

Business process and business interaction

Question: Besides the business process concept, ArchiMate also understands the concept of the business interaction. A business interaction is a process that is executed by two or more actors (a collaboration of actors). Why is the business interaction concept needed on top of the business process concept? Isn't it sufficient to relate a process to a collaboration of actors and thereby express that the process in itself is in fact an interaction?

Solution: A business interaction is defined as a specialization of a business process (or more precisely a specialization of the generic behavior concept). By using a business interaction, information is added to more explicitly describe the behavior that is executed by a collaboration of roles or actors. By relating a business process to a business collaboration the same information is expressed and it more explicitly describes the behavior that is executed by a collaboration of roles or actors. In the following figure, some variants are expressed:

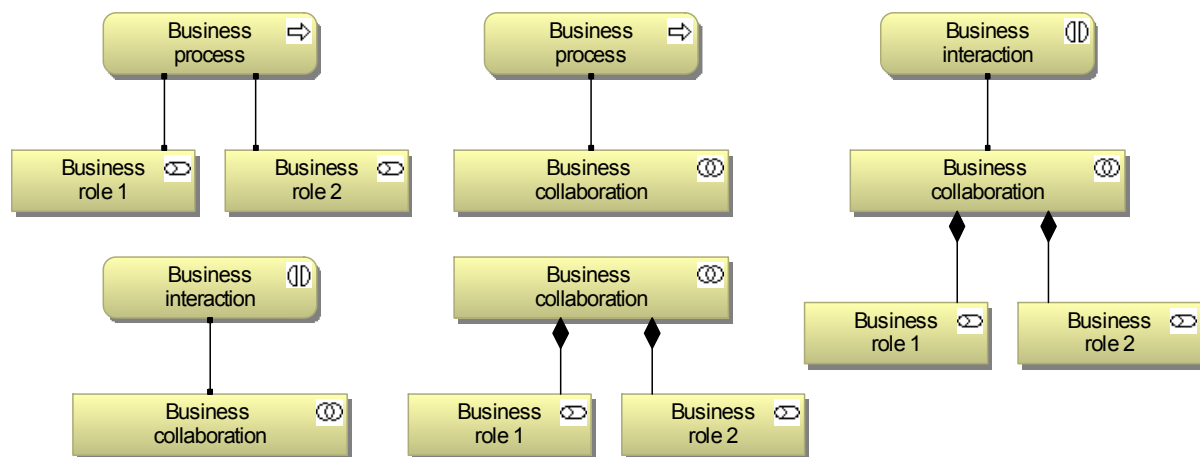


Figure: Variants of business process and business interaction

In the top left, a business process is modeled that is assigned to two roles, in the top middle a business process is assigned to a business collaboration, bottom left an interaction is assigned to a business collaboration, bottom middle shows a business collaboration consisting of two roles and to the right an interaction that is assigned to a business collaboration consisting of two roles.

This redundancy is not without a good cause. In some cases, a business collaboration is not explicitly modeled (for example if the focus is on the behavior and not on the actors), and at the same time you want to express that it is about an interaction with multiple roles. Another example is if one would want to express a collaboration, but not make explicit which parties or actors the make up the collaboration; this can be useful in, for example, a development phase where it is not yet clear who the final parties will be that ultimately will add value to a product of service.

Consequences: The goal the architect has with modeling or visualizing a business interaction or – collaboration will to a large extent determine which modeling solution is chosen and which aspect gets focus.

Alternatives: Not applicable.

Relationships with other good practices: A comparable distinction as described here is applicable to the application layer, especially related to application interaction and application collaboration. The examples and heuristics shown here are also applicable.