From possibility to actuality

Why social services and social security organizations are turning to SOA

Social services and social security organizations face numerous challenges, including the increasing cost and complexity of their IT systems. A service-oriented architecture (SOA) can help overcome these IT challenges by enabling organizations to optimize their existing IT investments and realize higher levels of efficiency and flexibility.

Public social services and social security organizations face a host of challenges – compelling them to move faster and more flexibly, target services more effectively, concentrate resources on increasing program efficiency and effecting positive client outcomes. Add to these factors the need to adapt quickly to legislative changes and the growing demands for services and benefits – all in the face of shrinking resources – and it's easy to see why administrators and executives are looking for new and better ways of doing business. But the IT systems that enable these programs and services add challenges of their own: increasing complexity and the costs associated with change.

In the field of social services and social security, services may be incorporated into various service plans. For example, the same substance abuse service that is grouped with other services to help prevent child abuse may be re-used

with a different configuration of services to help a person with mental illness live more independently. There are, of course, legal, funding and, in some cases, technology-related constraints that may make it difficult to share services – whether social services or SOA services. SOA provides an approach for organizations to deal with these "technology-related constraints" that can fundamentally change the way social services and social security systems interact, providing an unprecedented level of flexibility for the way social services are delivered and managed.

Can SOA really influence the structure of entire social systems? Can it really change the way that organizations provide benefits and services? And, can it help ensure that clients get the benefits and services that they need, and to which they are entitled? To answer these questions, business leaders must not

only understand what SOA is, but how to apply it strategically in their organization to business problems specific to their industry.

We use three scenarios in the social services and social security domain to show how to apply SOA to problems that are common to most social program areas.

- Using a retirement pension scenario, we show how SOA can enable significant new functionality to IT systems and permit better outcomes, without replacing existing computer systems.

- For managing disability determinations, an SOA approach illustrates that existing single purpose systems could be integrated and used in new ways to help improve service delivery. Benefits and services may be improved and costs held in check by using existing systems more efficiently.

- An unemployment scenario demonstrates how SOA provides access to individual functions within applications – making the operating environment more flexible and providing greater opportunity for business process change.

For each scenario, we describe the business problem and how it works today. We then discuss how the problem could be addressed with an SOA-based approach to technology integration, including how the systems interact using SOA, with terms and diagrams for business executives. We conclude each scenario by discussing the business value of the solution and, in some cases, value brought directly from the use of SOA techniques.

These examples represent just three areas in which SOA can help social services and security organizations meet the needs of the public – faster, more flexibly and more efficiently. Starting small may be the surest path to success. Once you have established an SOA infrastructure and reusable services in one part of your organization, successive projects can build upon that foundation. Although it can't do it alone, SOA can enable social services and social security organizations to fundamentally alter how they collaborate, deliver services and provide benefits.

To request a full version of this paper, e-mail us at iibv@us.ibm.com

How can IBM help?

IBM Solutions: Each scenario in this paper relates to one or more different solutions.

1. Scenario 1: Improving access to retirement pension information
   - Single View of the Citizen
2. Scenario 2: Proactively managing disability eligibility and benefits
   - Integrated Case Management
   - Electronic Case Folder Capabilities from IBM FileNet
3. Scenario 3: Managing unemployment services at the point of contact
   - Integrated Case Management Enterprise Business Architecture.
   - Electronic Case Folder Capabilities from IBM FileNet

The IBM Global Social Segment Practice has a number of case management alternatives. A course of action is ideally chosen using the initial offering, *Integrated Case Management: Enterprise Business Architecture*.

Government industry-specific offerings

- Why Social Segment Organizations are turning to SOA. A workshop built around the content of this white paper.
- Lessons in Integrated Case Management
- Social Services BPM for SOA Implementation Planning

Application Services Offerings:

- Application Development
- Business Application Modernization
- Complex Systems Integration
- Portals & Content Management
- Enterprise Architecture & Technology
- SOA Strategy & Transformation
- SOA Design, Development and Integration Services

Key contacts:

IBM Institute for Business Value:	Richard Disney, *disneyr@us.ibm.com*
Application Innovation Services:	
Global	Geoffrey Vickrey, *GEOFF@jp.ibm.com*
Americas	Roger Letalien, *rletalie@us.ibm.com*
Europe	Jane Slinn, *jane.slinn@uk.ibm.com* and
	Virginia Toural Mendez, *virginia.toural@es.ibm.com*
Asia Pacific	Steve Bingham, *steve.bingham@au1.ibm.com*

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