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Introduction

Many analysts predict that by the year 2012, SOA investments around the world could reach as high as \$160 billion. This not only speaks volumes for the potential popularity of the approach as a whole; it also speaks volumes for the belief in the approach that many corporate IT and industry experts have.

The need is clear: to gain and maintain competitive advantage, business and IT must be more cooperatively aligned. Fortunately, service-oriented architectures provide the promise of functionality that improves how we internally and externally perform: agile, flexible and responsive.

Great benefits; lingering challenges

Despite the vision, many companies continue to struggle to successfully plan, develop and integrate a service-oriented architecture. This paper discusses a few of the common pitfalls of SOA adoption.

SOA ≠ web services

One barrier to successful SOA adoption that we continually see is the incorrect relation of SOA and web services. A web service is a type of service, but does not infer architecture developed to support services. Successful SOA adoption requires a deeper understanding and commitment to the architectural characteristics of an SOA, as opposed to constructing JBOWS (Just a Bunch Of Web Services).

Perception of high investment, low ROI

When speaking with current and potential clients, SOA has both a positive and negative reputation at all levels of IT, managers and C-level professionals. One common reason is the perception of the value that is truly achievable through SOA. We find that professionals achieving success have a fundamentally different perception of SOA ROI than those who are struggling.

The truth is, it comes down to belief. *SOA adoption is an evolution, not a task.* We find that many professionals – perhaps in reaction to budget, time and resource pressures, all-too-often want to see immediate ROI from their SOA initiatives. While seeing ROI sooner than later is certainly not impossible, it requires this fundamental belief and commitment from C-level down to the developers.

A gradual, life-cycle approach to SOA will enable incremental adoption, which in turn will allow each component of the SOA to build on the previous. The benefit will be more manageable projects, and allow faster delivery and higher-value transformation.

Vision and planning

Understanding the level of effort to successfully adopt a service-oriented architecture is of critical importance. SOA is more complex than traditional SDLC processes provide for, and thus requires more robust practices, processes and methodologies.

Experienced resources understand that successful SOA adoption requires defining the problem domain at semantic, service and process levels, and using a governance strategy for guidance.

A pilot project can be a proving ground for the SOA plan and allow for quick-hit ROI. A solid vision and plan facilitates expansion into the enterprise. Without sufficient focus on vision and planning, companies will inevitably struggle with true SOA adoption, often having to rework the original pilot, or start over.

SOA governance ≠ SOA management

All aspects of information technology, inclusive of SOA, require a fundamental understanding of governance versus management. Without this understanding, the potential for success is reduced significantly. The struggles of many SOA-adopting companies can be attributed in part to this common challenge, and until resolved, resources cannot be properly aligned to achieve success.

Governance determines areas of responsibility, identifies and empowers decision makers, and establishes policies for how changes will be made. Management is the process of bringing changes to fruition. In short, management follows the directions set forth in governance.

In closing, while barriers exist, most organizations are in a fortunate position to re-adjust, re-prioritize and get on a better path to SOA success. With a trusted partner, companies are better prepared to address challenges through proven practices and methodologies, and achieve tangible, lasting results from their SOA adoption initiatives.