

Modelling common process patterns with BPMN

Pattern #1 – Meetings

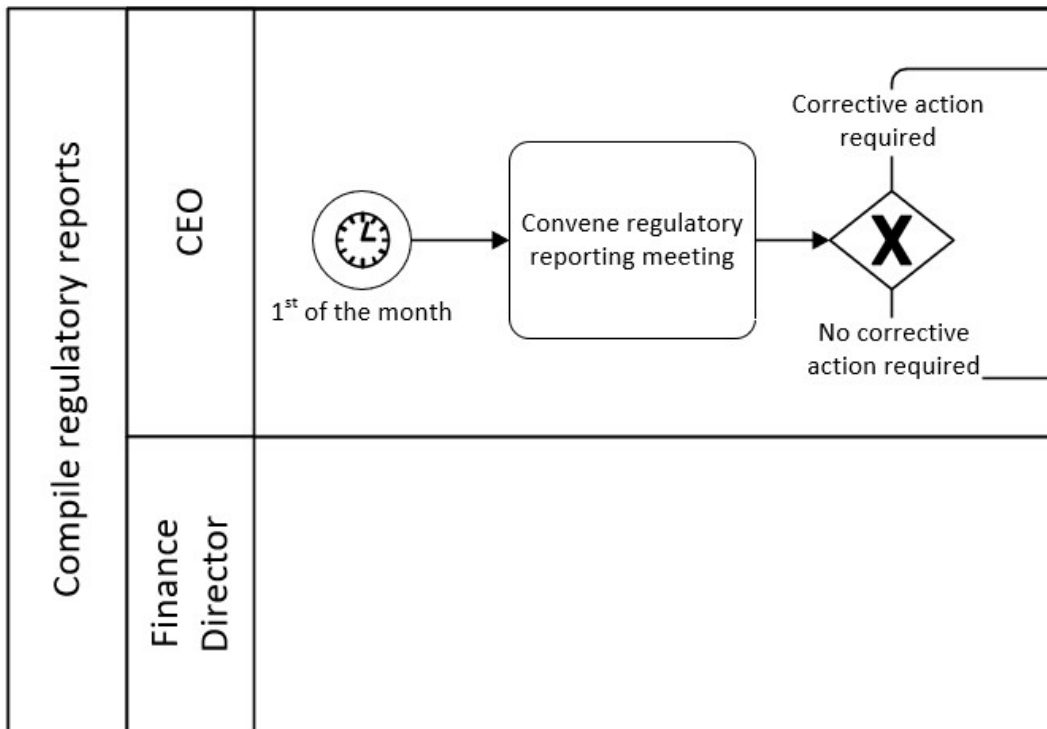
For me, meetings are possibly the one thing that BPMN does not handle elegantly. Meetings involve the coming-together of various roles, generally to discuss a range of matters (some of which touch on the process we're modelling), and often take place regardless of what our process is doing.

It's easy to get into a pickle when trying to model meetings. It's tempting to try and show all attendees attending, and you may even consider breaking every rule of BPMN to stretch a task across multiple lanes! You can quickly end up with a confused mess that doesn't conform to BPMN's syntax and also doesn't really represent what happens in practice.

Don't panic though! There *are* ways of showing meetings effectively in BPMN process models. You just to ask some questions help you choose the best method.

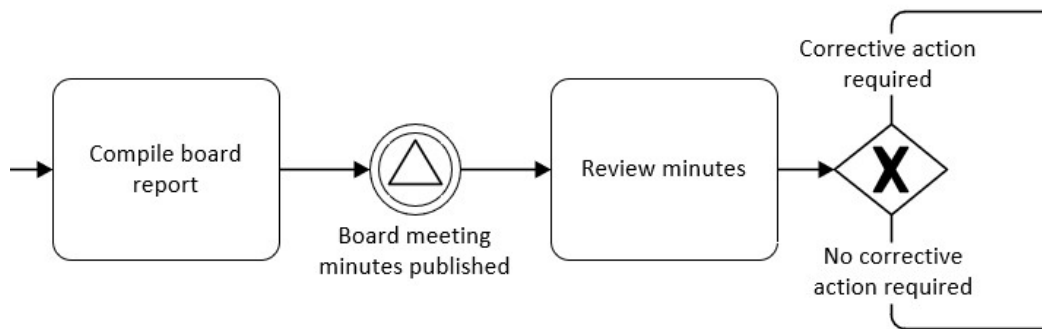
Firstly, establish whether your process owns the meeting. Ask yourself whether the meeting only deals with *this instance of this process*? If this is the case then the work of conducting the meeting can safely be included in your model.

I wouldn't try and show each attendee with their own task for attending the meeting. It will just clutter your model while adding very little value. Instead, I use a single task in the lane of whoever hosts the meeting:



If the meeting actually deals with *more than one instance* of this process, or with multiple processes, then the meeting is actually *external* to your process. Your process doesn't own the meeting. You can always model that other process separately, but for now you're really only interested in the *outcome* of the meeting.

If the meeting outcome is directly communicated to *this instance* of the process, then you could choose to have a Message Event receiving a message from an external pool. If meeting minutes are published more generally, you could use a Signal Event as follows:



The process will need to review whatever has come out of the meeting before it can move on, so there is likely to be a task for this followed by a gateway.

In summary, your primary aim should be to keep the model as accurate as possible while maintaining simplicity. Establish whether your process actually owns the meeting, as this determines whether you'll use tasks or events.