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# CONVERGENCE

BY DAVID MCGOVERAN



## The Integration Landscape

**W**e've all been told that few EAI projects meet their objectives on time and on budget. Likewise, we've all

heard stories about how massive Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) or Business Process Reengineering (BPR) projects have sometimes taken years to implement and then failed to deliver usable business solutions. Or, perhaps you've heard about an IT outsourcing effort that was brought back in-house. Even traditional enterprise Extract, Load, and Transform (ETL), data warehouse, and data integration projects are being plagued by difficulties as they expand in scope and attempt to address today's requirements. Some corporate Six Sigma quality mandates are so complicated that a new Six Sigma program has been initiated to manage them. And let's not forget the database integration problems facing many government and regulatory agencies as they try to protect the public from terrorism—whether it is financial or political, domestic, or foreign. Hopefully, someone in your organization is asking why such difficulties arise.

On the other hand, you may have noticed that integration efforts, which used to be concerned primarily with technical issues of interoperability, are refocusing on business interoperability. Early on, the primary concerns of integration were to remove the artificial IT barriers that impeded business activities. But over time, a new and more fundamental driver of integration has evolved: It is the need for businesses to remove the artificial operational and business barriers that impede and enmesh business objectives while respecting necessary business constraints.

These two facts jointly bring us to a poignant, perhaps discomfiting, recognition. It's becoming increasingly clear that thinking of business integration in terms of making two or more software applications interoperate is at best myopic and potentially even disastrous. Consider the quintessential use case for business integration as epitomized by mergers and acquisitions, although much the same concerns arise when a company reorganizes. For that matter, the evolution of a company can even be seen as a slow (yes, sometimes painfully slow) process of continual reorganization. For convenience, let's assume that two companies merge. If you've been through it, you may even recognize that the more details you learn about the individual IT systems, the more likely it is that you'll discover difficult integration problems. Without knowing details, are there any aspects of IT that will be immune to the changes required by a merger? Security? System management? Databases? Analytics? Websites? Scheduling? Probably not. And to solve the technical concerns, one must also integrate business issues to obtain an integrated business: organizational structure and process, business process, charter, staff, management styles, and so on.

Indeed, some say the primary cause of the failures previously noted lies in not treating business and technology in an integrated fashion.

There is yet a third fact affecting business integration that needs to be recognized. A few decades ago, it was pretty reasonable to classify computing problems according to processing time requirements. Although we tend to forget the history, much of the characteristics of distributed, server, workstation, personal, and even palm and wireless computing evolved from roots in real-time monitoring and control (both analog and digital). The need to have multi-user operating systems suitable for the purpose, but reliable enough to meet general business computing requirements, began the blurring of batch vs. real-time. The impact of that blurring is far-reaching, and we have yet to see its conclusion.

Taken jointly, these three trends are leading to the convergence of various technologies and business practices previously seen as distinct. Numerous technologies are converging and defining something new. Consider the blurring boundaries between, for example:

- Traditional workflow vs. business process automation
- ETL vs. transactional message delivery and transformation
- Operational activity monitoring vs. enterprise performance management and OLAP
- Information archival and retrieval vs. Web discovery and search.

Although we started as *eAI Journal*, the content of *Business Integration Journal* continues to evolve. Throughout 2004, we've added coverage of new topics as they become important for business integration. With the beginning of 2005, and as a way of drawing attention to the convergence that is taking place, it is my privilege to launch this new column titled "Convergence." Possibly with each issue, but whenever appropriate, *BIJ* will bring you a brief introduction to an important topic not normally considered to be "integration" related. Unlike our familiar columns, "Convergence" will be written by a guest expert. And we have really great experts who have agreed to write for us, so keep a sharp eye on upcoming issues. We think you'll not only be pleased, but also enlightened. **bij**

### About the Author

David McGoveran is president of Alternative Technologies. He has more than 25 years of experience with mission-critical applications and has authored numerous technical articles on application integration.  
e-Mail: [mcgoveran@bijonline.com](mailto:mcgoveran@bijonline.com)  
Website: [www.alternativetech.com](http://www.alternativetech.com)