

A photograph of a female doctor with short, wavy grey hair, wearing a white lab coat and a stethoscope. She is smiling warmly at a patient whose back is to the camera. The setting appears to be a medical office or clinic.

Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield: Improving Enterprise Architecture with SAP® PowerDesigner®

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Company

Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield

Industry

Insurance

Products and Services

Health insurance

Web Sitewww.wellmark.com**SAP® Solutions**

SAP® PowerDesigner® software



Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield uses SAP® PowerDesigner® software to enable its enterprise architecture group and IT staff to manage, document, and **understand the impacts that changes will have** on business processes prior to deployment. The software enables thorough impact analysis, supports the Zachman Framework for Enterprise Architecture, facilitates communication with nontechnical staff through HTML reports, and cuts development time by creating models developers can readily access.

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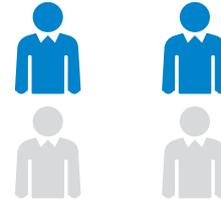
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Providing health coverage for 2 million members

Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield is a mutual insurance company owned by its policyholders. The company and its subsidiaries provide health coverage to more than 2 million members in Iowa and South Dakota. Through the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, Wellmark is part of a trusted national network that covers more than 100 million people.



2 million
Policyholders



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Enhancing enterprise architecture through modeling

Wellmark has a well-established enterprise architecture (EA) governance program as well as a data governance program that together help the company improve business processes. To help manage the impact of application changes on business processes and systems, Wellmark is developing a methodology based on the Zachman Framework for Enterprise Architecture to add to its EA program.

The methodology includes a defined set of architectural models. “We launched the enterprise architecture modeling project to bring our EA program to the next level,” says Tim Graham, enterprise architecture modeler for Wellmark. “Having a well-developed architecture will allow us to better understand how changes to business processes and organizational changes impact the company and who will be affected.”

To expand the EA program, Wellmark’s EA team required additional modeling capabilities to model the business using a formal methodology. Graham looked to leverage the many existing data models the EA team had already created using SAP PowerDesigner. The project launch happened to coincide with a release of the software that featured additional EA functionality.

Graham says that the HTML reporting feature that SAP PowerDesigner offers will play a significant part in the EA project. “We will be able to easily generate SAP PowerDesigner reports in HTML and load them onto a SharePoint site so that we can disseminate the information easily and timely,” he says. “Because of these reporting capabilities, we don’t have to train nontechnical staff on how to use SAP PowerDesigner. They benefit from the tool even if they don’t know how to use SAP PowerDesigner.”



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Modeling tool with the best impact-analysis ability

The ease of using the SAP PowerDesigner interface plus the new functionality convinced Wellmark that it would be best suited to build and maintain the EA models. “We also like the flexibility that SAP PowerDesigner offers, which lets us add functionality specific to our needs,” Graham says. “This includes adding extensions for specific DBMS functions, report templates, and Visual Basic scripts that enable us to automate many repetitive tasks.”

Wellmark considered other modeling tools but could not find one that provides the same level of impact analysis. “The SAP PowerDesigner repository is also a key differentiator,” Graham adds. “When architects check out models for modification, we can bring the models back together through the repository, which helps us with version control. The other tools we considered had repositories, but we were not

comfortable with the ability to take a model out, work on it separately, and check it back in.”

SAP PowerDesigner also closely supports the Zachman Framework EA ontology, a grid that Wellmark will use to organize views based on different perspectives, from the CEO to business users to developers. Another key feature Wellmark appreciates is traceability, which will let the EA team create dependencies between any two object types as well as between objects that are not in the same model. This will allow Wellmark to perform impact analysis, delivering what Graham calls a “big bang for the buck.” The EA staff can analyze how changes will impact all processes through different models, model types, and objects. “We will be able to pull it all together and see everything that will be impacted by the change,” Graham says.



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A better idea of application-change impacts on processes

As Wellmark builds models over time, the EA staff will keep improving its ability to estimate the impact of changes requested by the business. The team will also have a better handle on costs because it will know what is affected by the change and where. The staff will be able to make more-informed decisions and prioritize more effectively because it will know what will be impacted. "Previously, when we assessed a change, we did not know the impact, so we estimated the cost," Graham says. "When we build out the models, we will have a better idea of what's going to be impacted and a better idea of cost and timing."

Wellmark will be able to see the current and future state of the business when looking to make modifications and changes. Users will be able to see the changes graphically by viewing models that allow them to absorb information that is presented according to the

perspective and "viewpoint" as defined by the Zachman Framework. "We will be able to generate the right perspective based on the audience we are interacting with," Graham says. "The models will allow us to create visuals appropriate for the CEO and senior management as well as technical staff. It will be much easier to convey a lot of information."

Graham says that Wellmark could not have advanced the EA program without the ability of SAP PowerDesigner to extend models and give them the Wellmark spin. "Other modeling tools force you into a paradigm where they have a standard for how you have to create models," he says. "That approach always has a fixed look and feel, which did not work well for us. The ability to easily extend SAP PowerDesigner in our own way is a huge benefit."



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Saving hundreds of development hours

SAP PowerDesigner has helped the Wellmark EA team demonstrate the value of the architecture project. "With SAP PowerDesigner as our data-modeling tool, we stay consistent in meeting our standards, such as how we create indexes and how we name indexes and keys," Graham says. "Scripting saves us hundreds of hours as we create data models and tables, and generating scripts saves us hundreds of hours of tedious work."

In the future, when Wellmark no longer has to re-create logical entities, logical application pieces, and business rules, SAP PowerDesigner will help tie all these components together. Wellmark can then manage business processes, architectural changes, and the impact of code changes even more efficiently. "If we understand

how changes will impact us, and if we find the impact faster as well as understand how it will grow, we can then spend our time planning for what the change is going to be," says Graham. "We don't have to waste time looking through Visio diagrams and scanning code to determine what changes."

The more models that Wellmark creates, the more efficiently and quickly the EA staff will complete tasks – with fewer resources and knowing what the impacts will be instead of just trying things and seeing what breaks. "This is particularly helpful during times when staff turns over," Graham says. "We have all the modeling stored in one central place. There's a huge advantage in this."

"It would be difficult to build a true enterprise architecture without SAP PowerDesigner. Having a well-developed architecture will allow us to better understand how changes to business processes and organizational changes impact the company."

Tim Graham, Enterprise Architecture Modeler, Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield



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