



Push the Needle

Look beyond
cumbersome
processes to move
technology forward

By Steve Able

Computer hardware and software-related technology constantly evolves. Every enterprise, regardless of size, uses technology to make workplaces more efficient, develop products, capture customer information and, ultimately, drive revenue. The challenge for many organizations is determining how to better leverage today's technology-rich environment, streamline processes and improve operations. Frequently, the answer lies in innovation.

Innovative thought processes are promoted by analyst firms like Gartner to assist companies in eliminating the traditional approaches of thinking that hinder creativity.

Innovators focus on building a solution instead of relying on existing ones. A popular motivational poster sums up this sentiment: "Reality is only for those who lack imagination." In sum, neither individuals nor corporations can effectively innovate

without imagination and creativity.

Innovation moves the enterprise along. Because large investments in technology are often impractical, continuous-improvement initiatives are an enterprise's most logical method for help with goal setting and incremental advancement.

Sparking Innovation

When enterprises first became reliant on technology, communication

required either proprietary software or hardware. Innovators in the open-source world helped force a paradigm shift, making open standards possible. Now, the wide acceptance of TCP/IP means most any point in the enterprise can communicate with other points. Service levels for the Internet are reaching performance rates acceptable for business applications, providing justification for full communication across and among enterprises.

Organizations should examine how their critical business applications solve the problem of intersystem communication. If the enterprise is using open standards, it's ready to move forward with modernization initiatives.

Enterprises that rely on "roll your own" standards and solutions generally find it more difficult to advance. Partnering with an ISV or consulting company can allow an organization to speed up internal service-enabling processes.

Solution Options

Service interfaces exist for most new technologies. The more successful cloud solutions offer service-based interfaces that allow users to easily integrate or modernize their applications. Popular service-based interfaces include simple object access protocol (SOAP), representational state transfer (REST) and JSON.

Object-oriented programming promised business analysts would be able to connect objects together in a plug-and-play fashion. Object-oriented services are close to delivering on this promise, providing flexibility to allow an enterprise to make drastic changes with much lower risk than traditional procedural programming models.

Even something old can be something new. SQL with JDBC and ODBC processing has been around for years. Most major vendors and several ISVs provide solutions that allow the use of SQL for accessing information.

These solutions are normally direct data interfaces, but they can be helpful when an enterprise requires data communication links across dissimilar hardware.

Enterprise-ready ISV solutions provide the capability to wrap SQL request/response processing as services

based on open standards. By following an open standard service-based model, the enterprise can use SQL to exchange data between more points.

Web services provide a proven method to insulate the enterprise from risk associated with application

modernization. Continuous improvement by following agile, rapid development practices is a reality when the enterprise has technology wrapped as a service-based architecture.

Modernization

A proven method of lowering risk is to select vendors who understand the value of transactional and batch legacy business applications. Vendors with a strong background in IBM System z* and service oriented architecture know the value of exposing traditional procedural language environments with modern object-oriented services. These same vendors also understand the value of allowing legacy business-logic access to external object-oriented services. A modern solution cannot exist without allowing full bidirectional service enablement.

Vendors providing solutions allowing dual enablement of the System z environment can greatly reduce the risk associated with application modernization. When the modernization teams look at new technologies, the use of innovative paradigms with a phased approach will help ensure success. Following the continuous-improvement approach allows the enterprise to modernize as technology advances.

Look Within

Over the past few years, the mandate to get by with less has caused many large companies to tighten the reins on risk-takers; when in fact, those leaders should be given more freedom to look for creative solutions in tackling business challenges.

Organizations can start an innovation assessment by talking to employees about their ideas and opinions. Over time, they may become more forthcoming with ideas. Once the information exchange starts to occur, listen for common themes or pain points. Addressing pain points

within the organization builds even more trust and generates more ideas.

To incorporate innovative methods, the enterprise will have to review existing—and often restrictive—business models to support a

organization. That said, executive-level buy-in makes it much easier for the various silos of organizations to break through old and worn-out methods. Once an innovative culture is in place and more departments



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more open, innovative business model. From there, organizations can implement continuous-improvement methods to expand innovation processes and impact long-term success.

Companies hire employees to help drive success and profitability. Innovative principles allow employees to become more engaged and, as a result, more productive.

Ready for Anything

Breaking away from policies and procedures that have served your enterprise well for years may be difficult. However, by becoming adaptive, creative and willing to research new methods, your enterprise will be better positioned to react to any paradigm shift on the horizon.

Some of the aforementioned ideas may be started at any level in the

start to emulate the move to more innovative measures, the entire organization will start moving forward as one team with a common goal, instead of moving in silos.

For the enterprise to continuously improve, remain competitive and grow, it must review its business practices as well as its hardware and software business partners regularly. By doing so, it can determine if the enterprise is charting the best path among the ever-expanding advances, and it can select innovation over tradition as a way to move the needle forward. **Z**



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