

View Point



Integration Competency Centers

Upgrading Technology Excellence to Service Excellence

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The Dilemma

Integration Competency Center (ICC) as an organizational model to service the integration requirements of the enterprise. Different enterprises have evolved their view of the ICC over period of time as integration technology has been evolving. On one end there are enterprises that consider Integration as infrastructure and identify it tightly with a technology or the product that is being used for integration capability. On the other hand, we have enterprises that consider integration as more of an enterprise domain and deal with it at that level irrespective of set of technologies that enable the integration. Former ones see the ICC as a center of excellence for a technology while later ones believes that ICC is a one stop shop for all integration requirements encompassing all integration technologies.

Enterprises that are rethinking their ICC strategy or developing a new one, have to deal with the dilemma of choosing the appropriate ICC model and hence this question comes up: "should ICC be specific to a technology or should it be focused on integration across all technologies". Well, the good news is that enterprises have option to define the model that has best of both and balance the extent of each model as it suits the DNA of the organization.

However, Infosys believes that integration-centric ICC model has wider impact and greater value for the enterprise as opposed to a technology-centric ICC model. This view-point paper deals with the strategic perspective for selection of the ICC model that can help enterprises to upgrade their focus from technology excellence to service excellence.

The Starting Point – Value System for the ICC

Resolution to the dilemma starts with understanding of the value system that drives the definition of the ICC model. A value system is set of principles and hypotheses that enterprise strategically adopts in order to govern the materialization of the enterprise eco-system. Key points of the recommended value system are described below:

Integration Technologies will change

Infosys believes that technological evolution is inevitable and hence it will drive change-over of technologies as new and better technologies emerge. For a stable and long term ICC model, it must be able to effectively enable and handle the technology change-over than becoming irrelevant by it.

Multiple integration technologies will co-exist

Organizational changes are slower (and costly) than the technology changes. Infosys believes that ‘single technology platform’ is not a feasible reality in existing scenario and hence it is very likely that enterprises will have more than one technology serving the same purposes. As a strategic position, co-existence of technology should be leveraged to provide greater flexibility and openness in the enterprise eco-system.

Objective of ICC is to deliver value and not ‘deploy technology’

This is the core of the ICC value system. Objective for ICC should not be just excellence in technology deployment; instead it should be delivery of business values to stake holders, irrespective of the technology that is being used.

There is lot more to Enterprise integration Management than just the technology

Value delivered by Integration requires lot more to be set in order than just technology excellence. Enterprise processes, people and other organizational models collectively govern the effectiveness of the integration program much more than what technology does. This means that ICC strategy needs to have multiple focus areas than just the technology.

Integration systems should be managed like an enterprise portfolio

If we look at integration eco-system as collection of integration solutions, it forms a portfolio of integration that must be managed strategically. If there are multiple integration technologies, each of them will have set of integration portfolio. There are best-practices for IT portfolio management that should be adopted for integration portfolio as well.

Comparative understanding of the ICC Models

Uniqueness and individuality of each enterprise plays very important role in deciding how ICC model should be defined and evolved over a period of time. It is also important to note that such decisions are more relevant for ‘point-in-time’ need and as time progresses, enterprises will evolve to similar model of ICC.

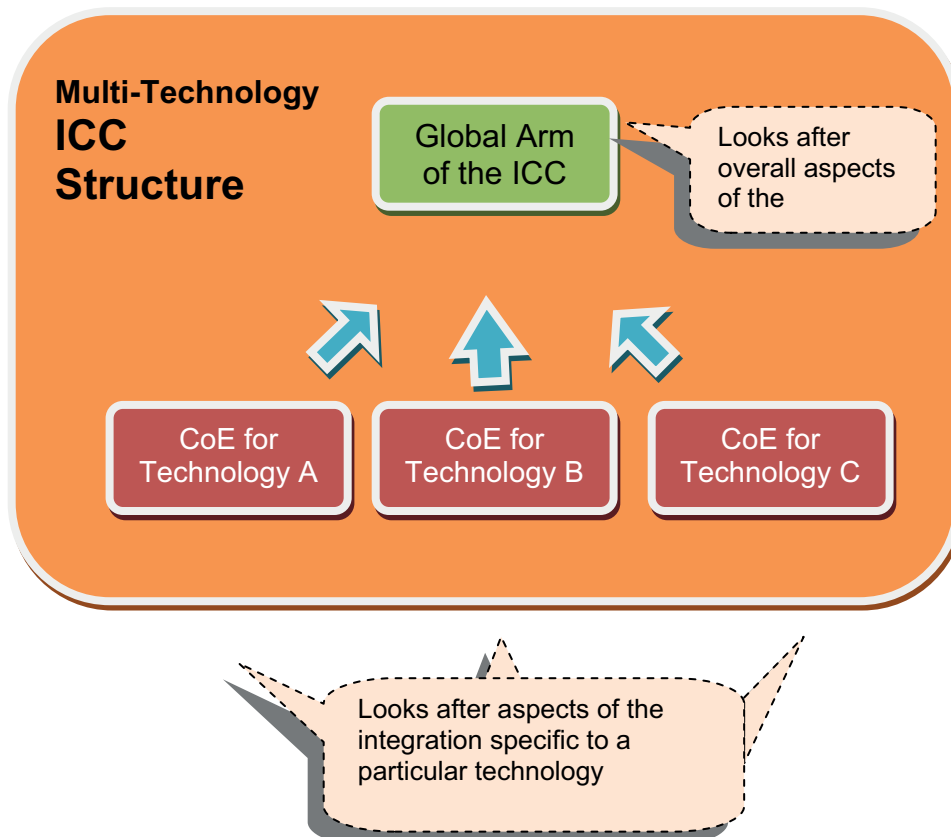
For the purpose of comparison, we have taken two models: Model 1 that is a technology center of excellence and model 2 that is Enterprise integration center of excellence (across all integration technologies).

Table below provides comparative analysis of these two models across various dimensions that play critical role on making the decision.

Dimension	Technology-centric ICC	Integration-centric ICC
Technology Change Impact	Will have huge impact due to hard orientation around a specific technology.	Technology change is a managed process and has moderate impact only
Multi-technology co-existence	Alignment across multiple technology focus areas is poor	Can easily deal with conflict of technology focus and can easily bring technology harmonization
Enterprise level optimization	Optimization (in terms of investment, reuse and resource utilization) done only at individual technology level and not across technologies	True optimization across all technologies with enterprise focus including shared services and shared investments across various technologies
Ability to influence enterprise-architecture	Found to be very minimal	Effective and more meaningful since focus is more on architecture than technology

Strategy to get the best of both the models

Enterprises have option of adopting a strategy that takes best of both the models. Infosys recommends that enterprises should establish an enterprise-wide integration solution center that manages the end-to-end integration portfolios across all technologies. At the same time, this ICC should host focused center of excellence for each of the technologies under the central governance to leverage the technology excellence as represented by the diagram below.



With this model, area of focus and influence across various ICC responsibilities are recommended as depicted in the table below.

Area	Tech CoE ownership	Global ICC ownership
Technology frameworks	Primary	Secondary
Architecture governance	Secondary	Primary
Technology selection	Secondary	Primary
Business analysis	None	Primary
Integration Strategy	Secondary	Primary
Integration Program Management	Secondary	Primary
Project specific solutions	Primary	Secondary
Test Management	Secondary	Primary
Infrastructure management	Secondary	Primary
SLA Management	None	Primary
Release Management	None	Primary
Configuration Management	None	Primary
Problem Management	L3/L4 support	L1/L2/L3 support
Environment Control	Primary	Secondary
Development methodology	Secondary	Primary

About the Author

Rakesh Mishra is a senior principal consultant with Infosys Limited with more than 11 years of experience in Integration. Rakesh specializes in Integration Strategies and Integration Competency Centers and has helped various fortune 500 companies to make right technology and architecture decisions to set up enterprise-wide integration strategies that deliver business value from integration.



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