Process Variants

Almost all processes are driven by their dedicated process context. Factors such as internal organizational influences, market forces, system and information configuration, and even the specific user may lead to process variations. There are two key aspects concerning process variants:

- **Business Diversification**: Similar processes are executed by different lines of businesses or different countries. The processes share the same fundamental process flow but are configured differently. They will differ at least in terms of organizational unit and master data configuration. You should understand each of these (diversified) processes as a process variant.

- **Execution flow**: A process flow contains ramifications leading to different execution flows within a single process. There is one fundamental process flow and one fundamental process configuration, but decision gateways, such as for approvals, will result in various execution sequences. You should also understand the individual execution sequences as process variants.

**Definition**

*Process variants* are variations sharing the same fundamental flow which uses the same input to deliver the same measurable outcome.

Process variants are a result of process configurations or flow variations. If you deal with only small and insignificant differences in the process flow (for instance a decision point before an approval step), you should stick to the same process definition and you should model the variation using diagrams, showing that particular activities are only executed under certain circumstances.

Variants in SAP Solution Manager

In SAP Solution Manager, variants are modeled as assignments to the process. For instance, a Payments from Customers process that allows multiple payment methods, might require multiple independent tests. To make this happen, one would define the Payments from Customers process and would assign a named variant for each payment method.
The diagram assignment to the process would describe the process master showing the overall process architecture and would mention all the payment methods. Now the variants, in this example they represent the different payment methods, are assigned to the process which can have independent diagrams, own test cases, or test configurations. The diagrams can be derived from the diagrams that may exist in the parent process. Variants can be directly leveraged by Test Suite.

In case you strive for completeness you would be required to identify all major variances, both resulting from business diversification and execution flow. This could lead to a very high number of process variants. So, you should only define those variants which have a certain importance for you.