

How ready are you for operational Service Oriented Architecture (SOA)?

Making a successful transition from SOA pilot to full production

With the growing need for improved business agility and increased IT infrastructure flexibility, many Chief Information Officers (CIOs) have adopted a service-oriented approach to help enable rapid change and drive superior performance. Case studies of SOA pilots suggest CIOs worldwide are encouraged enough to move toward production-level SOA deployments. How can you know if your organisation is ready?

If you're like 96 percent of respondents in a recent IBM survey¹ your SOA projects are either 'very successful' or 'somewhat successful.' However, you may find nagging questions remain as you consider launching a more expansive effort. Did we get it right? Have we achieved the value we anticipated? Can we support projected volumes?

A study from the IBM Academy of Technology² found that CIOs across the SOA continuum consistently identified common critical success factors that help determine readiness for a broader SOA adoption.

Create linkages between IT and business

CIOs should ask probing questions about strategic priorities and evaluate the level of IT support needed to help meet agreed-upon objectives. These 'meeting-of-the-mind' conversations between IT and business, while often challenging, can only improve the company's ability to innovate. When the real benefits of an SOA environment – managing complexity, increasing competitiveness, lowering integration costs – are visible to both IT and business leaders, the initiative will meet with greater success.

Architect for a service-oriented environment

An SOA allows for increased agility, better use of existing business capabilities and improved consolidation across siloed applications and organisations. However, there are significant technical challenges to address.

Whether or not you establish a senior SOA architect role – a best practice – using an SOA reference architecture can provide an expedient starting point. It can also help you track your progress in transforming the enterprise architecture from a traditional point-to-point system to a more modularised, service-oriented state.

Enable the necessary cultural shifts

In an SOA deployment, CIOs should give 'human capital' issues – adaptability, skills and training, available expertise – as much weight as technology decisions and evaluate the organisation's readiness to make significant cultural changes. Cultural shifts like those required for an SOA will



seldom be accomplished in one, smooth transition. Leaders need a measure of resolve and commitment to get through the rough spots.

Assess infrastructure flexibility

Service quality and responsiveness will suffer if your infrastructure cannot deliver the availability and flexibility an SOA environment demands. Sophisticated tools can diagnosis problems and provide insight into service performance issues that can undermine business confidence in SOA and delay Return on Investment (ROI). You should evaluate the potential impact on transaction integrity, the level of virtualisation and capacity for growth.

Manage and deliver services

If there's an area of agreement among CIOs, it's that governance and service management are essential elements. Because so much is new in an SOA – technologies like the enterprise service bus (ESB) and service registry, new roles and responsibilities and new approaches – governance provides the structure required to successfully design, enable, monitor and manage operational-scale SOA systems.

Service management for an SOA helps preserve resiliency in a dynamic system, manage performance and predict and manage change. An SOA approach requires a concerted effort to define service level agreements (SLAs) both by functional requirements and non-functional requirements like availability, continuity, capacity and security.

For more information

CIOs are uniquely positioned to help their enterprises proactively prepare for the future by delivering the IT innovation needed to not just navigate but embrace wide-ranging change. To learn more about how IBM can help you transform your organisation's strategic vision into operational reality by using a service oriented architecture, contact your IBM representative or visit:

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¹ IBM Global CEO Study: The Enterprise of the Future, IBM Institute of Business Value, May 2008.

² Five best practices for deploying a successful service-oriented architecture, IBM, March 2008, http://www-935.ibm.com/services/us/its/pdf/wp_five-best-practices-for-deployingsuccessful-soa.PDF.

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