

Oracle Application Integration Architecture Center of Excellence as a Competitive Differentiator

Excerpts from Panel Discussion at Oracle OpenWorld 2008, San Francisco

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1. What are some of the integration trends that you are seeing in the market? (How have customers approached integration in the past vs. today vs. evolving 5 years out?)

- Enterprise Information Integration (EII) or Enterprise Application Integration (EAI) technologies used to federate and synchronize systems and data have evolved considerably over the last decade. We have seen the basis of this move from basic batch and API-based integration for point-to-point integration between applications to Message based platforms.
- But, we've also seen that these complex EII and EAI technologies have actually added to architectural complexity of business and perpetuate problems with point-to-point integration. One of the root cause is that data is tightly coupled to applications & business processes and this data is not being managed by a single, independent resource that can capture the complete and current enterprise understanding of the domain (customer, product, account or supplier)
- We also see a lot of progress in the recent past in convergence of SOA, as a part of integration frameworks that seems to attacking the problem of domain.

- Looking ahead, we see enterprises striving to make their underlying infrastructure and applications more nimble & agile and try model their Business processes around applications & underlying business services. The key to success in the future will be to enable changed business processes that can be orchestrated on a scalable and managed platform. We see that there will be a lot more emphasis on business entity modeling with std. execution interfaces, for orchestration on a SOA platform.

2. Having executed end-to-end integration projects, in your opinion, what are the top drivers and challenges faced by today's large and mid-size enterprises?

- Business drivers would include:
 - Relate the business flows to the applications and their inherent integration of business transactions/entities
 - The need to implement end-to-end processes across disparate systems. This needs to be done in a way that the basic execution pieces are aware of the larger processes they enable. Agility is the key.
 - Total cost of ownership and obsolescence factors are important. Organizations want to invest in configurable technologies that can keep pace with technology and business changes.
- Technology level drivers would include:
 - Reduce the complexity
 - Reuse the existing services
 - Reduce the TCO
 - Single source of repository and clear ownership defined
 - Time to production
 - Ability to source off-the-shelf components
 - Configure rather than develop
 - Last but not the least, to implement these systems in a less intrusive way, so that changes in the integration technologies are done with minimum impact to applications. Of course, there are other factors that would contribute to this - like SOA, STD, etc.

3. As per your understanding of the customer priorities and Oracle product offerings, how does Oracle AIA address (or should address) some of these issues and challenges?

- We believe that AIA would be an excellent platform to act as a reference architecture for customers embarking on the SOA journey. This gives them a jump start, as well as introduce a bit of discipline in building the services.
- We think that Oracle AIA excellently articulates two fundamental areas: the need for a clean, easy to use object services layer in the form of the foundation pack and the second are pre-built processes in the form of PIPs.
- We particularly like the idea that there is an effort to standardize object service definitions, and this will go a long way in the convergence of business Standards with the integrating platforms. This will also be a great fit when Fusion Applications hit the road. This is a difficult effort as each industry and even organizations will have their own definitions, but if we can take care of 60 to 70% of the basic components and attributes, we will achieve significant strides.
- Since AIA is built on a scalable managed SOA platform using fusion, a lot of underlying complexities are taken care of and moved into the infrastructure layer.
- We would like to see a rapid increase in the availability of EBOs with their underlying connectors to applications. We would also like to see this implemented in a configurable way, with configurable parameters, to make for a flexible deployment. We also see the need for system management functionality in terms of managing governance, performance, traceability and it needs to be done at a EBO level.