

Pipeline

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Pipeline's 2007 Next Gen OSS Integration Summit Retrospective

by Tim Young, with a special commentary by Wedge Greene

When asked by Pipeline about Intelliden's choice to attend IQPC's Next Gen OSS Integration Summit, Ann Latham says it comes down to the show's "laser-like focus" and its ability to bring in a qualified audience at the director level and above. Latham, Intelliden's Director of Corporate Marketing echoes a sentiment held by many who attended the second Next Gen OSS event, held March 5-7 in Boston. The show had between 100 and 140 attendees, depending on who is doing the counting, so raw numbers couldn't have been a major draw for anyone who attended. However, for companies like Intelliden, the focus is the thing. Like many companies, Intelliden has taken on the strategy of focusing on specific shows for specific content.

So are shows drawing in a hundred people worth the time, effort, and money it takes to attend? That all depends on which hundred people show up. According to Larry Ehrhardt, Senior Director of Communication and Media Solutions for Vitria, everyone wished the show's numbers had been larger, but the mix of vendors to SPs was very desirable at around 50-50. Furthermore, Ehrhardt asserted that this show attracted the buyers and decision-makers. In the boutique setting, vendors like Vitria were able to speak to every service provider and demonstrate their products to them. Latham agreed, saying that the event was superior, in terms of quality of attendees, to much larger shows. She mentioned a recent IPTV show in London that brought in around 2500 attendees, and said that most of them were "worker bees." The Next Gen OSS show, in her mind, succeeded where the other show had failed. The Next Gen OSS Summit's organizers strive to attract attendees from among service providers' decision makers at the Director and VP level.

Vitria, like Intelliden, was one of the show's sponsors. Vitria used the opportunity to hint at a press release that was not officially released until March 19, which dealt with the launch of Business Accelerator, which they promote as the industry's first open, agnostic enterprise-class integration suite built from the ground up for Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA) and Event-Driven Architecture (EDA).

Ehrhardt also asserted that an intimate show like the Next Gen OSS Integration Summit discourages vendors from "power point noise" and the flashy sales gimmicks seen at the largest events and allows for candid discussions, product

demos and case studies. That, according to Event Chair Norman Rice, III of CA, is part of the point. As he stated in the pre-show piece on the event that ran in Pipeline back in February, the goal of this show was to allow vendors an opportunity to listen, learn, and discuss the major trends within the industry. The show was also an opportunity, according to Rice, for CA to really establish itself as a fixture in this space, and maintain brand awareness. While everyone in the industry has, no doubt, heard of CA, many aren't sure what their role is in the OSS space. CA saw this show as an opportunity to amend that, but also to really devote time and energy to promote discussion and debate in real-world terms.

In that regard, according to Rice, the show was a success. As an outgrowth of the numerous panels present throughout the event, a level of honesty and open discourse was reached that was beneficial to all involved.

John Petrie of Progress Software moderated a panel on tackling data integration for OSS. According to Progress Software's Olaf Kexel, the general consensus among SPs is that data management is very important, but hasn't been given the attention it deserves. The Data Integration panel included representatives from AT&T, BT, and Verizon, which is indicative of exactly the kind of service provider input that made this event worthwhile. It's easy to get vendors to talk about solutions, but when SPs can talk about problems in a realistic and honest way, that makes for informative programming. One source talked of having meaningful conversations with reps from BT, Verizon, AT&T, Vodafone, Telecom Italia and T-Mobile, all within a relatively short timeframe.

That level of open discourse helped to unearth a few key issues. According to several individuals present, the need for standards was very much a part of the discourse. While standards have been an issue for years, the conversations were less hypothetical at this event, and more focused on action. "It was a call to arms," said Rice.

The issue of governance came up at the event. Whereas different technologies have existed on an abstract level for a long time now, the time has come in the eyes of many to move beyond lip-service and focus on concrete policies for how systems will interact. This idea was highlighted in the comments of Vodafone's Karl-Wilhelm Siebert. Siebert's comments, according to Rice and Venugopal, were yet another example of the opinion that there are not enough practical examples of NGOSS out there. The broad swipe that has been made thus far is a step in the right direction, but not nearly enough. The reality of the network today is what many, before and during the event, refer to as spaghetti code.

Several parties present also pointed to the fact that the discourse was very related to the business side of OSS, rather than the technical side. While some considered this an advantage, others considered it a drawback. One might imagine that the split comes down to what part of the office the speaker works in.

In addition to the theoretical benefits of open discussion, many vendors present were able to turn that into an opportunity. "We met with decision makers of leading global operators discussing their challenges" said Joe Frost, VP of Marketing and Alliances for JacobsRimell, "and our approach seemed to align with their future

business strategies.”

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The speakers were informative, according to most sources. Rice, along with his colleague Venu Venugopal, seemed impressed with a number of the speakers, including Telenor's Harry Moen. Moen spoke about fraud, highlighting that telecoms lose over \$170 Billion annually, largely due to the gaming of interconnect contracts.

In addition, JacobsRimell CTO David Jacobs discussed how the growth in the number and complexity of products and services for residential and business customers is driving the need for consolidation and management of customer information. Intelliden's Ann Latham also presented in conjunction with Syndesis's Andy Fraley, which is a new partnership for the two companies. Their joint talk included information about delivery time, real-time provisioning, and SOA.

As event chair, Rice took the opportunity during his closing words, to issue a challenge. In the next year, he challenged all those present to set levels for the integration of NGOSS technology, and to work towards achieving those levels. In his view, and in the view of many, it is a now-or-never scenario.

It seems that the 2007 Next Gen OSS Integration Summit drew a crowd that, though small in number, was equally dedicated to authentic direction. In the end, this focus was the key selling point of the show. It was this focus that brought Vitria, which was a sponsor of the last Next Gen OSS Integration Summit, back with an upgraded sponsorship and an address from their CEO. According to Vitria, even medium-sized show like TMW can be somewhat overwhelming with multiple streams of session topics. Many attendees seem to have agreed and expressed approval that all of the attendees were there to focus on the same things.

As a special feature, we asked Analyst, Industry Veteran, and regular Pipeline contributor Wedge Greene to put together a perspective piece that displays his take on the show. While a lesser editor would assert that the views of Wedge Greene aren't necessarily those of Pipeline, anyone familiar with his work in this publication or elsewhere knows that Mr. Greene's opinions are often insightful, sometimes controversial, but always unique. As a result, the fact that Wedge's opinions are his

own goes without saying.

Enjoy.



Business Operations Architects



IPQC 2007 Next Gen OSS Integration By Wedge Greene, LTC International

In early March 2007 at the Boston airport, Telecom IQ, an IPQC division, hosted their 2nd conference on Next Gen OSS Integration. Last year's conference was quite well received. This year's conference was informative, but lacked last year's energy and momentum. Attendance was less than expected at around 100, but the caliber of those attending was notable. Service providers were about two fifths 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. However, 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.

While always fair and open minded, Willy was vocally skeptical of NGOSS eight years ago when NGOSS was first brought to the TMF 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. 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 Siebert.

Another mainstream view was delivered by the lauded Dr. Dale Skeen, founder of Vitria. He sees the current dominant 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. Right now, however, 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. Once everyone got to Boston, the message unreeled: Ziaur Rahman said it softly but emphatically, "SOA will lead to profound changes."

If you have news you'd like to share with Pipeline, contact us at editor@pipelinepub.com.