

# Service Oriented Architecture

*Integrating Business and Technology*

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## 1. What is SOA?

Enhancing the user experience, achieving greater business efficiencies and reducing human error are key drivers for any business. But how can you achieve this kind of idealism with today's technology that spans numerous applications with discrete functionalities that don't fit the businesses process?

A Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) is an IT infrastructure that links together a number of business services and re-uses existing assets to create a complete business workflow. Most internal business processes are typically restricted by the boundaries of the functionality contained within each discrete application. In reality, most business processes will span numerous applications, departments and stakeholders.

SOA typically integrates relevant blocks of functionality from each application to create a complete business flow. Take a 'simple' process such as requesting details of a customer's last purchase; A standalone package may provide an order management interface, or perhaps initiate an accounting application showing the transaction. A fully integrated architecture could systematically supply that information, together with an extended view of the customers' transactions, personal details and relationships with each part of the business.

Through integrating disparate parts of each business service into a business workflow an SOA can add value across the entire business and its key stakeholders from supplier to end user.

## 2. Advantages

Two of the major business advantages gained from a shift to a SOA are:

- Increased business agility – existing business processes can be changed in the minimum amounts of time and with minimal risk. Blocks of functionality within each business unit can be mixed and matched independently of where they've come from, or where they're based.
- New application functionality - new business processes can be built as the business changes to ensure maximum efficiency and returns from IT investment. The concept of services combining into business processes is much closer to the way decision makers think, so they can define new processes and have them implemented much more quickly than with traditional approaches.

Through integrating disparate parts of each business service into a business workflow an SOA can add value across the entire business and its key stakeholders from supplier to end user. Strategic decisions can be made confidently with relevant, up to date information about an organisation and its markets delivered to an appropriate portal, web browser, PDA or mobile phone.

A 'bottom up' approach, put together piece by piece, SOA is constructed specifically for an organisation by inextricably linking all applications, micro-processes and systems under one highly available and ever-changing information interface. This creates a single, manageable super-process such as 'procure-to-pay' that is without limitations or constraints, meeting the particular information requirements of a business on a daily basis.

### 3. Practical Steps on the Road to SOA

#### 3.1 - Conduct an impact analysis

SOA is a wide ranging change of business processes, impacting on every corner of the organisation. Before developing a full implementation plan, firstly conduct an initial impact analysis to research what the impacts will be to your organisation and the way it operates.

An impact analysis will usually involve:

- Overview of current and upcoming development tools
- Infrastructure requirements
- Training requirements
- Any changes to middleware
- Proposed new processes
- Recommended improvements to security models and policies

#### 3.2 - Set the Parameters

Primarily using the impact analysis, consider the internal and external factors that will shape how the SOA will actually sit within your organisation.

Budgetary constraints and strategic business goals are factors that will determine the size and scope of your implementation. Don't be afraid to limit the initial roll-out of a new SOA to the areas of the business that have the greatest need for it. It may also be that there are departments or processes within the business that do not require any amendments to existing processes.

### **3.3 - Involve yourself with a “can do” project team**

Process automation can throw up all manner of challenging scenarios and problems to overcome. When moving to a SOA, ensure that you put together a project team with the right attitude, people who fully endorse and understand the principles and business drivers of a fully integrated system.

### **3.4 - Evolution is inevitable**

SOA by its very definition is an infrastructure that is geared for the future. When developing a SOA you are looking at current and projected needs for your business. However, there's nothing more certain than change - and flexibility needs to be built in to your implementation to enable ongoing changes to your processes, reflecting any possible changes to your organisation or its markets.

### **3.5 Growth is not limited to implementation phase**

The growth of your environment will mainly take place within the first few months of a new SOA, but careful attention must also be paid to the post-introductory phase.

Examine what resources you will need to maintain and expand on these environments, carrying forward the momentum gained from implementing a new solution in to a continuous improvement cycle processes.

### 4. What Makes Teamsolve the Best in the Business?

Teamsolve have an intricate understanding of the SOA concept, and have experience of implementations spanning organisations of all types and sizes. From multi-national financial institutions, to small single site manufacturers our specialised team get to know the ins and outs of your organisation, tailoring an integrated architecture to suit your business perfectly.

We have a dedicated team of highly skilled business analysts and developers. We work strategically to assess your requirements, and build a robust and scaleable SOA solution that could significantly improve the way in which your business uses information.

Teamsolve are able to quickly and efficiently review the current environment, quiz key business users and understand the overall organisation's goals and suggest ways to improve functionality based upon delivering real business value. processes.

We have offices in both Derby and London and have clients all over the UK and world. Contact us today for more tailored information on how Teamsolve can improve your business productivity, streamline your IT procedures and boost your service levels.

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