WEBCON®

WORKFLOW, BUT BETTER.

WHY A "BRAND X" WORKFLOW USER SHOULD LOOK AT WEBCON

We at WEBCON get asked – a lot – how we compare to various low-code/no-code application tools and workflow products. Nintex gets mentioned from time to time, as does K2, but there are many others, too. Answering questions like that is a challenge, though, because we're not interested in disparaging competitors; we actually think that most of our competitors are pretty good at what they do.

But WEBCON doesn't actually want to do the same thing they do. We've got over a decade's worth of experience taking a different (and yes, we believe a better) approach to building business applications.

How about we go through what's special about The WEBCON Way, and you decide if it's compelling enough to learn more?

CHANGE

WEBCON assumes that applications change - regularly.

Have stakeholders asked for a new application without knowing exactly what results they want it to accomplish? Does scope creep ever happen in your environment? Are business conditions volatile enough that new needs often emerge even if you got it right the first time? Admit it – that's the norm, not the exception. Change is a fundamental necessity.

Every workflow, or process management, or automation software maker talks about supporting change, but it's almost always limited to the easy stuff like version control. WEBCON is operating at an entirely different level when it comes to change.

It allows you to quickly deliver something to users and use their feedback to iteratively improve it until it's exactly what they want. And even after things stabilize, a month later when they inevitably change their minds or discover new opportunities, you can adapt without disruption. People that have tried the WEBCON Way, in 20/20 hindsight, have asked themselves "does any other methodology even work?"

Change is instant.

Let's say this immediately and loudly: **WEBCON BPS can make changes to processes even while they're in progress**. It's not a gimmick or a hack. We fundamentally designed our workflow instances to continually check for changes and adapt on the fly. We call it InstantChange™, and we even trademarked it.

Change is everywhere.

It's not just about the workflow model. You can also modify the data schema, form layouts, connections, data sources – pretty much anything – and have the change take effect immediately. Not next time -- now. In real time.

Change is integrated.

Forms won't break If you modify a field — they adapt. Instantly. Alter the paths between steps in a workflow and form buttons adapt immediately. Renaming something only needs to be done one time in one place.

Changing location works, too.

WEBCON's technology and feature set is consistent whether you're on-premises, online in a dedicated Azure tenancy, or using our multi-tenant SaaS offering. It's possible to migrate your environment from one place to another and preserve everything. That includes history, telemetry, and the current running state of your applications.

Change is clear.

If you need to change a data source, a business rule, a field, a workflow path, etc., wouldn't it be nice to know what else that change would affect? We do that. Instantly. You don't have to run a separate report or anything; it's right in the Designer Studio.

Would you prefer to see "what's new" for each saved version of your application? We do that. How about auto-generated documentation for the entire application highlighting the changes? Already in the box.
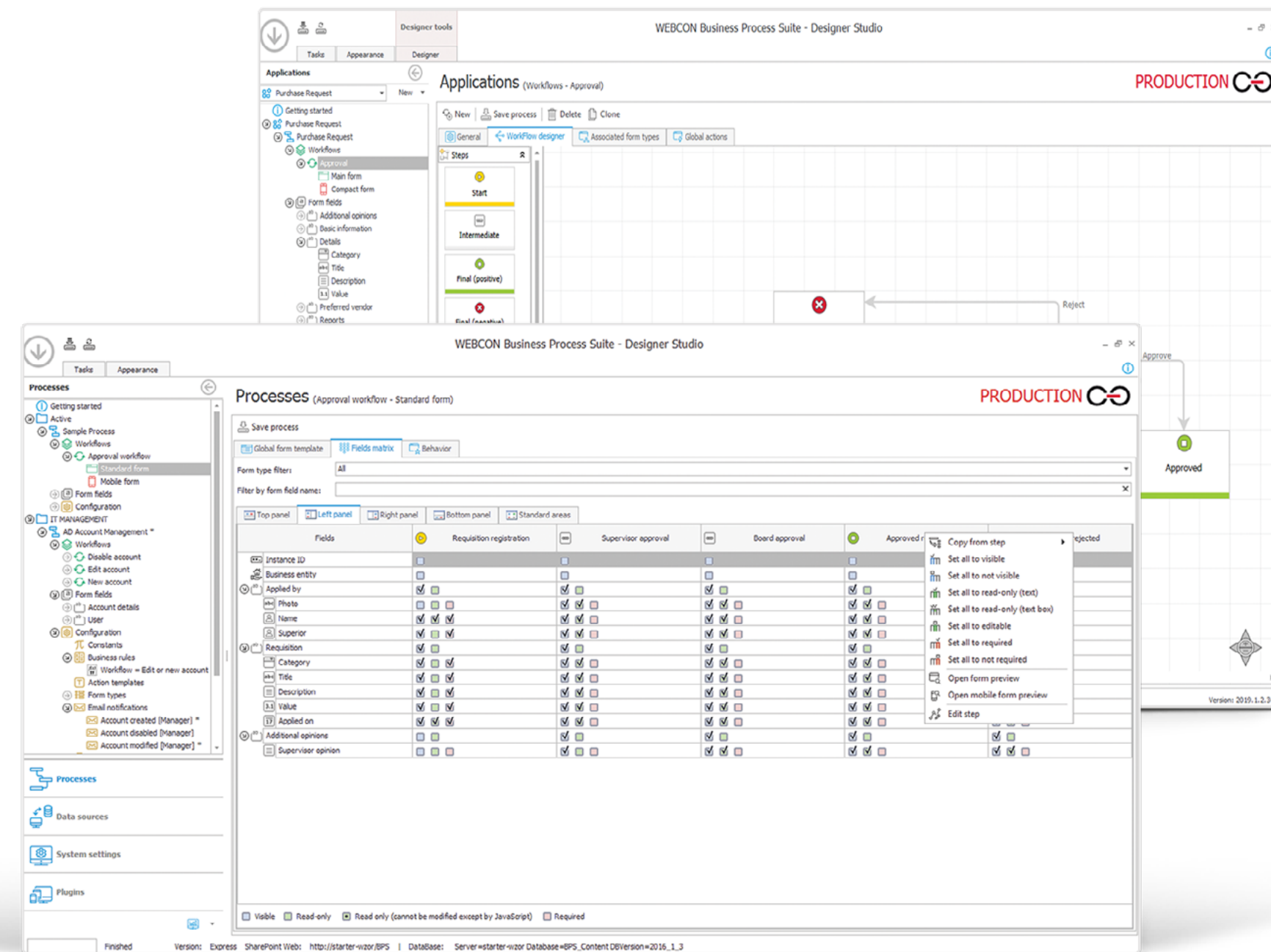
INTEGRATED

A WEBCON Solution is an integrated whole.

Pretty much much everyone else treats workflow development, form design, dashboard building, and data modeling as four separate things. Most of them cede all data responsibility to external sources. At best, they have the data act as the center of the application. They might — might — be able to deploy them as a set, but that's about it. And they'll probably make you deploy the data separately anyway.

WEBCON is different.

Integrated design

Would you like to be able to build all of those parts of your solution in one designer? To have the forms adapt to both the data and the process? To have the workflow tell the form what to do — without any scripts or even any formulas? WEBCON does that. With most everyone else, it's you that's the integration between the discrete parts.

Integrated content in case files

If you were going to approve a purchase request, you'd probably want to see everything in one place: an overall description, vendor details, line items, supporting attachments, related email messages, etc. You might want to keep a record of who added what and when. Maybe even comments and discussions. Possibly charts that tell you how much money is left in your budget.

The usual way to do this is to have one form query a lot of data from a lot of places and present it together at one moment in time. That helps, but what about preserving that moment in time — and every other moment during the process — for auditing purposes?

The WEBCON Way packages all of that info and stores it together in a case file. It includes all data, history, comments, attachments, and status. You can open it and peruse it. You can invite people to participate in it and assign them tasks. You can secure it as a set. And archive it as a set, too.

But you can list, filter, sort, and query a set of case files as if they were a list or data table. Case files combine the best parts of tables and workspaces — without any of the liabilities.
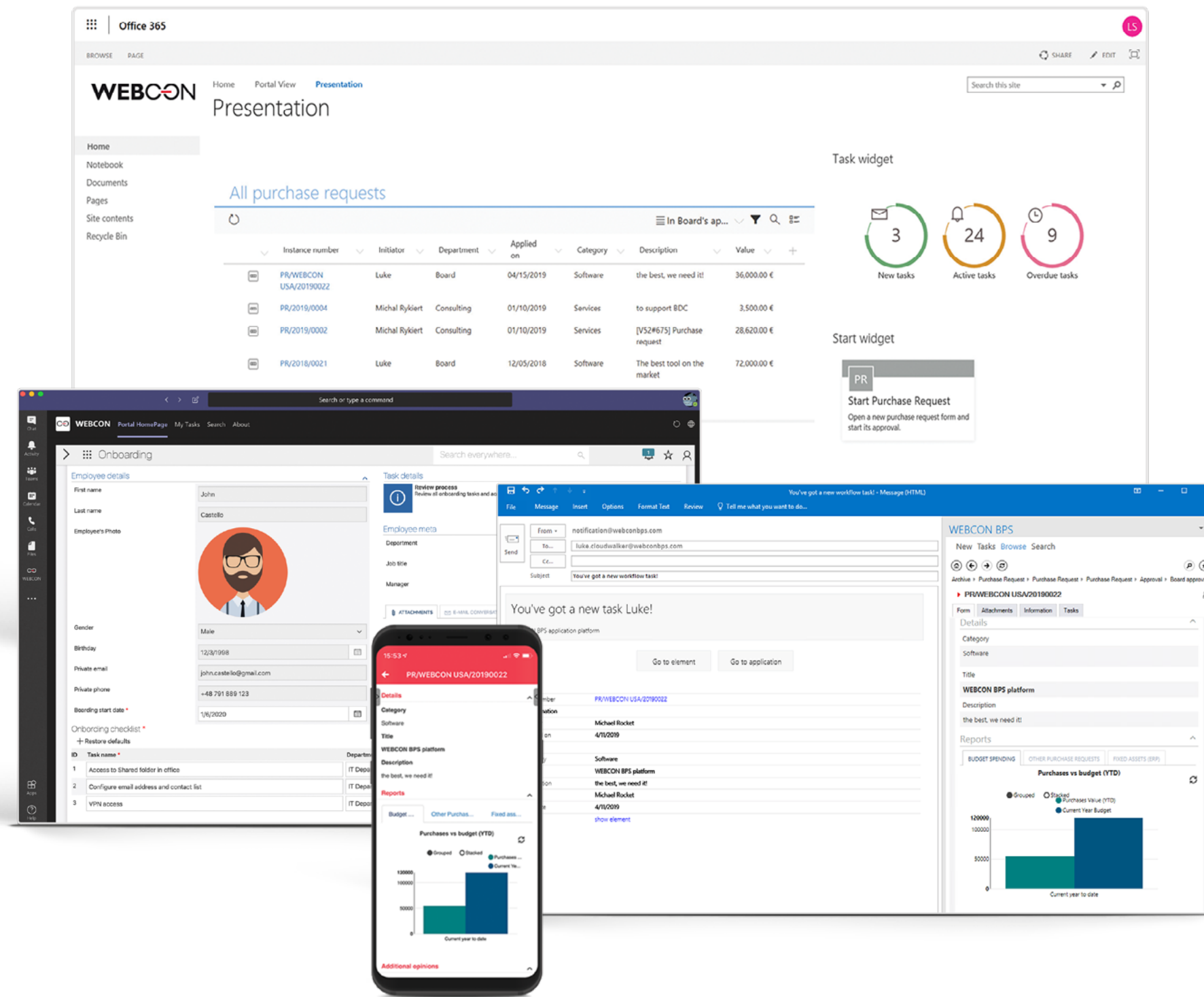
Integrated deployment

Everyone claims to do this, but the common way often omits a lot, and leaves it up to you to finish the job manually. We're talking about lookup information, connections to external applications and data. Lists, libraries, and tables. Essential parts of the application.

The WEBCON Way is different. We package and deploy an entire application: workflows, forms reports, dashboards, data containers, charts, rules – everything. That's including external connection details; at design time, specify what they are in development, in testing, and in production – so it's ready the moment you deploy it.

Integrated usage

You don't need to build a WEBCON application and deploy it to dozens of sites or teams. Keeping those copies in sync would be a nightmare. So would collecting the data from all those copies for big-picture analysis and reporting.

Instead, deploy a WEBCON application once and display it inside of dozens of SharePoint sites, Microsoft Teams work areas, custom websites, mobile applications. It looks, feels, and behaves like it's a part of each of them. You get the big picture and the close-up focus from a single piece of work.

WEBCON **puts the process first.**

Have you noticed that pretty much every low-code/no-code tool out there has you start by modeling data, or perhaps by connecting to data you already modeled/ created somewhere else?
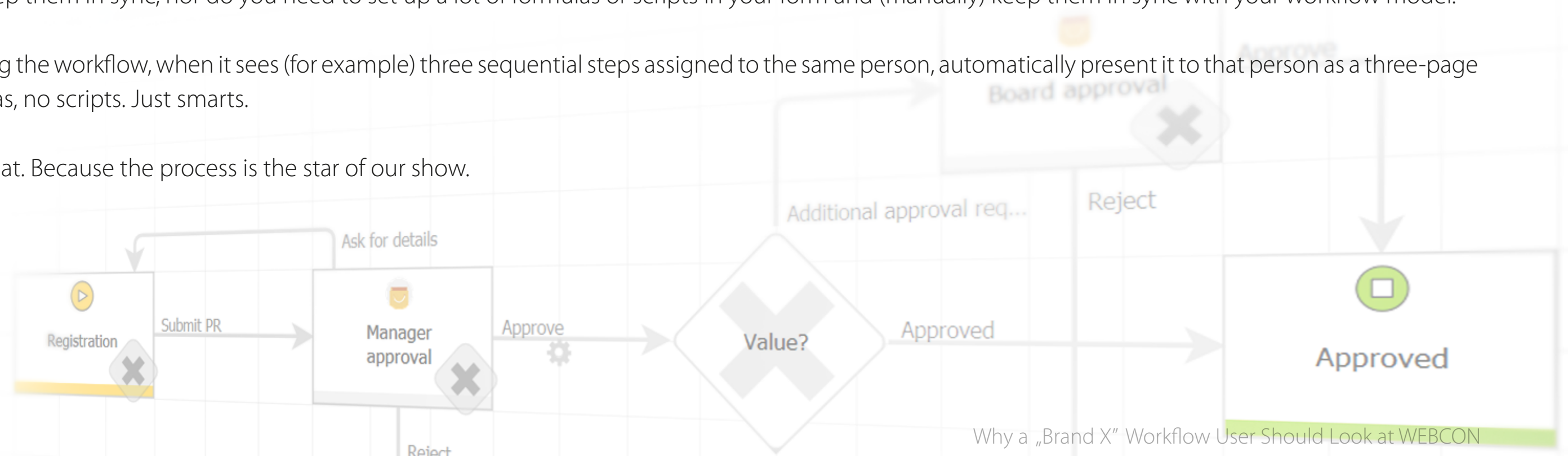
WEBCON can work that way – but we have to ask: *why would you model your data and create containers for it before you know what you want to do with it?*

How about modeling the workflow first, seeing what it is you need to do, and *then* defining the data you'll need to do it? And then using both to generate form you can adjust the way you like? And building reports and dashboards that fit what you decided you needed to do?

How about having the workflow, at each step, tell the form which sections/fields to display/hide/enable/disable/require? You don't have to create multiple task forms and manually keep them in sync, nor do you need to set up a lot of formulas or scripts in your form and (manually) keep them in sync with your workflow model.

How about having the workflow, when it sees (for example) three sequential steps assigned to the same person, automatically present it to that person as a three-page form? No formulas, no scripts. Just smarts.

WEBCON does that. Because the process is the star of our show.

WEBCON WORKFLOW, BUT BETTER.

WEBCON isn't "workflow for everyone" – it's more like "workflow for adults".

While Nintex stopped using the slogan "workflow for everyone" a couple of years ago, they continue to imply that anyone can build automation solutions. The people behind Microsoft's Power Platform are selling a story of a world where everyone builds applications for themselves because they don't need to write code to do so anymore.

We don't buy it. That's like telling people they can be published novelists by installing Word. Yes, making things easier and quicker is important (we do that), but it's not magic.

Automation can be simple – sometimes. And hitting a lot of singles can indeed help a team win a baseball game. But if you'd like to hit a series of home runs, actual Business Process Management is more involved.

You'll soon find yourself caring about things beyond "no code" and "drag & drop".

Adults need to measure.

It's great to know how many workflows are running, and how quickly. But that doesn't tell you if you're minimizing mistakes, saving time/money, or accomplishing something that wasn't possible before.

WEBCON automatically collects telemetry on process performance, progress, and business metrics. You can find out how many revisions were needed before a press release was publishable, or whether analysts were spending too much time on low-value proposals and not enough time on high-value ones.

Best of all, you don't have to do extra work to get this. You don't have to clutter your models with "record this info and send it to another place" instructions. You also don't have to go somewhere else to examine it – you can view WEBCON metrics right inside your application. Or display it within the designer to figure out how to improve your models.

Adults need to audit and validate.

Business processes are as much about understanding and documenting as they are about automating. A few rows in a database that say an action took place? That's not enough. Especially if the database is purged every once in a while.

WEBCON BPS keeps a record of everything. The way a form looked when it was first submitted vs. what it looks like now? Yes. Who did what, when, and how? Yes. And if you archive or migrate anything? The audit trail goes with it.

Did your process interact with a web service or an external data source? We keep a log of what happened, and we make it easy to inspect within the application itself. You can find out what went wrong, figure out how to speed things up, or just prove that something indeed happened as expected.

Adults don't want to waste time and energy.

Continually reinventing every wheel isn't a sound strategy. If a tool was built once, share it. If a data source has already been registered, reuse it. The notion of reuse isn't new. Even coders – especially coders – practice this.

WEBCON makes sure you can see which data, business rules, processes, connections, forms, fields, and everything else are available to be reused. And you can see where something is being reused, so you can always know what might be affected by any change you're considering.

Adults need to document their work.

WEBCON produces thorough, readable, indexed documentation of your application with a single click. If it's part of your application, it'll be part of that documentation. We'll harvest your comments and turn them into something understandable and professional.

If you ever need to show someone how much work you've been doing this month, and to do so with a little dramatic flair, do a Word document comparison between last month's and this month's documentation. We can't guarantee you'll hear "thank you", but we're pretty sure you'll never hear "what have you done for me lately?"

Adults need to communicate, validate, and achieve buy-in.

You can use many tools to automate work you'd otherwise be doing yourself. When you want to automate something that involves a group (or many groups) of people, though, things get more involved.

You need to be able to show others what your application does. You need them to be able to validate (or criticize) your assumptions and tactics. And showing them a step-by-step flowchart is not going to clarify things very well. Some people resort to using one tool to build the "real" design and a different tool to create an easy "executive summary" diagram (which has to be manually kept in sync with the "real" diagram as things inevitably change).

WEBCON diagrams are easy to read all by themselves. Each model shows which steps are involved so anyone can see *what* is happening. The details are one click away; click on any step to see *how* it will be completed. You get the benefit of "the big picture" and "the devil in the details" with a single effort.

WEBCON®
WORKFLOW, BUT BETTER.

Finally, WEBCON is flexible.

Not everyone has the same needs. Or works in the same environment. Or has the same budget. We get that.

Flexible location.

As much as we love the cloud, not everyone wants to do *everything* there. As much as we love multitenant software-as-a-service offerings, not everyone is comfortable letting their data mix with someone else's. So WEBCON BPS runs as a multitenant SaaS offering, or on an on-premises server, or in an Azure (or other IaaS vendor) environment dedicated to you.

But wherever you use us, it's the same stuff. Same models. Same user experience. No gateways, relays, or half-ways. You can migrate an environment from one place to another place and lose nothing. Current running state? We preserve it. All history? It'll still be there.

Flexible pricing.

Would you like to subscribe to WEBCON BPS? Okay. Would you like to just buy it outright? Fine. Would you like to buy user licenses, process licenses, or a combination? We can handle that. And our pricing is reasonable, too.

LEARN MORE

Don't take our word for it.

Thanks for reading this. When we wrote it, we meant every word, and we took great pains to avoid exaggeration. That said, we'd rather you didn't have to believe us – not when you could believe your own eyes.

Check out webcon.com, where you can find documents, videos, testimonials, case studies, and an online trial.

There's even a downloadable Express edition of our product you can install and use for free – in production – and it never expires.

There's also a link to contact us and arrange to see a demo of WEBCON BPS in action -- which is even more fun than reading this document (but again, thanks for doing that).

We look forward to your virtual visit.

Let's talk!

About the author

Mike Fitzmaurice is the Chief Evangelist and VP – North America for **WEBCON** and is a recognised thought leader in workflow/business process automation, citizen development, and low-code/no-code solution platforms and strategies. He has more than 25 years of product, consulting, evangelism, engineering, and IT management expertise. His 11 years at Microsoft included being the original technical product manager for SharePoint, helping launch and shepherd its first three releases; it was Mike who birthed, developed, and led developer evangelism on SharePoint, positioning it as a development platform. Other gigs included a decade at Nintex as Vice-President of Workflow Technology, a year as Chief Technology Officer for skybow, and five years as Director of IT at the National Association of Broadcasters.