

SOA 101: Essential Advice for Implementing a Successful SOA

HP Principal Consultant Andrew Pugsley discusses the challenges posed by service-oriented architecture and how to address them

SOA is today's hot topic. Why has it caught executives' attention?

Organizations are facing two key challenges: one is the ongoing need to reduce costs while increasing efficiencies. The other is an escalating rate of change. The ability to respond to change effectively is a critical success factor for most companies. SOA has captured the imagination of business and IT because it provides an architectural approach that helps businesses reduce operational costs, become more efficient, and respond faster and more effectively to change.

What is one significant misstep companies make when they move toward SOA?

Most companies understandably focus on technology, and I don't want to downplay the importance of that. But to successfully adopt SOA across the enterprise, organizations must also consider other areas. The business needs driving SOA must be assessed, for example, and people-related issues — the business culture and ways of working — must be evaluated along with the technology. For SOA to work, program management demands a more iterative, evolutionary approach. Governance helps companies track and control the change. Architecture must be well-managed, and enabling technologies support the overall initiative. Having capable, suitably dynamic operations and management is also key to supporting an evolving SOA environment. Finally, organizations must consider the supply and demand



of IT services — both services supplied to the IT organization, and the service that the IT organization supplies to the user community. Successful SOA adopters consider each of these areas.

What's the best way to start?

We recommend starting with a business initiative that will result in significant

change. SOA lets you do that by flexibly integrating new technologies and business processes into your existing environment. HP took this approach with a European insurance company and successfully helped it change the way it interacts with its customers. Subsequently, that change has rippled throughout its market.

There are so many vendors with SOA offerings. It can be difficult to choose a partner.

Fortunately, an emerging set of reasonably well-defined standards provides greater freedom in choosing or changing technologies, or merging multiple products or technologies. At HP, we make recommendations based on the ultimate business need — considering the current and potential challenges a customer faces and the related need for services, technologies, and support.

So there's no one best SOA technology?

SOA products and technologies are growing at a rapid rate, leapfrogging one another with new capabilities. By not tying too tightly into any one

The best approach is to pick a starting point and move through the enterprise over time, migrating various parts of the business into a service-oriented architecture. Part of that process is making clear judgments about what to move and when to do it. Although every organization can benefit from SOA, the advantage that SOA delivers is not the same across the entire organization. A good candidate for SOA is any area where applications are changing rapidly and the ability to change is compromising business success.

Is it fair to say that attaining the proper expertise is critical?

Enterprises embarking on an SOA journey should engage with a service

There is considerable value in engaging with a partner that can bring the expertise and methodologies that will help you be successful.

technology approach, organizations can take advantage of these new technologies. It's unrealistic in the current IT environment to expect to get everything you need from just one technology or vendor. SOA makes it easier to accommodate new products or techniques, then focus on services that the business needs — rather than concentrating on what technology to buy.

Every CIO's nightmare is signing those big checks — especially when the company has a data center full of infrastructure investments. Is there a way companies can use what they have and still reap the benefits of SOA?

SOA is a journey; it's not something that can be done in a "big bang."

provider that brings expertise and proven methodologies. To be successful, you want a partner that can help you address all of the enterprise domains I mentioned and who can handle multiple technologies with equal skill. Also, you should choose a provider that really acts as a partner — a mentor, if you will. Your partner must help develop skills within your organization that allow you to take on responsibility for effectively designing and managing your SOA. You don't want to be dependent on this provider forever. To avoid that, choose a partner that will share experience, skills, and ideas — and transfer them to your enterprise over time.

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SOA Management: Foundation for Success

One critical — and often overlooked — requirement for a successful service-oriented architecture (SOA) is building an appropriate management structure. Simple Web-services integration projects may be managed easily, but as SOA projects begin embracing processes, policies, and interactions, more complex and rigorous management strategies are needed.

A comprehensive, effective SOA management approach not only monitors and measures the effectiveness of Web services, it also maps those services to the underlying SOA infrastructure and to the business services being offered. "Proper SOA management moves beyond pure technical considerations and aligns the SOA initiative with the company's strategic business goals," explains Mark Perreira, chief architect for SOA, HP OpenView.

To develop an effective SOA management approach, organizations must choose products, technologies, and vendors that can scale to support the full range of both their current and future SOA needs. To ensure that the solution does not become a technical dead end, companies should look for partners whose products can manage the Web services environment, provide management control at the business service level as it relates to the SOA initiative, and support process management within SOA.

"Companies should view SOA as a transformational mechanism that can help them become a better business," says Perreira. "Yet SOA in itself is no silver bullet. To succeed, you must understand your goals, measure them against the technology execution, and adopt a reasonable approach to architecting a solution, creating services, and developing a technology architecture and direction. Embracing SOA management, including robust governance, will make SOA succeed within the organization."