Interviewer: So let me now turn to **Rob High**, IBM fellow, chief architect of IBM's SOA Foundation, and also a member of the IBM Academy of Technology, to begin our conversation about Impact and the business and IT values we're gonna get from it.

Rob, these days, as you know, in the economy, many IT architects and technology executives are being challenged to drive more and faster ROI from their SOA investments and, often, with fewer staff. How can IBM Impact help IT professionals faced with that question?

Interviewee: People are always surprised to learn that SOA is much about just exercising good software engineering principles as anything else. And so, if you are already applying good software engineering principles, you're already adapting to the principles of modularity and componentization and isolation and separation of concerns and structured design, then you're already a long ways down the path towards using SOA.

You know, if you're not applying good software engineering principles, then you're gonna be in trouble. You're gonna be in trouble for a lot of reasons, not the least of which is that you're probably building up an inventory of capabilities that may or may not be useful for you over time.

The reason I bring that point up is because there's a lot that can be done, even now, without much more to accelerate the use of SOA and get value from SOA, and it's not as daunting, as expensive as some people might make it out to be.

In any case, it's always a good idea to get some help from other people who are practicing this stuff, and that may be your peers in the industry. It might be other enterprises, other companies who are also exercising SOA, maybe in your own industry, or maybe in other industries, and reaching out to them and getting their ideas about what they've done to try to accelerate the use of SOA and to achieve a higher degree of return from that use.

This Impact conference that's coming up in May, I like it because it has a rich number of topics and sessions that are brought in to cover all aspects of SOA-based development and applying SOA to

achieve higher degrees of return on investment, and it focuses on best practices for both software engineering and SOA in particular.

Just as important is that it's largely based on experiences that other people are having, and so a large number of the sessions that are being organized at Impact are actually sessions where other customers of IBM have come in, and we'll talk about they do and how they leverage SOA and how they've gone about trying to solve the problems of getting better returns from their SOA investments and how to do so with less staff and in a more cost-effective manner.

And so the Impact conference is a great place to learn from others and to gain the benefits of their experiences as you apply those techniques to your own solutions.

Interviewer: That's a great lead-in, Rob, into the Impact agenda. So for folks that want to both communicate better with their fellow IT compatriots, given that resources are strained and they might wanna collaborate better, as well as make those dashboards more compelling for business users, take us through a couple of really cool Impact highlights that people could benefit from quickly after they get back from Impact.

Interviewee: Yeah, very good. And so just to kind of survey a few of the sessions and pull them out at random here, there's sessions that will focus specifically on things that I've talked about before; that is, how to apply the best practices for developing SOA-based solutions. We even have a session where one of our own distinguished engineers will come out and talk about what we've done within IBM to build reusable assets and to leverage those assets for composing capabilities, both within our products as well as the way that we conduct our own businesses.

We also have practitioner sessions that focus on the technology and technique for creating composable monitoring widgets and to assemble those into a dashboard and customize those for individual end users and their particular needs.

We also have some sessions that will focus on how to extract componentry, reusable services, not by creating them from scratch, but rather by leveraging our legacy, our heritage, the applications

that are being used today to run our business. When we step away from those and look at them and think about, I mean, their component parts, it's pretty easy to recognize where there may be capabilities in there that we can simply use. And when we do that, we've accelerated the development and deployment of solutions that use a service-oriented approach and gain advantage back to the business.

So that's just a few of those that are in the agenda for the Impact session. And, again, some of those are actually taught by the technicians, the technologists within IBM, people who are directly responsible for creating product to support customers who build SOA-based solutions. Some of those are taught by our professional practitioners, people who work today in the field with customers on building solutions and, therefore, can share those experiences and knowledge. And, as I said before, a large number of those are actually taught by other customers who also have been practicing the use of SOA for their own business advantage and can share those experiences with other people.

Interviewer: Let's talk a little bit about the way Impact has been structured over the years, especially for this year, of how folks that have a particular agenda item or a particular problem they wanna solve, that Impact is really designed to help that person get some real ROI from their attendance. Talk a little bit about how Impact would help that person basically meet his own agenda if he came.

Interviewee: Yeah. And this, again, is something that I really appreciate about what the organizers for the Impact conference have done. First of all, of course, as you would expect, there's gonna be a large number of sessions that deal with individual topics.

But one of the tools that they provide for attendees is to build their own track, to build their own agenda, to either orient around predefined themes that have already been established with a certain knowledge about what it is that real developers need in order to improve their ability to leverage technology, or you can use that as a template and customize that to include other activities, sessions that are more appropriate for you and your particular set of concerns. That's one thing.

The other thing that is really attractive about Impact is they give an enormous number of opportunities to meet one on one with technical experts. They have a product technology center where you can go in and work with technologists, either around a particular technology, or around technique and practice, so a tech zone where you can just sort of walk in at any time and find experts who are available to walk and talk around a whiteboard setting and have a discussion around whatever topics of mind that you need to get into.

We have one-on-one sessions with an enormous number of the executives that are responsible for the products that we use and develop for enabling SOA.

Interviewer: You know, Rob, hearing you talk about this idea of CAPEX and OPEX conservation and efficiency, it puts me in mind of the slide that you've brought with you about this idea of traditional SOA versus solving SOA for today and tomorrow. I mean, the more you can think ahead and actually think right about a problem solution, you're gonna get efficiencies by definition. It almost looks like a roadmap to Impact to me. Maybe take me through these areas and line them up for folks to attend Impact.

Interviewee: Yeah. In our experience, working with customers with SOA, we've kind of boiled down sort of five key building blocks to successful SOA, and each of these tools can be treated sort of as an entry point, a particular area to start with, but, in fact, over a period of time, you'll find yourself dealing with each of these five things in turn.

And just to kind of take you through them, the first one having to do with reuse, of course, we talk about reuse, and in the old days, reuse was somewhat limited to just simply reusing skills. As we move forward in SOA, the idea is to reuse functional elements that have a strong correlation and relevance to the business that enables the business to actually be more efficient.

And so, as we look at Impact and the kinds of sessions we have there, we talk about, you know, what are the techniques for design and analysis for identifying what are those reusable elements within the application? What of those reusable elements gives you the best advantage in creating new solutions for new business

products or for addressing changes in your business that you need to be able to respond to quickly, both in your business, as well as the information systems that support that?

We talk about connectivity, the ability to get away from these point-to-point connections hard-coded into application design to a capability that allows services to be exploited anywhere at any time, and as we move through that, recognizing that dynamism is a principle characteristic that needs to be supported in the connectivity between services. We need to be able to rapidly identify where services are, be able to exchange one service with another.

And, again, the Impact conference has sessions that speak directly to, for example, the federation of service buses, or to enabling dynamism within your service bus for connectivity between services and, in doing so, increasing the robustness and reliability of the system in the presence of those kinds of changes.

Interviewer: You know, this is a great view of Impact, Rob, for the architect. And I see that you've also taken the same philosophy toward CTOs and architects that need to surface information for the business user.

Interviewee: Yeah. And one of the mistakes I think people make when they think about service orientation is presume that somehow, the information is subservient to the services, that information in some sense doesn't really belong. And yet, it's actually a critical element to any solution, that most services, in fact, not only depend on information, but are often structured around the information that's relevant to the business.

We actually elevate information as a service, as a first-class consideration within SOA's solutions-based design. And by information here, of course, what I mean is data in the context of its use, the way that the application or, even more so, the business end user, thinks about the data that they care about.

We have sessions that target not only how to identify information and render information as a service, in doing so, encapsulating all of the characteristics of quality enhancement and enrichment that go into the use of the information, recognizing the dependencies

that we have on that information to be accurate, and create a sense of trust.

Those are the things that we talk about, not only on the technique for how to do that, but the importance of doing that, and we even discuss some of the technologies that are available to help address elevating data to having a secure sense of trustworthiness within the applications that leverage the information they represent.

Interviewer: And, of course, where there's information, there's people. Take me through that one.

Interviewee: Human beings are an important element to the business process, and so being able to model what people do and how they interact with each other and how they perform activities as a member of the process is just as important as the parts of the processes that we're automating in information system.

Within the portfolio, we have things like the WebSphere Portal. We have the Lotus Expediter. We have a set of Lotus Collaboration Services. We also have a capability that I alluded to earlier that we deliver through WebSphere Compass and the WebSphere business monitor, a set of user interface widgets that you can mash up and compose to build new dashboards, but you can also use to enable business people to have access to their process, their process design, their process state, to know where that process is in its execution, to know who has been assigned tasks within that process, and all of that's incorporated within the WebSphere Business Compass arena.

And, again, we have sessions that will deal with these technologies and how to apply them and how to get the best advantage from them that accelerates and supports those relationships.

Interviewer: You know, speaking of the word, "accelerate," it does sound like IBM has structured IBM Impact this year to be an SOA accelerator for success as far as showing folks the technology, how it's been put to use, folks that have successfully been able to measure their results. I mean, it really does seem as though, for the three or four days I might be in Las Vegas, I could really save myself three or four months of confusion and working down some dead ends.

Interviewee: Yeah, very interesting analogy. Yes, we are – Impact is loosely coupled and strongly coherent.

Interviewer: Like many of the folks that work at IBM and many of the attendees at Impact. Rob High, chief architect and technologist for SOA Foundation. Thanks very much for taking so much time today and for taking us through a terrific view of the hands-on aspects and the ROI from Impact.

Interviewee: Very good, man. Thank you.

[End of Audio]

Duration: 15 minutes