

HP SOA Products Director Tim Hall on New Business Drivers and Efficiency Benefits From SOA

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Dana Gardner: Hi, this is Dana Gardner, principal analyst at Interarbor Solutions, and you're listening to a special BriefingsDirect podcast recorded live at the Hewlett-Packard Software Universe Conference in Las Vegas Nevada. We are here in the week of June 16, 2008. This sponsored HP Software Universe live podcast is distributed by BriefingsDirect Network.

We now welcome to the show Tim Hall. He is the director of HP's SOA Center products. Welcome to the show.

Tim Hall: Thanks, Dana.

Gardner: We are going to talk about, fittingly enough, service-oriented architecture (SOA), the products, the market, some of the underlying trends, both from the business viewpoint and technologies that are driving SOA adoption.

I suppose SOA is at somewhat of a crossroad. We have seen a lot of pilot and project-based adoption. People were expecting to see more holistic, deep and wide SOA methodologies brought into play, but there has been an awful lot on the plate of CIOs and architects these days.

They are now thinking about data-center transformation and next-generation adoption for virtualization, higher utilization, and lower costs. They are also dealing with some of the issues around energy and power. They are being asked to modernize legacy applications. There's an awful lot going on, but SOA can be an enabler and an aid to that. Why don't you tell us a little bit about, how you see SOA moving into the mainstream?

Hall: From our perspective, we think SOA is an application-development philosophy, and that philosophy is really the backplane, or an enabler, of lots of different and interesting trends.

You mentioned that modernization is a key one. Lots of old mainframe programmers like myself are retiring, and we've got lots of customers now looking to migrate to more modern architectures, Java platforms, Microsoft technologies, and maybe replacing with updated packaged apps from Oracle or SAP -- those are the two major package players these days. You know, both of those vendors, are building custom software, and SOA is the way in which they are doing this.

It also is an enabler for things like Web2.0 or mashups that are created from the information and the capabilities that are exposed through those services. SOA is, as I said, a philosophy

about how we are building applications. We want to be service-oriented in those services that are consumed across a wide variety of composite applications that can be built. So, when you think about things like virtualization at the hardware level, SOA allows you to do that at the software level.

Other trends that are intersecting here include software-as-a-service. They have service in the name. The question is how much of it are you consuming. And, are they also exposing services that you can actually integrate with things you have in house. All of these things are connected, but I think SOA is really this backplane to enable all of these pieces. Whether we are talking about it as a first-class citizen, or just the way in which the work is being done now, is the point of view about it coming into the mainstream.

Gardner: A lot of the discussion here at Software Universe has centered around the need to bring together what happens in design time, with what happens on the operation side, in run time, and in production. And, it seems to be one of the key assets of SOA methodology in adoption is a creation of registry/repository, a really powerful information source for policies, SLAs, and use patterns.

When you start looking what they are doing with federated configuration management database (CMDB) on the ops side, when you look at policy engines, you start to see how some of these federated data sources can be brought together to create more of that lifecycle approach. Tell us a little about the registry/repository, and how key it is for people in a IT role, not just for SOA, but perhaps for more?

Hall: I think that's a great topic, especially from HP's perspective. You know, there are lots of different information sources that you have in IT. There isn't just one, and if you think you are only going to have one, we think that's the wrong approach, and customers have played this out.

I think what you are getting at to a certain degree is to looking at the adoption of two different trends that are going on. One trend that's impacting the operation teams is the establishment of configuration management database, and the adoption of the Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL), and IT service management on top of that information. That's one trend.

By the way with ITIL version 3, all of those processes now are oriented around the notion of service delivery, which now fits very nicely with the notion of the application teams building these next-generation applications that are also service oriented.

And, you know what? Most enterprise architects and most operations folks don't normally get along. But, maybe with these two converging trends, we have an opportunity for these folks to understand each other's motivation. We are talking about the same kinds of terminology. Suddenly, there is this shared understanding that we might actually get some work done.

So, there are these different authoritative sources of information that we see being established, some within ops, some within app development, quality management repositories, enterprise directories with identities, and they are all related, all stitched

together.

The point on the application side is the more and more structured information that we are creating and putting around applications, the more automation that you can drive through the entire lifecycle. This includes enriching information like what's in the CMDB, by providing federated access to all of these different information sources. So from the SOA perspective, having a SOA-centric artifact repository as an authoritative source for those documents, is absolutely critical.

The registry is yet another place to discover and point you to where those two different authoritative sources actually live. So, in some respects, the registry can become the federation master, if you will, telling me, if I want to find the configuration management database, where is that? If I want to find the SOA artifact repository, where is that? They can point you in all those different directions.

Gardner: I suppose also, in aligning with SOA, approaches and methodologies, the enterprise service bus ESB becomes a way in which some of these policies can be instantiated. A messaging bus is not only the way in which the information is available. There is federation. There is a relationship between these different repositories, but then the actual execution of that can happen.

I think the point what we are trying to get to here is that SOA may have been given short shrift in terms of its role for cost efficiency and productivity, if you think it only in terms of application services reuse and compositing. When you look at in the context of IT lifecycle, and the full opportunity to create much more efficiency in the IT operations, it looks a little bit prettier.

Hall: Absolutely right, and I think if you look at what HP is assembling in terms of our software portfolio, there are some logical connections you can draw. First, as you are building more of these structured artifacts and linking them together in terms of the lifecycle, what can we do in terms of things like automated deployment? And, if I've captured information about the environment that the service is going to deploy in, the policy, the run time policies and the associated policy enforcement points are going to be responsible for executing those policies, be they hardware or software based.

Clearly, we have a leg up in understanding all of those elements, bringing Opsware into the fold and looking at how we can take the whole stack soup to nuts and automate both the deployment, as well as enriching the information in CMDB. Those are sort of the conclusions that you can draw from all the different elements that we have in the portfolio.

I actually think it's a discussion you can have about application architecture in general. You can say, "What are the best practices that we are learning out of the SOA approach that we might want to apply to other types of applications that we are deploying? What other structured artifacts shall we will we be creating to help us drive that kind of automation?"

Gardner: And, of course, the major trend that people are talking about and starting to move toward is virtualization. It's another layer of complexity, but if you've got those assets in

place, the backplane ESB is doing management on a automated basis through policies and governance criteria that are already embedded in these data repositories. The whole notion of scaling virtualization for very dramatic cost savings becomes a bit more or less scary.

Hall: That's absolutely right, and, again, these trends are all collected, they support each other, and they can be composited and built on each other. I mean, virtualization is not a new topic. I was having a conversation with some folks yesterday about shouldn't we take the OSI seven-layer stack and talk about each layer of that stack. Put the word virtualization next to it, and then describe at that layer, network layer, application layer, operating system layers, what does this mean? What capabilities you are getting out?

I think, what you are alluding to is that customers have some confusion about what am I virtualizing at what layer and what do I get as a result of doing that? But I think it would be a very powerful discussion topic or a discussion slide to have with customers as they are trying to decide what the benefits are in each one of those layers?

Gardner: As we started out saying, there is an awful lot for IT departments to bite off and chew these days. A few years ago, I had customers come and say, "Okay, what we do first to get ready for SOA?" The big thing to do is get your data act together. Get a data service's layer, because it's data services that will be probably most important and beneficial to consume through your SOA infrastructure.

Well, now I am thinking that at even higher abstraction, you've got to get your whole SOA infrastructure and approach going, so that you can then be in a position to take advantage of this larger IT lifecycle.

Hall: I'll be a little controversial. We actually don't think that that's the right approach -- for SOA adoption, at least. After seven years of kind of playing in the space, we have seen most customers be successful, when the first thing they do is decompose their business, and not worry about the technology.

Actually for most customers that we talk to their first problem in terms of SOA adoption is when they've driven it from the bottom up, meaning, they try to have the technologists drag the decisions about data services or selecting ESB without even understanding the requirements to drive that kind of decision.

The most successful adoption that we have seen and the highest number of benefits is when they take a business-focused approach. Let's decompose a business. Do we really understand what it means in the IT world to be a service provider? When I say service provider, I mean in the classic sense of a telecom. Somebody once asked me if you are successful with SOA, what is my IT shop going to look like? I said, you are going to look a lot like a telecom provider, and they looked at me very puzzled. Then I said, you are becoming the dial tone of the business by providing all of these services, and that means you have to be available 24X7.

Think about what that means to be a truly carrier-grade IT service provider and that's a catchphrase that I like to use to get that conversation going.

Gardner: Sure, and then to bring that into some of the newer hype curve of activity lately around cloud computing. What you are describing is where people are beginning to identify as a private cloud.

Hall: Yes, that's absolutely correct.

Gardner: Tell us a little bit about what you think a private cloud and SOA do together?

Hall: Cloud is the next new, new thing. There was a blog I was reading the other day, that said, SOA was the boring cousin of Web 2.0. Now, I am thinking, after seven years, of doing this for the boring cousin. Very interesting, but cloud is the next new thing that people are talking about.

How can I get these compute resources and how can I get access to them from wherever I am in the world? I think there is some very interesting models being put together, such as Amazon's S3 model, and now I see businesses tapping into that, and using that as the means for scaling up and scaling out their environment, without ever having to have touched the hardware infrastructure operating systems.

Gardner: And, developers using it to put their apps through their paces on a performance-testing basis before they ever put in production. Try it on Amazon.

Hall: Absolutely, and performance validation, by the way, is one of those things for SOA, which I believe is absolutely critical, and yet, who is involved in that? Is it architects? Is it your quality management professionals?

Normally, there is a performance validation team that's absolutely world class within organizations to understand how to do that kind of scale up of individual apps? Now they are applying those means and methods to services. So, cloud is really one of those cool, new buzz words that we are hearing about. Private cloud? Sure. I definitely see that it's an evolution of how do we turn all of the assets in IT into services, and now we are saying, hardware is a service.

Gardner: Okay, so what's interesting is the relationship between these trends and how it really starts to point to a larger goal for business transformation and IT service management in the transformative implications with that. It seems that IT is becoming more a fabric of a company, rather than a second thought or a supplier. It's not really a supplier -- it doesn't really do IT justice anymore.

How do IT professional in these IT departments begin to think of themselves, actually recast their role and their position, their culture, to take on perhaps a much larger role in these companies?

Hall: I think one of the messages you see from HP software is that we are not talking about information technologies any more. You know, back in the day, it was data processing, right? We are now talking about business technology, and we are saying, "How do we optimize the outcomes of applying technologies in the context of business?" And, our message is, IT is a

strategic weapon. The folks that were in IT, we are transforming them to be in BT now, and the more their companies are able to look at applying technologies in new and unique ways, this is absolutely their strategic differentiator in the market.

Gardner: Well great. I think we have covered quite a bit, and all the pieces are not quite in place, but once people see the vision, and they've got a stake in the ground. It really helps rally the troops and put together your requirements of how to get to where you want to be. So, we are going to thank Tim Hall, he is the director of HP's SOA Center Products. We appreciate your time.

Hall: Thanks very much, Dana.

Gardner: This comes to you as a sponsored HP Software Universe live podcast recorded at the Venetian Resort in Las Vegas. Look for other podcast from this HP event at www.hp.com website, under "Software Universe Live Podcasts," [<http://h20219.www2.hp.com/services/library/GetPage.aspx?pageid=599221&statusid=0&audienceid=0&ccid=225&langid=121>] as well as, through the BriefingsDirect Network. I would like to thank our producers on today's show, Fred Bals and Kate Whalen, and also our sponsor, Hewlett-Packard.

I'm Dana Gardner, principal analyst at Interarbor Solutions. Thanks for listening, and come back next time for more in-depth podcasts on enterprise software infrastructure and strategies. Bye for now.

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