Nintex introduces new analytics for workflow automation and previews its Workflow Cloud

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The company's Hawkeye analytics exposes performance details beyond workflow execution metrics to reveal how business results and outcomes are determined, while Workflow Cloud can be likened to a self-service SaaS design and runtime environment.

451 Research

Nintex has announced the release of Nintex Hawkeye, and previewed its soon-to-be-released Nintex Work-flow Cloud. Hawkeye is a cloud-based workflow analytics service that can capture, monitor, measure and assess workflow analytics that provide the means to understand and improve automated workflows and business processes.

Workflow Cloud enables Nintex to build automated workflows as a service across IT platforms beyond the Microsoft ecosystems that spawned the vendor's growth. We believe both offerings will attract considerable new market interest because they treat workflows and business processes as a portfolio of strategic assets, and manage their development and use accordingly.

THE 451 TAKE

Hawkeye brings to the workflow and business process management (BPM) markets a means to track business processes as a portfolio of assets. Indeed, it exposes typical metrics tied to workflow execution and performance to help improve workflow and process designs. But it steps back to look at the big picture of how many workflows are being designed and used across an enterprise, and also zooms in on individual workflow business results. To us, it represents an asset management approach to workflows. Workflows become assets and need to be managed as such. Nintex has the right idea, and the current capabilities of Hawkeye represent a good start to a field we believe will grow in the coming years.

By cloud-enabling its Nintex Workflow Platform, Nintex is set free to build workflows on and across other IT ecosystems beyond those from Microsoft. Actually, it enables enterprises to build their own customized SaaS applications when no alternatives are commercially available. The digital-transformation initiatives by many enterprises that are intended to improve customer experience and modernize business models will require workflow intelligence and business process portfolio analysis to continuously track outcomes and results. Hawkeye and Workflow Cloud are a pioneering approach to such means.

CONTEXT

Workflow automation specialist Nintex was founded in 2006 with the launch of its Nintex Workflow platform for Microsoft ecosystems. In 2010, it expanded its offering with the Nintex Forms product. In a prior report on Nintex, we discussed its 2015 acquisition of Drawloop, and how it added document-creation capabilities in Salesforce ecosystems to the Nintex Workflow platform.

Nintex currently employs a staff of roughly 380, 140 of which reside at its headquarters in Bellevue, Washington, and another 140 in Melbourne for product development. Other offices are located in Irvine, California (the Drawloop staff), Dubai, London, Tokyo and Malaysia. Nintex reports that it has 6,500 customers globally. At the close of its fiscal year in June, its revenue increased 25% from the prior year. It is currently operating at a $100m annual revenue run rate, is profit-able and self-financed. The vendor is posturing for a public offering.

STRATEGY AND PRODUCTS

Nintex's strategy is to position in the workflow and BPM markets as a preferred provider of content-driven workflow automation. Its flagship offering, the Nintex Workflow Platform, enables users to craft workflows on and across Microsoft SharePoint and Office 365 ecosystems, and includes a design studio to automate workflows; a forms engine to capture data, complete tasks and edit content; connectors for back-end systems and cloud integrations; and mobile apps for data capture, content review and data task completion across mobile devices.

The acquisition of Drawloop enabled the Nintex Workflow Platform to bridge the workflow and document-sharing divide that often existed between its customers' Microsoft and Salesforce ecosystems. With the recent announcements of Hawkeye and the Nintex Workflow Cloud, the vendor is attempting to craft a new category of workflow portfolio intelligence, and is declaring independence from Microsoft ecosystems to enable intelligent automated workflows in any IT ecosystem.

Hawkeye enables enterprises to instrument, measure and monitor their business processes. It captures people and process data and generates reports and dashboards with analytics. It enables business and IT planners to answer questions about process performance, and offers insight into process execution that heretofore has been lacking in many similar workflow and BPM tools. Hawkeye can reveal which processes are automated, what functions they perform, when and how often processes run, who's involved in the process, what content is accessed, how effective the processes are, and how they might be improved.

Hawkeye exposes workflow intelligence via of a series of analytic lenses. For example, the Usage Lens reveals the size and scale of workflows, how many people are building and participating in workflows, and tracks key consumption metrics of the Nintex platform. The Process Intelligence Lens offers perspective on the effectiveness and return on investment of the individual automated processes. Hawkeye uses technology Nintex refers to as Beacons that are inserted into a workflow to capture data about the workflow, and expose it to Hawkeye's Lens.

Other Lenses for monitoring/alerts and workflow inventory management, among others, are on the drawing board. OData APIs are available to feed data and intelligence from the Lens into other business intelligence tools, such as Microsoft Power BI or Tableau, that can visualize workflow analytics via dashboards.

Nintex is also previewing the Nintex Workflow Cloud, its next-generation cloud architecture that extends the Nintex workflow platform to support cloud and hybrid workflows across a multitude of content sources and platforms. The company is positioning it as a means to deliver 'workflow as a service' where workflows are reusable, embeddable and shareable, and become stand-alone applications that can be used from anywhere.

Workflow Cloud is currently in beta testing, and is expected to be generally available in September. IT organizations are often resource-constrained, thus forcing line-of-business (LoB) decision makers that seek operational improvements to fend for themselves. We have found they first turn to the SaaS markets for their needs. When SaaS offerings are unavailable, they then look to workflow engines or BPM software to build the business process applications they need.

We liken Nintex's Workflow Cloud to 'software as a self service' for LoBs (and indeed IT organizations) – a resource to design, develop and run their own customized SaaS offerings. We believe the demand for such will accelerate through 2017 because it captures the best of many worlds – customizable development, consumed on-demand with a pay-as-you-use pricing model, from a cloud environment absent the headaches of infrastructure management.

COMPETITION

Direct rivals to Nintex have been other Microsoft .NET-based workflow and BPM vendors such PNMsoft, K2 and Kofax TotalAgility. Appian is strong in the cloud and mobile BPM. Pega, while overly complex and expensive, is adept at customer-facing processes. Alfresco offers compelling Activiti BPM and dynamic case management.

Oracle and IBM also have comprehensive cloud strategies, analytics and BPM engines capable of document and workflow automation, and the integration technology capabilities of bridging Microsoft and Salesforce domains, but are less likely to appeal to the LoB decision makers that Nintex attracts.

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS
Nintex is capitalizing on its success in automating workflows in and across Microsoft and Salesforce ecosystems, and is demonstrating thought leadership with its analytics and cloud approaches to automated workflow portfolio intelligence.

WEAKNESSES
Nintex's ambition to grow the number and types of workflow automations it enables may force the vendor to look into rules and event management capabilities sooner rather than later.

OPPORTUNITIES
Hawkeye represents a new direction for workflow and BPM, offering analytics that reveal how workflows can affect business outcomes, and how they can be managed as a portfolio of assets. Workflow Cloud enables enterprises to build their own SaaS. Both enable options and flexibility that the market will likely receive well.

THREATS
Cloud services providers of all types are accelerating the rate of investment in their own PaaS offerings, many of which will include the automation and analytics capabilities now being offered by Nintex.