

2009 WebSphere System z Podcasts - 'Did you say Mainframe?'

TITLE: Business Event Processing on System z

HOST: Hi, and welcome to the "Did you say Mainframe?" podcast series. This is where we regularly interview IBM technical experts who can help you to understand important IBM mainframe hardware and software issues. I'm your host Sherrie Abshire.

Today we're going to talk about business event processing on System z.

Our guest today is Rob Rowe from IBM System z BPM Marketing. Rob, it's great to have you here.

SME: Thank you, Sherrie; I'm delighted to be here.

HOST: Before we begin, I'd like to mention to our listeners that we have several upcoming regional BPM technical seminars where you can learn more about Business Process Management and how it can help to make your business more agile. I'll be giving out more information at the end of this podcast.

HOST: [Question 1] So Rob, can you tell us a little about business event processing and what benefits it provides?

SME: [Answer 1] Sure. Let me first mention that business events are different than system events. Those customers that have Tivoli products, and are familiar with them, know that they monitor the health of your systems in the enterprise. They alert you to events such as a disk drive going offline, a system crash, network issues and the like. Those are examples of system events. Business event management is the monitoring of business events such as a new account being opened, the sale of a particular product, an ATM withdrawal and other events that relate to your business, not your IT infrastructure.

Getting back to business event processing, this is not a new idea. Over the years, event processing has evolved from addressing simple events and complex events to focusing on business events. Simple event processing is the detecting and responding to a single source or homogenous event type. Something to the effect of, if a shipment event occurs, add the quantity to the inventory count. Complex event processing is just what it sounds like. Through all the numerous events that happen in an enterprise on a daily occurrence, it provides functions to help detect and respond to event patterns among like or related events, missing events and aggregate events. As an example, if within a 48-hour period, a potential customer researches a specific product at a Web site a couple of times or calls customer service for more information, but does not purchase the product, then send a sales follow-up by adding the customer to the direct mail system and after five days send a "thank you for your interest" e-mail to the customer. Business event processing takes this a step further by providing a

2009 WebSphere System z Podcasts - 'Did you say Mainframe?' graphical, non-programmatic user interface that allows business users to manage event processing logic themselves, resulting in a significant reduction in time to value and total cost of ownership. In addition, it encompasses events from numerous sources, in no particular order or sequence, and allows patterns of interest to be made from them. The benefits are clear: ease of use, no programming required, and intelligence gathered from random events flowing through your enterprise to allow business users to receive notice and to be able to respond to business events which together become something of interest to the user.

HOST: [Question 2] How does this help the System z community?

SME: [Answer 2] When you look at the majority of the System z customers, you'll notice that they are running CICS transactions. Many, many transactions, every day. In early October, IBM announced the availability of a SupportPack for CICS Transaction Server version 3 which will allow events from CICS transactions to be translated into a form suitable for consumption by WebSphere Business Events, the IBM business event product for business users. What this means is that CICS users can now enjoy the benefits of business event processing that previously were unavailable to them. This is a huge opportunity for the CICS and System z community. It extends the value of your CICS applications, it extends the value of System z and it provides an entry point to business process management.

HOST: [Question 3] Does WebSphere Business Events run on System z?

SME: [Answer 3] Version 6.2 of WebSphere Business Events runs on Linux for System z. So yes, it runs on System z, but not on z/OS at this time.

HOST: [Question 4] Can you give a scenario of how business event processing works with CICS transactions?

SME: [Answer 4] Absolutely. Let's use a financial scenario since many CICS customers are in that industry. Let's say that a credit card authorization request originating in St. Louis from a cardholder with a registered address in Seattle might be of interest. If a second authorization request originating in New York arrives one hour later, that especially generates interest. The obvious pattern here is that this credit card number is being used in various geographic locations in a timeframe not sufficient for the cardholder to physically travel to these locations and use the credit card for legitimate purchases. These types of transactions are being run in businesses using CICS today. And the benefit to the business user is that when patterns of interest occur, he receives immediate notification so that he can take the appropriate action.

HOST: [Question 5] Is it difficult for a business user to use WebSphere Business Events?

SME: [Answer 5] No, it is actually rather easy. There is a graphical front end where the user enters the related events that they are interested in, for each set of patterns. So let's use another example, where a business user would want to look for other suspicious activity in the case where a PIN change occurs followed by an attempt of a large cash withdrawal at an ATM machine within 1 day. The business event logic might be named "watch for suspicious activity" It would be related by customer number and be in response to a large withdrawal activity with a recent PIN change. The resulting action would be to deny the withdrawal transaction and initiate an investigation activity. All of this is entered in fields through a graphical interface and is so easy to use. It has to be, because otherwise a business user wouldn't want to bother with it.

And, surely the event pattern recognition could be coded in some application, but that would take time to perform the programming, and then to make changes as required. Plus, it would be difficult to retrieve the events from all the possible disparate applications that are running in the enterprise. The benefit of externalizing this to a product such as WebSphere Business Events is that it is so easy to change existing patterns and add new patterns as they become necessary.

HOST: [Question 6] You mentioned that events from CICS transactions can be used for business event processing. Are there other sources of events that can be used for business event processing?

SME: [Answer 6] Yes, any events that are running in the Common Event Infrastructure can be used for event pattern recognition. That is the beauty of it all - the events can originate from different applications, can come through in random order and still WebSphere Business Events can make sense of it all and notify the business user as it happens.

HOST: [Question 7] How does business event processing work with business activity monitoring?

SME: [Answer 7] Business event processing compliments business activity monitoring. Business activity monitoring, or BAM, provides insight into your currently running business process instances. It shows you, in real time, what is occurring as related to the key performance indicators and metrics that have been set up for monitoring. How business event processing is different, and compliments BAM, is that business event processing tells you when to act upon related events that are occurring in the enterprise. This results in increased business agility, which is what all businesses today are needing to stay ahead of their competition.

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HOST: Thank you Rob, that was really interesting.

SME: Thanks for giving me the opportunity to talk about business event processing for System z.

HOST: Well, that wraps up this podcast discussion. To find out more about the BPM technical seminars I mentioned earlier, please go to the description for this podcast at: <http://www.ibm.com/software/os/systemz/podcasts/websphereonz>

Join us next time as we talk about another important mainframe topic. For now, this is Sherrie Abshire saying "Thanks for listening".