

Business Process Generation by Leveraging Complete Search over a Space of Activities and Process Goals

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Abstract: An efficient and flexible business process not only helps an organization to meet the requirements of the evolving surroundings but also may facilitate a competitive advantage over other companies towards delivering the desired services. This is even more critical for an emerging paradigm like cloud based deployment. In this paper, we introduce a novel mechanism to generate the business process suitable for specific organizations. The approach provides an automated way to build the possible business processes for a given set of tasks that fulfills the goal and satisfies the constraints of an organization. In step 1, we show how to generate the finite space of all possible designs for a given set of tasks. Secondly, we accumulate the effect of each step to deduce the final effect of each possible process design and to ensure that the redesigned set of steps still realizes the service goal. The designs not meeting the service goals are eliminated from the space. In step 3, the rest of the designs are checked for the constraint satisfaction subject to some specific cases. The framework provides a comprehensive, both syntactically and semantically correct, consistent business process generation methodology that adheres to the target business goals and constraints.

1 INTRODUCTION

There is a need to re-design the business processes over the cloud based on the requirements so that services can be offered in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Different business houses, even in the same vertical, often have their own set of distinct goals, policies and constraints. As for example, two different travel agencies may target customers of different strata of the society and can set their goals and constraints accordingly. An appropriate business process model for a particular organization should be tailor-made according to these. Given a set of tasks/activities/services and constraints, this paper aims to construct a business process for an organization. The initial set of activities is referred in rest of the text as capability library. Initially, we generate all possible set of business process designs out of these capabilities.

The manuscript is organized as follows: Section 2 presents a survey in the existing literature followed by a statement on the motivation behind the work. In section 3, syntactic derivation of the exhaustive search space is described. This ensures that no pos-

sible design is dropped out during generation of the intermittent solutions that realize the goals. Section 4 describes the checking for completeness of the proposed algorithms for generation of all possible business process models. Semantic extraction of goal specific business space from the initial syntactically correct search space followed by a running example is presented in section 5. Eliminating redundancy from business space depending on the constraints is described in section 6. In conclusion, we have discussed the effectiveness of the proposed approach in identifying the optimized business process from the reduced business space. Our approach generates all the business process designs irrespective of the business application. However, this is a one-time exercise depending on the number of tasks and may be reused for different business verticals. Subsequently, depending upon the requirements of specific business houses and their application, the goals and policies can be imposed on this exhaustive design space to have client-specific solutions with the most optimal design. The proposed solution follows the methodology of converging to the optimal design from the exhaustive design space as described in figure 1. The

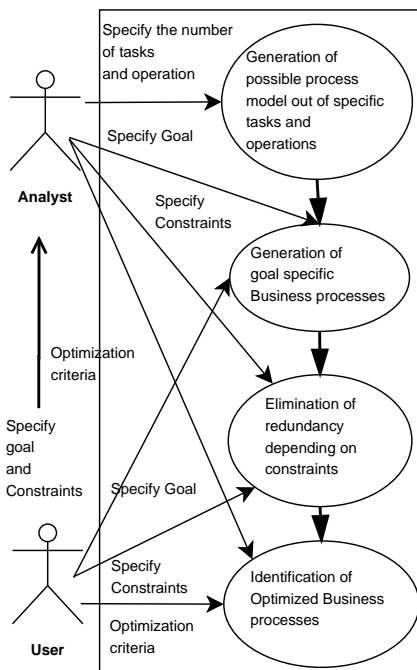


Figure 1: Use case for the proposed business process generation framework.

proposed approach provides an automated way for business process designs as compared to modeling with BPMN. The proposed mechanism may be extended towards deriving an optimal solution based on one or multiple criteria pertinent to specific clients.

2 RELATED WORK

Services can evolve typically due to changes in structure, e.g., attributes and operations; or, in behaviour and policies, e.g., adding new business rules and regulations, or, in types of business-related events; and in business protocols as presented by (Papazoglou, 2008). Thus, the issues of service redesign are very vital. Most of the literatures on business process redesign (Reijers and Liman Mansar, 2005; Liman Mansar et al., 2009; Kumar and Bhat, 2011) do not address the method to arrive at an improved process from the existing business process. A general purpose business process modeling language such as BPMN (BPMN, 2006) or UML activity designs (UML, 2003) are not designed to support enterprise in creating models using their own vocabulary and terminology. A business process modeling framework proposed in (Alotaibi and Liu, 2013) made it easy for IT people to understand and implement. (Lodhi et al., 2014) focuses on the relation between evaluation of business processes and their representation at the

process managerial level.

(Yu et al., 2014) offers a complete methodology for modeling and validating an e-commerce system with a third-party payment platform from the view point of a business process. In another recent work, (Zhang and Perry, 2014) proposes a technique for modeling composite activities by including components of data, human actors and atomic activities and represent business processes with composite activities using process-oriented languages. (Malesevic and Brdjanin, 2013) presents a software tool for the automatic visualization of presents a software tool to automate visualization of the UML activity diagram. Modeling of medical services based on business process model is been described in (Natalia et al., 2013). A new modular workflow modeling language is proposed in (Combi et al., 2014) allows the designer to easily express data dependencies and time constraints. Verification of Business Process Constraints is been demonstrated in (Gao et al., 2013). A synchronization method for change management between process models on different abstraction levels is proposed by (Weidmann et al., 2011). (Macek and Necasky, 2010) derives XML formats for communication links in the conceptual schema of the business process and optimizes them. (Wu et al., 2011) proposed to model the business process based on semantics of business process models and business vocabulary, then used the method to transform a plain text rule statement into BPMN files. The literature survey indicates some limitations and challenges in the domain of business process generation such as fulfillment of user demand, post execution analysis, automated tool support, provisioning of constraint specification and end to end solution to provide a model for the analyst. These motivate us to have an end to end solution to provide a business process design of a specific business logic incorporating the goal, constraints and optimization criteria for the analyst.

3 GENERATION OF EXHAUSTIVE FINITE SPACE

The process starts with a capability library of n tasks for an organization and set of possible model constructs such as XOR-split and AND-split which can be denoted as $\langle T_1, T_2, \dots, T_n, \otimes, \oplus \rangle$ where T_1, T_2, \dots, T_n are the capabilities and \otimes, \oplus denotes an XOR-split and AND-split respectively.

We generate all possible business process designs in the form of tree which is elaborately described in algorithm 1. A business process design tree is a tree for a given fixed capability library in which the

root node is an empty business process design, every leaf node is a syntactically correct business process designs, every non-leaf node is a partial (incomplete) business process design and every child node differs from a parent node by including a single extra process model construct (either an extra activity, or an extra event, or an extra gateway). The algorithm generates the tree considering all possible constraints for complete generation of all possible process models. The business process designs are generated on traversal of the paths of the tree. The complete process models in the tree are all leaf nodes or some intermediate nodes. The leaf nodes representing XOR-split or AND-split are followed by XOR-join or AND-join during the generation of the process tree. A path end with an XOR-split or AND-split is discarded. Such types of constraints are identified during the traversal of the path and are included in the designed algorithm 2. Figure 2 shows the tree view for the generation of process models.

Let us take a domain specific example of Car rental process where the possible subtasks for realizing the above goal are Register Request(**Task1**), Review the request(**Task2**), Reject the request(**Task3**), Allocate Car(**Task4**), Car allocated(**Task5**) and Perform Transportation(**Task6**) Using the exhaustive approach we have all possible business process designs

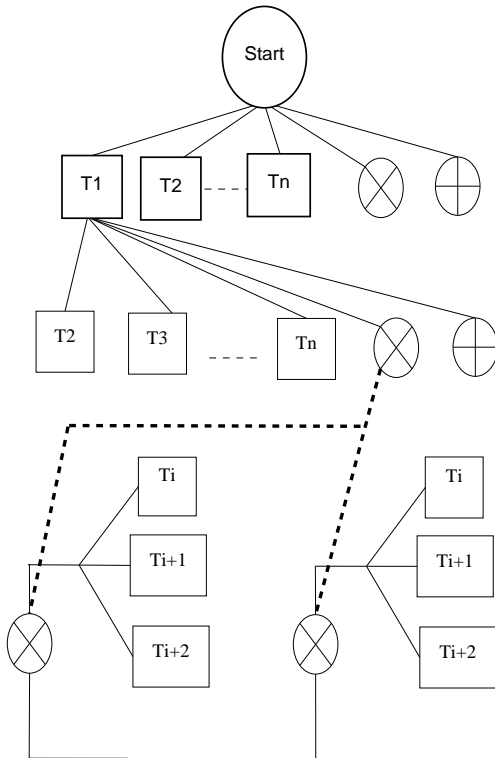


Figure 2: Process Model Generating Tree for n tasks.

with the above identified tasks T1, T2, T3, T4, T5 and T6.

4 COMPLETENESS OF ALGORITHM FOR GENERATING ALL POSSIBLE DESIGNS

The exhaustive set of syntactically correct business process designs refer to the collection of subtrees where all the artifacts are operated for the valid set of operations that are syntactically permissible. We would establish couple of base cases by manual checking for $n=1$, $n=2$ and $n=3$ and shall prove Lemma 1, Lemma 2 and Lemma 3 by the method of induction. In figure 4, we find that all the possible business process designs for $n=2$ where each of the two root tasks at level 1, are having a tree with 4 nodes. Each of these two sub-trees generates two different models. Similarly, by manual checking for $n=3$, we find that the algorithm is generating all the possible business process designs. The corresponding tree is shown in Figure 5 where each root task at level 1 is having 19 nodes in its sub-tree. For brevity we have not shown all the possible business process designs in the figure. Again, by manual checking for $n=4$, we find that the algorithm is generating all possible business process designs where each root task is having tree size=49.

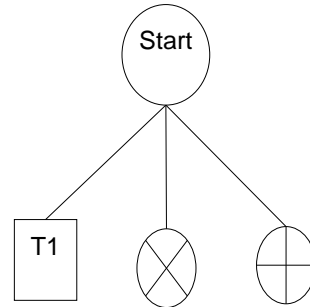


Figure 3: Process design generating tree for a single task.

Lemma 1: If n be the size of the Capability Library, i.e. the number of tasks in the capability library, then the height of the tree is equal to $(3n-4)$, $\forall n \geq 2$.

Proof: We will prove by induction that $\forall n \in \mathbb{Z}$ and $n \geq 2$ the height of the tree $H_n = 3n - 4$.

Base Case: If the size of the Capability Library $n=1$ We have only one task at level 1 of the tree. In other words, at level 1 of the tree, we have $\langle T_1, \otimes, \oplus \rangle$. The next element for a task at intermediate level is

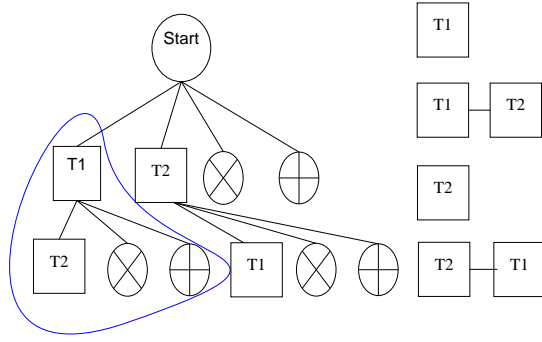


Figure 4: Process Model generating tree where number of tasks =2.

any of $n-k$ tasks where k is used tasks and the value of k ranges from 1 to n . Therefore there will be no expansion for the tree for $n=1$. The tree is shown in figure 3. Thus height of the tree is 1. If size of the Capability Library $n=2$, then its height H_2 will be $[(3 \times 2) - 4] = 2$. Figure 4 shows the height of the tree is 2. If the size of the Capability Library $n=3$, then its height H_3 will be $[(3 \times 3) - 4] = 5$. Figure 5 shows the height of the tree is 5.

Inductive Hypothesis

Assume that the theorem is true for number of tasks $\leq k$.

Inductive Steps: We must prove that the inductive hypothesis is true for $(k+1)$ numbers of tasks. During the expansion of the tree with $(k+1)$ numbers of tasks, we have the nodes of level 1 of the tree as $\langle T_1, T_2, T_3, \dots, T_k, T_{k+1}, \otimes, \oplus \rangle$. The generation of the tree terminates when the number of possible tasks at all level is equal to 1. Therefore starting with $k+1$ number of tasks, the tree expands till used tasks become $(k+1)$ and the number of possible tasks for the next level becomes zero.

We get n numbers of edges for $n+1$ numbers of tasks. Thus the height of the subtree for tasks corresponding to a level with $n+1$ numbers of tasks will be n . For each of the XOR or AND split in the corresponding level with n tasks we have 2 to $[(n+1) - k + 1]$ way split where k is used tasks. It is very obvious that the number of remaining task in the next level for $3, 4, \dots, [(n+1) - k + 1]$ way split will be less than that of 2 way split in the same level. Therefore the height of the subtree for 2 way split will be more than that of subtrees of $3, 4, \dots, [(n+1) - k + 1]$ way split. The maximum height of the subtree for an XOR or AND split will correspond to the level with maximum number of tasks. As the tree expands the number of tasks will be reduced in increasing level of the tree. Therefore the corresponding height of the subtrees for XOR or AND split with lower number of tasks in the corresponding level will be less than that

Table 1: Height of Subtrees.

No of Tasks	No. of Levels	Size of Tree
1	1	1
2	2	2
3	5	5
4	8	8
5	11	11
6	14	14
7	17	17
8	20	20

of subtrees for XOR or AND split with higher number of tasks at corresponding level. Therefore the height of the tree will be equal to height of subtree created with 2 way split at level 2. The height of the subtrees with increasing number of tasks is given in table 1. Suppose L_{T_n} and $L_{T_{n+1}}$ denotes the subtrees created with 2 way split at level 2 with n and $n+1$ number of task respectively. The height of subtree created with 2 way split at level 2 with $n+1$ number of task From the above table it is observed that (by the inductive hypothesis)

$$\begin{aligned}
 L_{T_{n+1}} &= L_{T_n} + 3 \\
 &= (3n - 4) + 3 \\
 &= 3n - 1 \\
 &= 3(n + 1) - 4
 \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, the height of subtree created with 2 way split at level 2 with n number of task is $3n-4$ and hence the height of the tree is $3n-4$.

Lemma 2: All the subtrees generated with $n-1$ capabilities are the subset of the subtrees generated with n capabilities.

Proof: We will prove by induction that $\forall n \in \mathbb{Z}$ and $n \geq 2$. $T_i(n-1)$ is the subtree of $T_i(n)$ where $T_i(n-1)$ and $T_i(n)$ denotes the tree generated with $(n-1)$ and n capabilities. Suppose $T(n)$ be the tree generated with the capability library size n which consists of m number of subtrees denoted by T_i such that

$$\bigcup T_i = T(n)$$

The start node is at level 0 has the vertices $T_1, T_2, \dots, T_n, \otimes, \oplus$ i.e. $n+2$ nodes.

Base Case: If the size of the Capability Library is $n=1$, then there will be only one process model. If the size of the Capability Library is $n=2$ then from figure 4, we find that $T_i(1)$ is the subtree of $T_i(2)$. If the size of the Capability Library is $n=3$ then from figure 5, we find that $T_i(2)$ is the subtree of $T_i(3)$.

Inductive Hypothesis

Assume that the theorem is true for k number of tasks such that $k < n$, i.e. $T_i(k-1)$ is the subtree of $T_i(k)$.

Inductive Steps: We must prove that the inductive

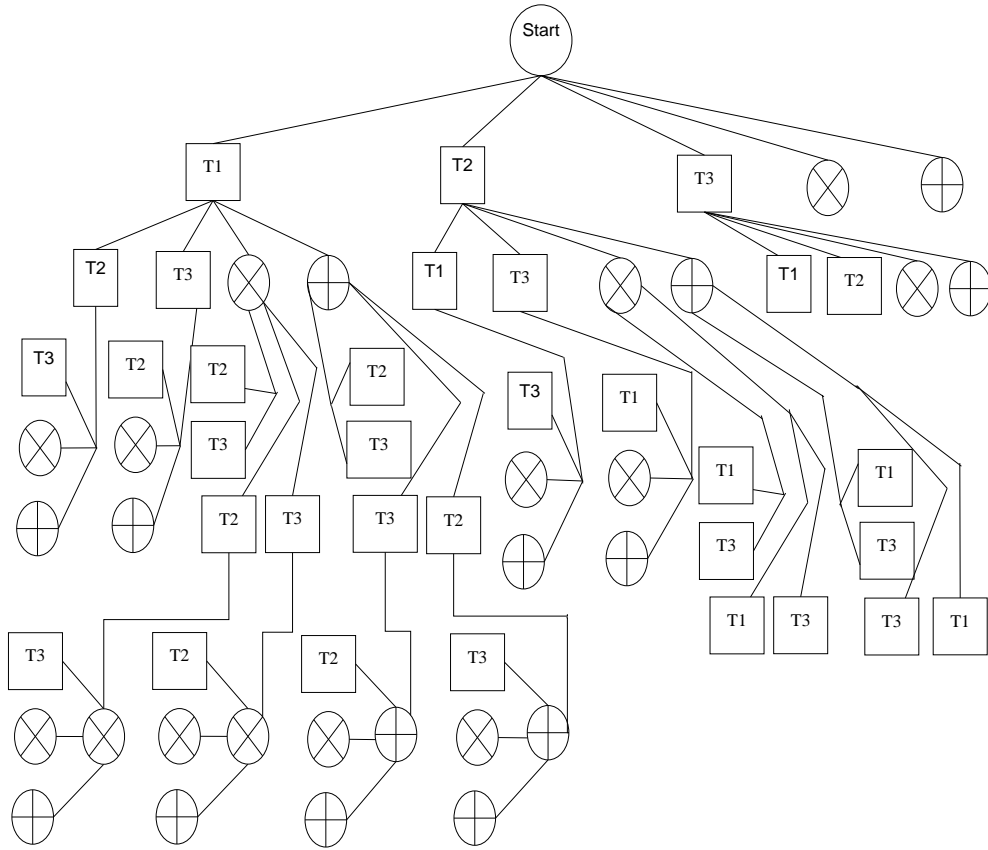


Figure 5: Process Model generating tree where number of tasks =3.

hypothesis is true for $(k+1)$ numbers of tasks, i.e. $T_i(k)$ is the subtree of $T_i(k+1)$. Now, in order to form the tree for T_{k+1} , the start node at level 0 for T_k will have the child vertices $T_1, T_2, \dots, T_k, T_{k+1}, \otimes, \oplus$ i.e., a total $k+3$ nodes will be there below the start node. In turn, node T_k in level 1 of the T_{k+1} tree will have the child vertices $T_1, T_2, \dots, T_k, \otimes, \oplus$. These nodes will again have their decedents as per procedure *ExhaustiveModelGenration()* i.e., the tree with T_k as the root node is essentially a sub-tree of T_{k+1} . Hence, it is proved that if the induction hypothesis holds good for $T_k, k < n$, then it holds good for T_{k+1} as well. Thus the statement of Lemma 2 is proved by induction.

Lemma 3: Tree having the capability library size n can generate all possible process models.

Proof: We will prove by induction that $\forall n \in \mathbb{Z}$ and $n \geq 1$, $T_i(n)$ produces all the possible process models with n capabilities where $T_i(n)$ denotes the tree generated with n capabilities.

Base Case: If the size of the Capability Library is $n=1$, then there will be only one process model. If the size of the Capability Library is $n=2$ then from figure 4, we find that $T_i(2)$ produces all the possible process model. If the size of the Capability Library is $n=3$ then from figure 5, we find that $T_i(3)$ produces all the

possible models.

Inductive Hypothesis

Assume that the theorem is true for k number of tasks such that $k < n$ i.e., $T_i(k)$ produces all the possible process model with capability library size= k .

Inductive Steps: We must prove that the inductive hypothesis is true for $(k+1)$ numbers of tasks, i.e., $T_i(k+1)$ produces all the possible process model with capability library size= $k+1$. As from Lemma 2, it is obvious that $T_i(k)$ is a subtree of $T_i(k+1)$, therefore having capable of generating all possible process models for capability library size k with $T_i(k)$ with height $(3k-4)$, procedure *ExhaustiveModel-Generation()* essentially generate all possible process model for capability library size= $k+1$ with $T_i(k+1)$ with height $(3(k+1)-4)$. Thus the statement of Lemma 3 is proved by induction.

Theorem: The proposed Construction Algorithm generates the exhaustive set of syntactically correct business process models.

Proof: Lemma 1, Lemma 2 and Lemma 3 establish that the algorithm is complete in the sense that it generates all possible business process designs. Hence, the statement of the theorem is correct.

5 EFFECT ACCUMULATION

The primary aim of this work is to redesign the business process. This means replacing the existing process model with an improved one on the basis of better optimization criteria that confirms to the business goals and constraints. So it is quite essential that each of the process models, thus generated are submitted for goal checking done by effect accumulation mechanism. The approach is domain specific. Effect accumulation enables the analyst to provide with immediate effects after each step, so as to be able to calculate the cumulative effect. To accumulate the effects of each step, we focus on the formal effect specifications. Let us define a pair-wise accumulation operator based on one first introduced in (Hinge et al., 2009). As defined $\text{acc}(e1, e2)$ to be the set of cumulative effects obtained by executing a step with effect $e2$, given a prior set of effects $e1$. An effect scenario at a given point in a process is one consistent set of cumulative effect of a process if it were to execute up to that point. The first step in effect accumulation is deriving a Scenario level. To obtain effect scenario at a given point in a process the set of scenario level is computed at that point.

Considering the case of Car rental process again all the possible process models generated by our method can also be termed as scenario levels. Out of the automatic generated scenario levels, let us take a particular scenario level $\langle S, T1, G1, T3, G2, T4 \rangle$ where S is the start event.

The effect accumulation stage involves the process of immediate effect annotation for each of the tasks listed in the scenario using a pair-wise operation when the immediate effect of S is combined with the immediate effect of $T1$, the result being the cumulative effect of $T1$. The cumulative effect at $T1$ is then combined with the immediate effect $T2$ resulting in the cumulative effect at $T2$ and so on up to $T6$. We express the effect annotations in conjunctive normal form. Let $e1$ be the cumulative effect annotation and $e2$ be the effect annotation at $t2$ and $t3$ respectively. KB be the knowledgebase which is nothing but a rule set:

$e1 = \text{request registered and request reviewed.}$

$e2 = \text{request accepted.}$

$KB = \text{the request is accepted after the review of the registered request.}$

We express the above informal representation formally in CNL (Control Natural Language) and also can provide an analyst friendly interface by means of a software.

$e1 = \text{request}(x) \wedge \text{request} - \text{review}(x)$

$e2 = \text{accept} - \text{request}(x)$

$$\begin{aligned} KB &= (\text{request}(x) \wedge \text{requestreview}(x)) \rightarrow \text{acceptrequest}(x) \\ &\equiv \neg(\text{request}(x) \wedge \text{requestreview}(x)) \vee \text{acceptrequest}(x) \end{aligned}$$

The cumulative effect of the two tasks consists of the effects of the second task plus as many of the effects of the first tasks. Two alternative effect scenario during the cumulative effect at $T3$ are $\text{request}(x)$, $\text{accept-request}(x)$ and $\text{request-review}(x)$, $\text{accept-request}(x)$. We proceed this way to gather final effect annotation at $T6$. The goal of Car rental process can be decomposed in CNL (Control Natural Language) sentences and may be combined to form a logic sentence. Let F be the set of final effect scenarios after effects are accumulated across all the steps in a service. Let G be the formal representation of the goals associated with the service. We require that the constraint $F \models G$ be satisfied. Methodologically, the redesign of the steps can involve search through a space of alternative sets of steps (including deletion or replacement of existing steps, addition of new ones and so on) provided the constraints are satisfied.

6 CONSTRAINT SPECIFICATION

Relation is an abstract association and connection that holds between two or more conceptual object. A constraint is a special kind of relationship that is restricted or compelled to exist under a given set of conditions. We have to identify the constraint between the business processes. A constraint is said to hold in a given context when the relationship is maintained in the context. In order to verify whether a constraint hold for a process we use temporal logic.

Business rules may be annotated as constraints to specify the behaviors and also to specify the derivation of conditions that affect the execution flow. These rules are forms of conditional operations attached to the process to give data result. The business rules will be restructured when organizations change the data or process to accommodate the varying business needs.

When rules are changed, it would be possible to provide a decision based on the given constraints or based on business requirements. The correct business process could also be verified by evaluating or validating the completeness of the business rule.

However, these rules may lack completeness to determine the computability of business logic. Thus, for a specific client, it is necessary to check whether the rule-set is complete. This can be proved when the rules are interpreted with temporal logic. We propose the following steps for constraint satisfaction checking. First, formally representing the design sets,

secondly, formally representing the constraints and finally use Prover9 first-order logic theorem-prover for performing checking constraint satisfaction. The constraints are considered as the conditions. The user may go through several forms to assign values to different constraints definition by example.

7 CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we introduce a methodology that supports client-specific constraint checking towards generating goal-oriented, efficient business process designs. Subsequently, one may apply suitable criteria for optimized design. The optimization may consider issues such as delivery time, cost etc. and remains the future prospect of our current work.

The main concern about the proposed approach lies in the computation towards generating the exhaustive set of process designs. However, this step is executed offline and a priori for k numbers of tasks and offered as the template for the analyst.

Our work paves the way for constraint specification and checking. We have done completeness checking for the proposed solution. We are also in the process of developing a tool support with which the analyst can derive the optimized business process as per his/her scope, business goals and identified constraints in the environment.

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APPENDIX

Algorithm 1: Algorithm for generating tree for n initial elements.

```

1: procedure GENERATETREE()
2:   Begin
3:   Create root for START EVENT at level 0;           ▷
   initialization
4:   Build level 1 with elements for all of the  $n$  distinct
   tasks, an XOR split and an AND split;
5:    $k \leftarrow 2$            ▷ variable  $k$  represents current level
6:    $T \leftarrow n - k + 1$  ▷  $T$  is the number of remaining tasks
7:   repeat
8:      $\forall$  task at level  $k$ ,  $2 \leq k \leq n + 1$ 
9:     Choose all of the remaining  $n - k + 1$  distinct
     tasks, an XOR split, and an AND split as possible next
     elements;
10:     $\forall$  XOR split at level  $k$ ,
11:    Choose the possible next elements in
12:    for  $i = 2$  to  $n - k + 1$  do
13:      Generate all possible ways of  $i$ -way split
      from  $n - k + 1$  task
14:      if thenumberofsiblingtask  $\neq$  NULL then
15:        the next element is an XOR join
16:      else
17:        return NULL
18:      end if
19:    end for
20:     $\forall$  AND split at level  $k$ ,
21:    Choose possible next elements in
22:    for  $i = 2$  to  $n - k + 1$  do
23:      Generate all possible ways of  $i$ -way split
      from  $n - k + 1$  tasks
24:      if thenumberofsiblingtask  $\neq$  NULL then
25:        the next element is an AND join
26:      else
27:        return NULL
28:      end if
29:    end for
30:     $\forall$  XOR join at level  $k$ ,  $2 \leq k \leq n + 1$ 
31:    Choose all of the remaining  $n - k + 1$  distinct
    tasks, an XOR split, and an AND split as possible next
    elements;
32:     $\forall$  AND join at level  $k$ ,  $2 \leq k \leq n + 1$ 
33:    Choose all of the remaining  $n - k + 1$  distinct
    tasks, an XOR split, and an AND split as possible next
    elements;
34:     $T = T - 1$ ;
35:  until number of remaining tasks  $T < 1$ 
36:  End

```

Algorithm 2: Algorithm for extracting all possible process from the tree for n initial elements.

```

1: procedure EXHAUSTIVEMODELGENERATION()
2:   Begin
3:   mark all nodes in the tree as .NOT. REACHED;
4:    $count = n$  ▷  $count$  stores number of nodes yet to be
   processed
5:   repeat
6:     pick any one of the node, say  $X$ , at level 1 as
     starting node;
7:     mark  $X$  as REACHED;
8:     place  $X$  on READY list;
9:      $count = count - 1$ ;
10:    repeat
11:      pick a node  $A$  from the READY list;
12:      find the child nodes for  $A$ ;
13:      if  $A$  represents XOR or AND then
14:        discard the node;
15:        Break;
16:      end if
17:      if  $A$  and its child node represents two con-
       secutive XOR or AND split then
18:        discard the nodes;
19:        Break;
20:      end if
21:      if node  $A$  representing XOR or AND split
       that do not have siblings then
22:        discard the nodes;
23:        Break;
24:      end if
25:      if the same tasks occurs after XOR or AND
       split or join node then
26:        discard the nodes;
27:        Break;
28:      end if
29:      mark the node  $A$  as REACHED;
30:      add  $A$  to READY list;
31:       $count = count - 1$ ;
32:      print the READY list;
33:    until READY list is empty;
34:  until  $count < 1$ 
35:  End

```