KNOWLEDGESTORM
The Upshot
Volume 1 Issue 2 October 2002
Better IT Information for Better IT Decisions

THE BUSINESS OF IT IS BUSINESS

How new technologies are changing the role of the 21st century IT department?

By Geoff Crawshaw, CTO, OpenAir.com

Traditionally, IT's enterprise role has been to evaluate, implement, maintain and upgrade disparate software systems. Today, a confluence of technological changes has profoundly altered this role. As a result, while internal IT still manages the daily aspects systems operation, they are increasingly expected to provide more strategic business support to the organization.

Three primary technology trends are responsible for this shift in emphasis:

- The rise of Internet Business Services
- The acceptance of XML as an industry standard
- The rapidly improving viability of open source systems

More than ever effective CIOs will need to develop a thorough grasp of the strategic business goals.

Universal web access has expanded software delivery options from the product model to a service model. More than ever before, traditional software is hosted and managed remotely through Application Service Providers (ASPs). The ASP model, while faster to implement and easier to maintain and access, is only a small first step toward Internet-based for software delivery. The far more profound shift is embodied by Internet Business Services (IBSs).

IBSs are built for Web delivery from the ground up. They centrally host one highly configurable version of the software, which customers access through the Web. Their switching architecture design makes it possible to match the specific workflow and feature requirements of individual customers without requiring custom code. Delivering software through this model is far more cost-effective for the manufacturer.

The open source movement, begun by Linus Torvalds' introduction of Linux in 1992, has led an evolution of open source operating systems, databases and programming languages at a pace that is unprecedented in the history of software development. Organizations as diverse as Boeing, Oracle, IBM, Shell, and NASA have undertaken major initiatives using open source technology.

Among emerging industry standards for how different data systems interact, Extensible Markup Language (XML) leads the way. XML provides a set of rules that allow complex data to be exchanged between servers independent of architecture. This enables real-time integration among various systems.

These technologies have dramatically reduced the costs of buying, integrating and maintaining software, making a far broader range of systems affordable. At the same time, as IBSs standardize on data exchange platforms, IT departments will be able to architect company systems that treat IBSs as "Web objects" and weave them into an overall system that meets the specific needs of the organization.

More than ever, effective CIOs will need to develop a thorough grasp of the strategic business goals so they can proactively recommend solutions that will further these objectives. How they evaluate and integrate the many diverse software services available will impact the enterprise's competitive advantage.

Explore KnowledgeStorm's business software solutions from OpenAir.com.