

How to build a BPM for **a real estate** company with lots of branches and cut **60% of costs**

B. F. SAUL

CASE STUDY ON
WORKFLOW ENGINE

OptimaJet, 2020

About the B.F. Saul company

[B.F. Saul](#) is a medium-scale industrial company from the US, Washington DC, and it has a very complex structure, with lots of divisions and a few industries they work in. It's one of the most successful privately owned real estate companies in the United States, operational since 1892.

it's a conglomerate of companies, with a unique internal control model, which covers these industries:

- Development and construction
- Real estate
- Property maintenance

Visit their website at <http://bfsaul.com>

IT department at the heart of real estate

The company has its own IT department that creates software for internal use and helps with processes management.

As Vince Gee (CTO) says, one day they may work for a hotel, another – for another division. His IT team includes more than 10 developers who develop in-house systems for internal use, and the company shares services among its divisions. Despite the fact, it's a real estate company substantially, they have a full team of IT specialists to create and manage their internal control systems.



The corporation includes the following divisions:

- Hotels,
- Homeowners insurance,
- Business insurance,
- Shopping centers,
- Residential property,
- Construction and development,

In addition to these divisions, they own a public company, while other branches are private.

How they handled Workflows before

B.F. Saul employees used MS SharePoint for file repositories and it fell short of their needs. However, they needed a Workflow management system to process documents.

Here is an example of the task they couldn't do in SharePoint: somebody starts a new document, then it needs to be approved by five different people. Certain rules might apply here, like If one expert gave his or her approval, send it to the next expert, etc. After it went through all checks and corrections, the document needs to be published in the system as an officially approved document.

Indeed, the IT department tried to build their own Workflow solutions as parts of larger systems that included CRM. It took 3 years in parts for them to develop a workable system.

Workflow Engine by OptimaJet

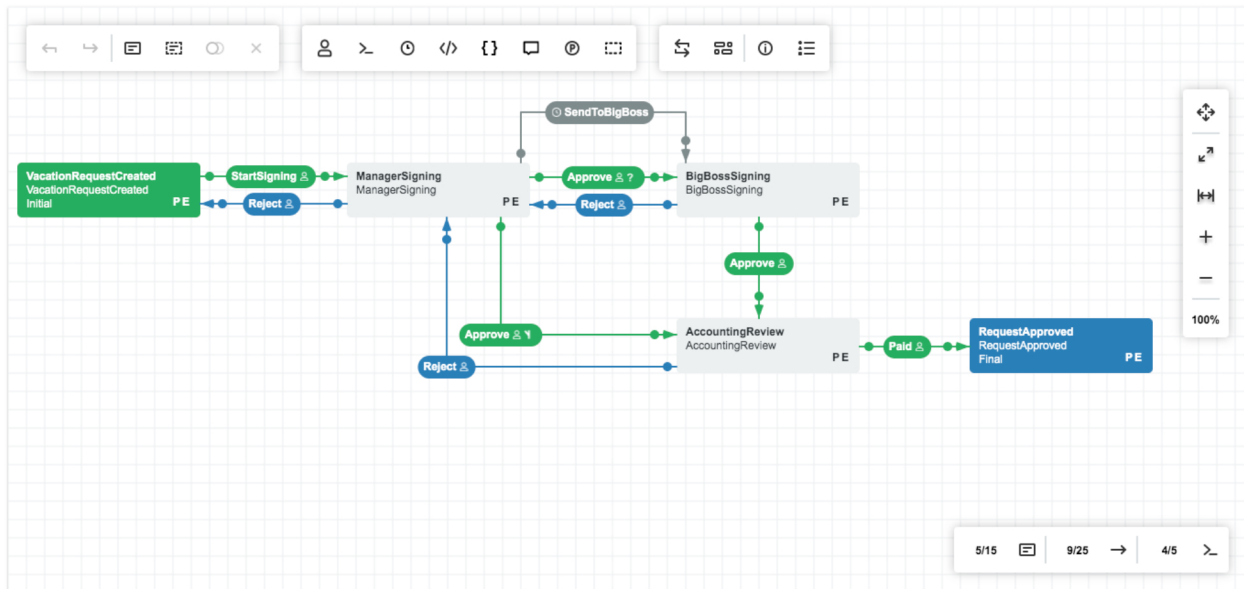
- When then created SharePoint environment, they picked the .NET Workflow solution
- Workflow Engine did everything they needed to do.
- Saved up to a year of development on their own.

Visit the developer's website <https://dwkit.com>

Why Workflow Engine (WFE)

It was similar to the MS SharePoint experience and everybody in the company had a good grasp on it quickly. Plus, the system was highly configurable and it could be accustomed to the processes in no time..

Workflow Engine gives this same feel as MS SharePoint, yet you can extend it by writing your own handlers, etc. This makes the integration into the corporate's file system significantly easier. For example, you can write the function that, e.g., HR department needed, and pull it right into the Workflow diagram.



Workflow Engine designer: A visual editor for for business process creation

Link to demo: <https://Workflowengine.io/demo/designer/>

Workflow designer web's GUI was one of the selling points as well. They took the whole WFE designer's code and put it onto their web page so employees can create and manage processes there.

At any given moment they have around 500 documents circulating in the system and it handles this high load like a breeze. About 500 Workflows are in process. All issues with stuck Workflows were caused by the rules of the particular Workflow and other parts of the system but WFE.

Internally made system

As this case shows, they have already built their own Workflow management systems several times for previous projects. However, the latest one was so large, they needed a fully dedicated component of managing Workflows.

This project is not something they build in a few months or even a year. The development took 3 years in parts. However, it lacked a smooth Workflow management solution. The Workflow Engine did everything they needed to and it fit their framework perfectly.

DWKit: How to build a BPM for a real estate company with lots of branches and cut 60% of costs

Cut costs up to 60% with WFE

*Every division's project has an estimated budget, but it's difficult to project all the expenses. Also, the costs tend to grow over time as new obstacles show up. When you apply a modular approach (where **WFE** is one of the modules), it's easier to manage costs.*

it would've probably taken them a year with two or three developers writing code, which would translate to about a \$500,000 USD. But, with **WFE**, it was all just configuration; Considering the price of the system they didn't blink an eye purchasing the solution, because it was about 90% cheaper than if they were to build something from scratch.

Other choices

Here are the SharePoint Workflow systems that were tested side-to-side with Workflow Engine:

- K2
- Nintex

However, they couldn't include either of them into their solution and customize to the extent they needed. Plus, they were magnitude more expensive. The selection was obvious in favor of WFE.



Integration

The Workflow Engine system was integrated in less than a week with no problems whatsoever. It was installed on one of the company's servers and tested on a developer's computer beforehand. One developer was responsible for the integration and it doesn't cause any technical or performance issues.

System configuration and improvements are handled easy because most parts have a Visual Studio project code, available for modification.

About this case

This case study was based on an interview with [Vince Gee](#), vice-president of the information technology department (CTO) at B.F. Saul. He's in charge of all software development with 20 years of experience.

In the future, B.F. Saul IT department is planning to move the Workflow engine to the cloud, and OptimaJet just came up with [a server solution](#) that manages Workflows and it perfectly fits their requirements so both companies shared the same path.

Explore Workflow Server by this link:

<https://workflowengine.io/server/>