhere.

The use of a Business Rules Management System (BRMS) to support implementing a decision service, allows encapsulating the business rules and exposing them out in the service layer. This allows for consumption by any business process or application that needs it, and gives us reusability and consistency. This also makes it possible to change the business rules as often as needed without having to redeploy any business process or business application that consumes them.

How do I identify business rules that can be made into a decision service? Looking at your business processes and applications, there are always decision points within them that drive what happens next. Often the decision points will consist of all the business rules needed to make a decision. So a decision service is then a reusable implementation of one or more decision points. Identifying those decision points is important and will help in planning for rules discovery, analysis and implementation of a decision service. Business rules that return a consistent answer are essential to making decisions within business processes and applications. Separating that logic into a decision service may be a different way of thinking for most solution architects or developers but is vital when designing business processes or applications if we want to get the most reusability and ease of adaptability to keep up with our ever evolving business.