



NGOSS is the New Mainstream

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NGOSS IS THE NEW MAINSTREAM

Summary:

At the 2007 IPQC Next Gen OSS Integration Summit the clear message was that all the operators now recognize and accept the problems and issues that drove the introduction of NGOSS eight years ago. Further, the standard solution approach is bus facilitated TMF NGOSS architecture using TMF data models and OSS/J interface definitions. But tomorrows solutions will be SOA and web services.

IPQC 2007 Next Gen OSS Integration

Wedge Greene was privileged to stand in for Tim Young of Pipeline who was prevented from attending at the last moment. Tim therefore cannot be completely blamed for this resulting editorial.

In early March 2007 at the Boston airport, Telecom IQ, an IPQC division, hosted their 2nd conference on Next Gen OSS Integration. Last years conference was quite well received. This year's conference was informative, but lacked last years energy and momentum. Attendance was less than expected at around 100, but the caliber of those attending was notable. Service providers were about two fits of the audience; as were those that identified themselves as OSS/BSS vendors. Integrators made up the bulk of the remaining fifth part. There were some outstanding presentations from both the service provider and vendor community, but little new ground was broached. On par, the presentations covered rather well-established ground. But the conference overcame this with lively discussions in the halls and the social gatherings.

The clear conference message was that most all the operators now recognize and accept the problems and issues that drove the introduction of NGOSS eight years ago. Further, the standard solution approach is message-bus facilitated TMF NGOSS architecture using TMF data models and OSS/J interface definitions. *NGOSS is now the new mainstream.* While IPQC carefully referred to the conference as "Next Gen OSS", thereby avoiding the trademark the TMF has on NGOSS, it was clear that the Next Gen was really this past generation. This was punctuated by a well designed and delivered presentation by "Willy" Siebert of Vodafone – who also is also a continuing TMF Board Member.

While always fair and open minded, Willy, eight years ago when NGOSS was first brought to the TMF, was vocally skeptical of NGOSS - because he was not finished exploring TMN approaches. Over the last decade he not only has accepted NGOSS and its foundation ideas, he has become a champion of using them in his company. Willy presented a large project example where Vodafone has implemented OSS/J interfaces into a java message bus for multiple functional services and product lines – basically the TMF ProSSpero approach. Vodafone's audits found that this approach saved them 50% of development capital and ongoing operational costs over the old ways (read point-to-point TMN). "It works. It Really Works!" said an enthusiastic Willy Siebert.

Another mainstream view was delivered by the lauded Dr Dale Skeen, founder of Vitria. He sees the current dominate integration strategy as ESB, but that SOA is the future if it can be tamed with re-use of the governance models and technology that currently controls the ESB message-based architecture. But right now, he finds the chief problem for integration is bad paths in workflow implementations: "Providers spend \$4 billion annually to fix process exceptions" which can be fixed with automated exception handling. He sees SOA as the Wild West, not yet ready for prime time. Business Process Management, using BPEL, will overcome the shortcomings he sees in today's SOA. The natural evolution of integration is stepwise from ESB to BPM and only then to SOA.

Dan Druta an architect with "Cingular, now the new at&t" was in great demand because of his honest assessments and practiced eye for detail. - He appeared on 3 panels. He found that internal turf battles still hold back OSS modernization. He sees vendors in denial that OSS & BSS is becoming a commodity. Druta kept returning to the basic truth that *it is the customer, stupid.* OSS & BSS must be re-conceptualized and redesigned from the perspective of the end consumer of services and must cease being a utility for the operations and accountants of the company. This is the design lesson of web services and his vision for future OSS.

Lessons learned

On the side of light, some simple messages did get delivered. AMDOCs and Telecom Italia saw integration as event-driven and not, as was viewed in the past, data-driven. Vodafone laid it all out so simply to its fellow service providers, “If you do not know your processes, you do not know your business.” Suresh Bhandarkar of Tech Mahindra described OSS delivery as “Expose = create services; Compose = aggregate services with processes; Consume = deploy in bundled units”. We were reminded that events have a finite life-cycle and can have different uses and even meanings in different contexts. Clint Heckel of Verizon Business praised use of the SID and TAM as a way of providing and enforcing IT design standards on the many diverse teams that are occupied within large projects. And the TMF is promising fresh tools with the forthcoming Telecommunications Application Map (TAM) Release 2.

But the darker side of the conference showed that the lessons and designs of NGOSS are not universal. The most general mistake of the majority of presenters was in equating *Architecture* with *Interface Design*. Some presenters used the NGOSS terms, but had not read the documents; for example calling the SID data-model an interface design. Another malapropism was in calling SOA a “philosophy” which so incensed the esteemed Ziaur Rahman of T-Mobile that he responded by recapping the history of Information Technology from machine language to modern times with side branches into epistemology and modern physics. Another problem was in vendors continuing to display the overall OSS/BSS architecture as a TMN inspired pyramid. But worst was the *surprise expressed* that tomorrow’s systems must handle petabytes of data. So there is still work to be done.

Service providers were open about their needs. Dan Druta finds that most operating effort is wasted in today’s OSS & BSS – his operations team must work so hard because his systems are so inefficient. Massimo Albani of Telecom Italia found security sorely missing from OSS/BSS designs. Willy Siebert wants his vendors, current and prospective, to hear the message on what operators really want and need. He still finds this an uphill battle. Fabrice Libon of Sprint Nextel wants a “data-orientated mediation layer where the business units, and not the vendors and IT, own the data.” And Clint Heckel wants more reusable web service solutions. Dr. Lorien Pratt is capturing these needs and trends in a comprehensive study of data needs and uses in OSS/BSS.

Next Years...

But what of the future? Where is the *next* generation, the next 10 years from now, headed? LTC International sponsored a survey to which 60 participants contributed. Respondents, grouped as service providers, OSS/BSS vendors, or Integrators, were asked their views of two forward looking technologies: SOA & IMS. The responses, compiled by Peter Gilligan of LTC, should point the direction to next years Next Gen OSS conference. Vendors see SOA as driving down OSS/BSS costs. Service providers see SOA as enabling significant improvements in OSS/BSS performance. Both acknowledge this leads to new opportunities for service providers, but vendors and integrators see service providers as the main beneficiary of SOA technology. A similar trend was seen with IMS. Service providers are quite optimistic that IMS will lead to new revenues; large service providers especially so. All three groups believed that IMS will reduce service provider’s costs and vendors felt that IMS will lend a degree of protection to service provider business models. Network equipment vendors, who supply the IMS technology today, are expected to profit from IMS as well.

For some participants, the need for better systems design and deployments was presaged by the operational software failure of their airline as they were traveling to the conference – where the planes flew, but not the passengers. But once everyone got to Boston, the message unreeled: Ziaur Rahman said it softly but emphatically, “SOA will lead to profound changes.”



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