IBM

WebSphere® software

Software solutions to help integrate the extended enterprise.

Software solutions to help integrate the extended enterprise

Business changes at an incredible pace. Forces—e-business, globalization, consumer power and competitive advantage—define and redefine the global business landscape. You need to leverage these forces to reap the business opportunities they create. And to stay a step ahead of your competition.

New e-business opportunities and strategies make the integration of applications—legacy and new—more critical than ever. To help ensure success, you'll need to integrate diverse computing environments and present customized information to your customers, trading partners and employees.

Make your resources work for you

Business integration is about enabling people and computing resources—inside and outside your organization—to work together to support your business strategy. Most companies have a mix of computer systems. All of which need to communicate with each other across platforms and networks. But investments in upgrading your legacy applications can be expensive and time-consuming. The IBM WebSphere® software platform for e-business can help you deploy e-business solutions in these diverse computing environments.

Business integration can provide significant value to your company by helping to:

- *Unite diverse businesses so you can deliver products to market faster.*
- *Derive a single view of each customer so you can better service that customer's needs.*
- *Cross-sell products and services through a better understanding of your customers' purchase patterns to drive new revenue.*
- *Link the Web to your business strategy and expand business opportunities.*
- *Synchronize your supply chain to reduce costs.*
- *Respond quickly to business changes.*

IBM solutions for business integration build upon the WebSphere software platform for e-business to align technology with dynamic business goals. We help you create a consistent computing environment that supports your business strategy. Without having to replace applications, install new systems or recruit employees with highly specialized skills sets.

Business integration: overcoming barriers to success

Many examples of lost business opportunities can be attributed to difficulties integrating different information technology (IT) systems. Two large savings and loan organizations, for example, canceled a corporate merger after it was discovered their IT systems were incompatible. An electrical goods manufacturer purchased an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, but found the cost to integrate it with other systems 10 times greater than the ERP system itself. An auto manufacturer invested in an appealing Web site, but then lost customers because its IT department couldn't properly integrate the Web with back-end order systems.

Challenges like these require you to adapt and connect existing systems to accommodate new business approaches to your supply chain and customer service. And do it with speed and flexibility.

Drivers for business integration

Business integration is one of the most important priorities facing companies today. New trends challenge an organization's ability to focus its resources—computer and human—on tasks related to market pressures:

- *e-business is attracting new Web customers from around the world. Customers expect the same level of service online as they receive through traditional channels.*
- *Globalization of markets and brands is compelling companies with international reach to act as one unified and integrated operation. Consumers view these organizations as single entities, with consistent worldwide brands.*

- *A shift from product to market focus is taking place. The demands of sophisticated consumers have created many product alternatives, tailored to different market segments. Companies must understand customers and offer the appropriate products through different channels.*
- *Competitiveness is reaching new dimensions. Increased cost pressures bring attention to every part of the value chain. New competitors enter the market daily. And time to market in a digital world is shortened. In this marketplace, smaller producers cannot compete without easy access to new markets and vastly reduced overhead.*

The challenge of diverse IT systems

How is it that the same computer systems that brought giant strides in efficiency and speed within your organization make integration with your customers, trading partners and suppliers so challenging?

The answer is diversity. IT systems consist of a broad mix of hardware, operating systems and software that needs to work together, but often doesn't. Previously, building collaborative relationships among these components took extensive skills, broad experience and many resources.

But diversity doesn't have to present so many challenges. It provides choice, competitive pricing and wider opportunities to fit solutions to needs. In the IT realm, one size definitely does not fit all. That's why you might have three or even more computing platforms in your organization. And the same is true of the companies you want to build relationships with.

Six business integration issues

The benefits of business integration—and of e-business—are apparent in the context of six business issues that are the target of much attention today. These opportunities—Web exploitation, mergers and acquisitions, customer relationship management (CRM), ERP, supply chain management (SCM) and straight-through processing—are likely to require the integration of the information and processes that run your business.

- *Web exploitation. The most difficult challenge facing many companies is the integration of their Web sites with their existing enterprisewide systems. But e-business is more than just connecting your customer with Web-enabled facilities. It demands a Web infrastructure that supports business strategy. It exploits the immediacy of the Web to offer innovative and compelling services. And it enables you to build new and dynamic relationships with your customers.*

- *Mergers and acquisitions. A merger or acquisition leverages the strengths of two companies. The effects of the new relationship can be far-reaching when you consider the integration or consolidation of business processes, assets and cultures. Inadequate planning and execution may jeopardize the benefits of the merger. Successful business integration can create opportunities to cross-sell, enhance service and reduce costs.*
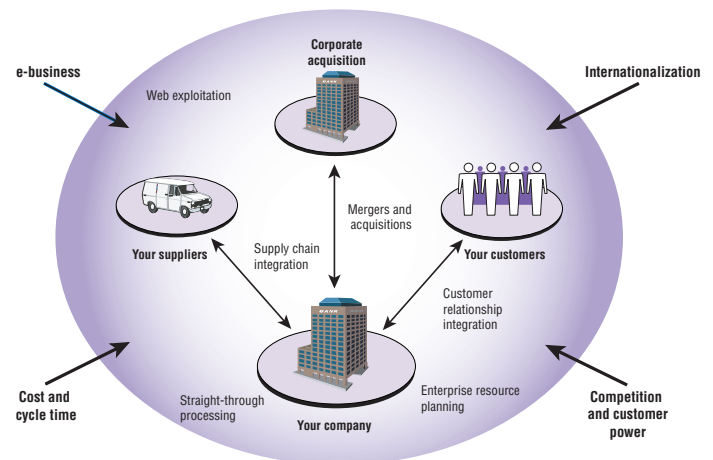

Figure 1. Business integration issues created as a result of corporate relationships and external pressures

- *Customer relationship management. In a world of plentiful commodities, expanded market reach and intense global competition—factors that give your customers an abundance of choices and opportunities, the service that you provide might just be the ingredient that sets your organization apart from its competitors. And for most businesses, customer service is the critical element in corporate survival. Excellent customer service requires flexible, speedy, responsive IT systems. Business integration can leverage accumulated customer information by integrating front-end systems with corporate back-end IT systems and provide you with a consolidated view of customers and markets.*

- *Enterprise resource planning. An integrated enterprise system is the vision of ERP. But vision and reality are often separated by a myriad of technical issues and cost constraints. Technology issues—applications linked to a new ERP system or extended to supply chain partners—often derail ERP projects. But ERP handles only a subset of your total business processes—processes that stretch from customer-facing systems to suppliers. Business integration can offer rapid linkage between packaged and legacy applications with minimum risk. And can help you leverage best-of-breed components—or even your existing applications—to achieve the same benefits as an ERP package.*

- *Supply chain management. Efficient e-business supply chains are crucial to gaining competitive advantage. The obvious benefits are reduced inventory and improved cash flow. But other benefits can surface as well, from satisfied customers to greater control of inventory and manufacturing processes.*

- *Straight-through processing. Straight-through processing is a requirement of the finance industry, where the relationship between trader and broker depends on speed and reliability. Straight-through processing can help reduce the cost of delays and potential for human error by automating the information flow from data capture to confirmation processing.*
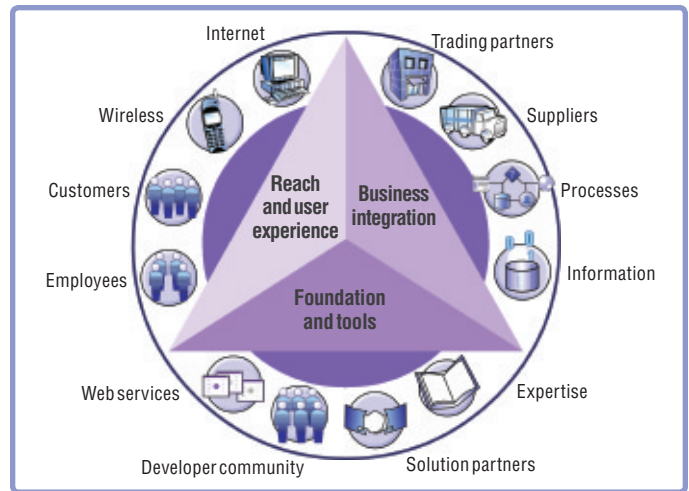

Figure 2. The WebSphere software platform for e-business

IBM solutions for business integration

The WebSphere software platform for e-business is the foundation of IBM business integration solutions. Using WebSphere software you can unify key business information by connecting applications throughout your enterprise. And you can harness the power of packaged applications and legacy systems by coordinating processes across multiple applications. With control over your corporate information firmly in hand, you can enhance your customer relationships with high-quality, relevant information.

Business integration from WebSphere software can stretch your reach beyond the organization to help create an extended supply chain, information flow with security between connected trading partners. Connect almost any client—employee, customer or trading partner—to nearly any information on virtually any server. And aggregate and personalize this information and these processes. IBM CrossWorlds® software delivers proven integration patterns—for linking applications or systems and integrating and automating business processes—that allow you to implement reliable, low-risk solutions. You are assured the high-performance reliability and scalability that you've come to expect from IBM solutions.

IBM solutions for business integration go beyond WebSphere software. Tivoli® software solutions from IBM help you to deploy an e-business infrastructure with confidence by providing centralized security management and access control. Companies can quickly implement secure e-business applications, allow consistent enforcement of security and privacy policies and provide centralized enterprise risk management.
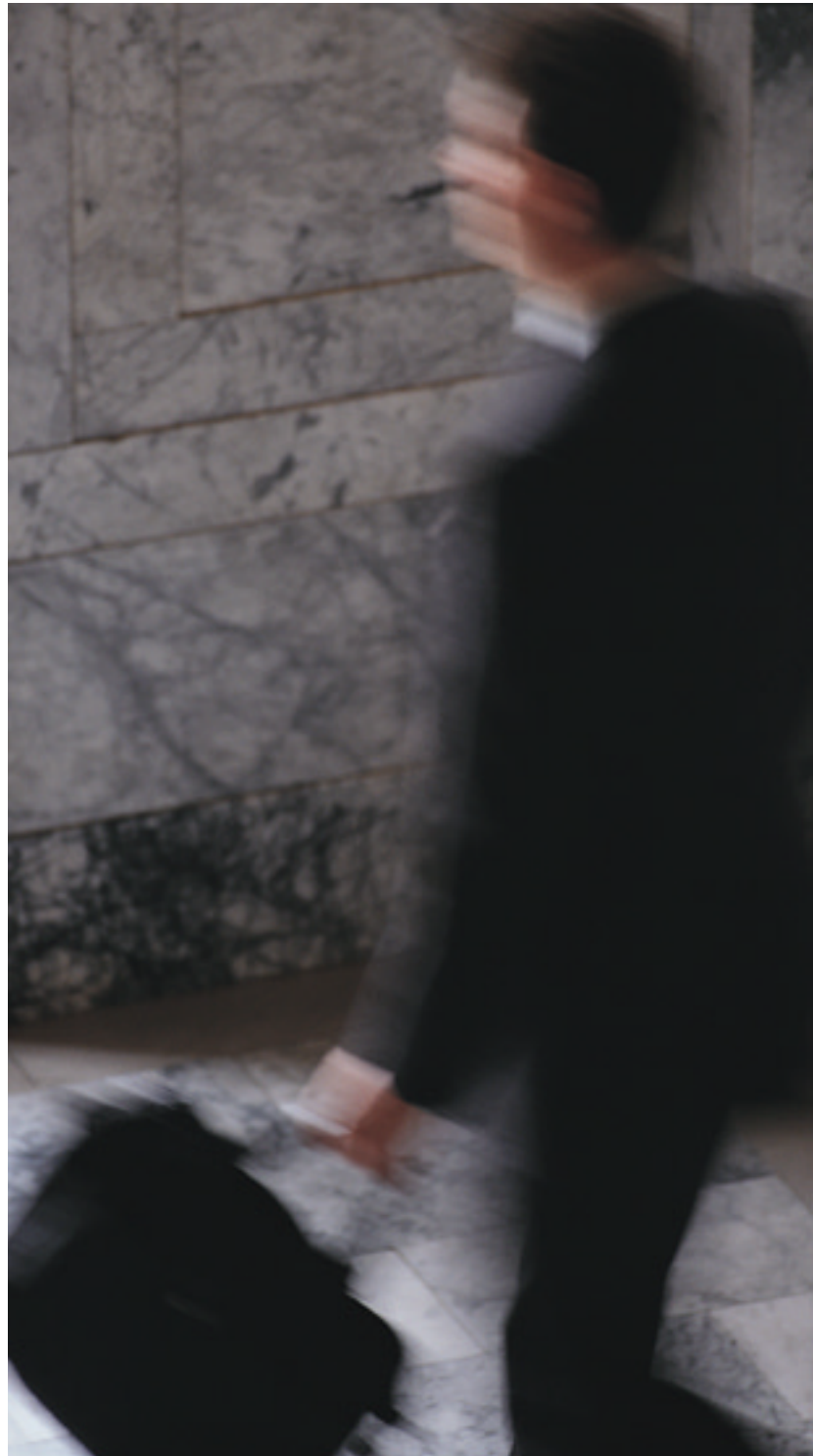
For more information

IBM solutions for business integration have helped thousands of customers balance the needs of business within diverse IT environments. The platform independence of WebSphere software allows you to create a consistent computing environment, helping you to integrate your systems across all major operating systems. With IBM solutions for business integration, you can help lower your costs and reduce risks in your move to e-business.

WebSphere software can give you the flexibility to respond quickly and efficiently to business demands. Implement cross-enterprise business solutions that work for you. And do it without having to replace applications, install new systems or seek specialized skills sets.

For more information about WebSphere software and business integration solutions, visit:

ibm.com/websphere/integrationinfo

IBM®

*e*business software