BETTER BPM
DESIGNING BETTER BUSINESSES

Consider a business rule that says a discount will be applied to bulk orders based on customer loyalty and the number of items ordered. The business rule could be modeled in BPMN using a sequence or "chain" of gateways.

- The process is instantiated when a bulk order is received.
- Next, details regarding the number of items ordered and an indication of customer loyalty are extracted from the order.
- The sequence flow is then routed to a series of exclusive (XOR) gateways regarding customer loyalty and order volume. In this example, the customer is deemed to be loyal and is eligible for a volume discount schedule that is more generous than that offered to non-loyal customers.
- A discount is applied as a function of the number of items ordered.
- The order is fulfilled, and the process instance ends.

Such a model is precise, but it's visually complicated and unwieldy. Furthermore, even small changes in the underlying business rule necessitate a reworking of the BPMN model.

Here's a much simpler but no less precise BPMN model that incorporates a business rule task.

- As before, the process is instantiated upon the receipt of a bulk order.
- Next, order details are extracted, including the measure of customer loyalty and the number of items ordered.
- The complex chain of gateways is replaced by a single business rule task. For example, if the customer is loyal and orders from 100 to 500 items, the discount to be applied to the order is 10%.
- Once the discount is determined using the decision table, it can be applied to the order, the order can be fulfilled, and the process instance completed.

Obviously, this model is simpler and easier to understand than this. Furthermore, it's no less precise because it incorporates a DMN decision table that is easily modified.

So, when you find yourself creating a BPMN model that looks like this, you may want to consider incorporating a business rule task like this.