

THE CASE FOR OPEN SOURCE INTEROPERABILITY

● Interoperability has been a major challenge for the business software consumer for decades. Software applications, each designed with distinct requirements in mind, and built on technology stacks by engineering teams working largely in isolation, were simply not created to work together. The result has been customers enduring the time and expense of getting everything to work together.

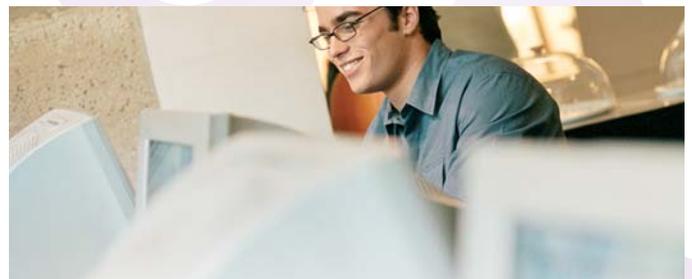
● The industry has attempted successive waves of standards with limited success. Many of the resulting standards are extremely complex, leading to poor understanding of their meaning and incompatible implementations that claim to be compliant. Another problem is the proliferation of standards, with multiple competing and incompatible standards, often sponsored by competing proprietary vendors. This complexity and poor interoperability has been a barrier to adaptation in most small to medium businesses, which frequently need a smaller solution that “just works”.

● The last five years has seen the emergence of technologies and development methodologies that can radically improve the interoperability landscape. The emergence of the web and its related technologies such as AJAX and Web Services make it much easier to assemble software pieces together into a new application. The open source software trend, with its transparent source code only heightens this impulse.

● The Open Solutions Alliance (OSA) has been formed expressly to help speed the creation and adoption of integrated, interoperable business applications based on open source. The OSA approach to interoperability is pragmatic – focusing on solutions, not standards. By raising awareness of interoperability problems and promoting guidelines for interoperability, the OSA hopes to sponsor the ongoing evolution of interoperability practices. We think that open source’s spirit of openness and collaboration is the ideal way to develop and define these practices. One of the goals of the OSA is to develop, with community participation, a set of interoperability guidelines, eventually leading to a certification program. The OSA is a nonprofit, vendor-neutral consortium dedicated to driving adoption of open source business solutions. The OSA will work with open source ISVs, the open source community and business users to improve

interoperability among today’s stand-alone software products by publishing best practices, promoting standards, and making tools and APIs available.

● Increasingly, businesses are looking to benefit from open source above the operating system and middleware layer of the software stack, which is reflected in analyst firm IDC’s prediction that the open source software market will grow to \$3 billion by 2009. Analysts are also predicting that a wider portfolio of open source applications will become available this year, prompting more deployments of the software. The OSA recognizes that business users are ultimately seeking solutions suites opposed to stand-alone software products and has formed the Alliance to provide interoperability among open source business-class software products. It will adapt key aspects of the open source *development* model to build an innovative *business* model that helps ensure the availability of open source business suites, meets customer requirements and competes with proprietary alternatives.

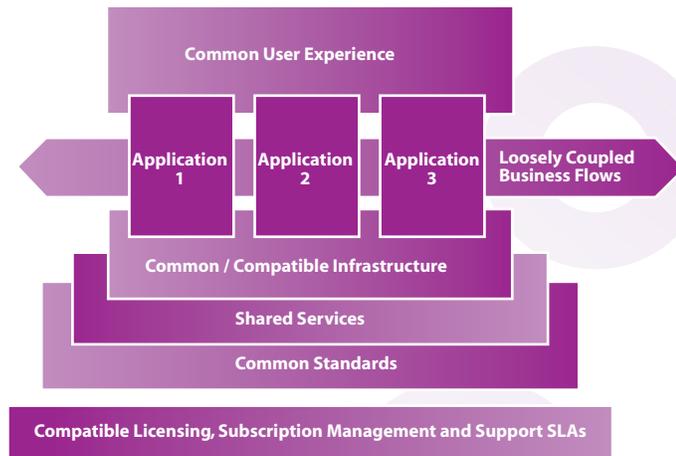


Interoperability has been a major challenge, specially for small and midsize companies that need solutions that “just work”.

Open source software, with its transparent source code makes it much easier to assemble software pieces together.

The Open Solutions Alliance has been formed to speed up the interoperability between business applications based on open source.

●● The OSA plans to address the major interoperability issues faced by small and midsize businesses. The first areas to be targeted include:



●● **Common User Experience** to offer a consistent look and feel across applications. This requires support for customizable user interfaces, and for embedding the presentation layer inside of another application.

●● **Loosely Coupled Business Flows** between applications. This implies facilitating that development teams at different projects are in contact to exchange needs and coordinate the development of interfaces.

●● **Compatible Infrastructures** to facilitate deployment and maintenance of multiple solutions. This means, whenever possible, harmonizing the use of infrastructure components, including application servers, databases, web servers, etc.

●● **Shared Services** to simplify the deployment and management of the combination of applications commonly used together. This service layer should include a common install, upgrade and configuration experience, patch management, single sign-on and authorization services, backup of shared data, etc. The actual set of services will vary from solution to solution.

●● **Common Standards** to improve application interoperability. Applications should adhere to both formal standards (such as JSR-168 for Portlets) and defacto standards (Hibernate for object/relational mapping) where appropriate.

●● **Compatible Licensing, Subscription Management and Support SLAs** to reduce artificial barriers for adoption. We want to facilitate that solutions built with several applications can be sold and serviced smoothly.

●● The key to success for this initiative is collaboration, which is deeply ingrained in the tradition of open source. Vendors can contribute domain expertise, users contribute requirements, system integrators drive specific interoperability needs, and developers contribute architectures, data models and code.

●● For more information please visit the OSA web site at : www.OpenSolutionsAlliance.org

