



Applications
Symposium Community

Trip Report

Applications Symposium Community

Members: 216

Key Takeaways

In keeping with the theme of emerging trends, key sessions focused on emerging technologies and practices that are shaping the future of applications. Among the most compelling topics were digital natives, social networks, mashups, communities, Web 2.0, innovation and open source software (OSS). These trends threaten the centralized control of the IT organization. The attitudes of young IT workers, provisioning the workforce, user needs, reporting structures, customer expectations — all are changing fast. Many attendees responded by asking: “How are we going to manage all of this?” Companies must change their management disciplines to keep up. In a matrix organization, for example, how do you manage IT staff that spends half its time working on projects that are owned by other managers? You have to build frameworks of trust for people who never see each other. The key takeaway is that communities, mashups and all of the other “problems” are also solutions that application organizations must employ in order to succeed.

Conference Highlights

How to Manage Open-Source Software in the Enterprise

Ignoring OSS will put companies at a disadvantage against competitors who are exploiting mature open-source technologies. OSS must be managed alongside existing enterprise software assets. While OSS may be free of charge, it is not free of challenges. For example, OSS is actually licensed software, so organizations must monitor downloads and ensure employees don't use OSS code without permission. How do you know if OSS is right for your application? Four factors should drive your OSS adoption decisions:

- Fitness of purpose
- Maturity of your applications environment
- Your technology adoption profile — are you an early, mainstream or late technology adopter?
- Deployment scenario

Enterprise Mashups: Applications That Change as Fast as Your Business Environment

The speaker started the session with this statement: “By 2010, we will enter the era of user-assembled applications.” The speaker then asked how many people agree (over half raised their hands) and disagree with this statement (only 10% raised their hands). Competition will drive you toward enterprise mashup capabilities. In 2008, mashups are good for geo-location visualization, making portals more flexible, projecting a Web presence, extending packaged applications and situational awareness. Stay tuned for more applications as products to support enterprise mashups emerge. Mashups bring yet another style of application to an already crowded and diverse environment. Recommendations:

- Review your applications portfolio and backlog for mashup applicability
- Create a repository of mashable components
- Evaluate highly dynamic processes for mashup use

Beyond Consumerization: The Socialization of IT

There's a disconnect in application organizations with regard to consumerization. A Gartner survey found that 36% of organizations ban access to social sites like Facebook while 80% say innovation and collaboration are important to them. Consumerization of IT is an attitude — it is not just about technology. It reflects the need for participation, the sense of being part of a community. Companies must understand the growing impact of consumerization. They cannot treat employees differently from their consumers because employees are consumers when they leave the workplace. To align your practices on consumerization with your desire for innovation, review existing policies toward personal infrastructure to determine whether they are adequate and progressive.

The Facebook Phenomenon and the Emerging Social Platform Wars

In this session, 80% to 90% of attendees said they had accounts at a social networking site. The Web is evolving from content objects to social objects. You need to create a digital model of the world of people and their interactions. Enterprise collaboration suites and portals will add “Facebook features” such as profile pages, activity streams, contacts lists and social searches. Key takeaways:

- Think of social software as a platform, not just an application.
- Assess your vendors’ ecosystems as a social platform.

Mastering Business Innovation: How Winners Succeed

In 2008, most organizations will search for disruptive innovations, but most success will come from incremental innovation. Among the strongest trends in innovation are designing robust innovation networks; recognizing barriers to innovation and developing “accelerators” to break them down; and formalizing “voice of the customer.” Procter & Gamble is using innovation networks with the objective of acquiring half its innovations from outside its organization. Bank of America has honed its “voice of the customer” practices to increase customer satisfaction and thereby has increased revenue from those customers. Among the implications of these trends are:

- If you don’t tap your customer, partner and employee ideas, others will.
- Successful innovation demands intentional design, structure and leadership.

Recommendations:

- Ask for top-level commitment to innovation. Don’t start a program without it.
- Attend to your weakest areas when building innovation programs. Technology is your strong point.

Keynotes

Welcome Address

CEOs want cost reduction, more flexibility, support for growth from the IT organization, regardless of the economy. That’s why 80% of CIOs expect major changes during the next three years — 40% of CIOs expect transformational change, according to Gartner’s latest CIO Survey. Expect old metrics (such as IT spending as percentage of revenue) to give way to new metrics (such as IT spending needed to gain new clients). Seventy percent of CIOs say their organizations don’t have the right skills to create the needed change. Therefore:

- Focus on pivotal roles and competencies
- Capitalize on talent globally
- Make IT attractive to digital natives

Analyst Keynote: Technology-Enabled Business Acceleration

Be counter-intuitive — while cutting costs, have other staff prepare for the return to growth. If you wait until the recession ends, you’ll lose months of opportunity. Schedule meetings with business executives to go over the project portfolio and decide what to keep and what to cut. Web 2.0 enables amazing productivity. Plenty of Fish, a dating site, has 2.5 million users per month, generates \$10 million a year in revenue, and is run by one full-time and one half-time worker. You need to figure out how to employ IT resources for competitive advantage. For example, a context-aware network would know where you are, what you’re doing and what you need. You also need to provide mass-produced, repeatable services, not technology, to the business by:

- Developing a usage measure like the kilowatt-hour.
- Changing the IT workforce from caretakers to service managers.

CIOs and other leaders need superlative communication and an ability to influence throughout the enterprise.

Keynote Panel: A Look Into the Labs

Gartner analysts interviewed four research leaders from major IT vendors:

- Rich Friedrich, HP Labs
- David Douglas, Sun Labs
- Guido Jouret, Cisco Emerging Technologies Group
- Steve Hoover, Xerox Labs

What are you working on now?

Friedrich said consumerization is the next big thing for HP — figuring out how enterprises can integrate consumer devices and technologies for business purposes. This includes location-based and context-sensitive services. Jouret said that Cisco is working on technology for distance collaboration that includes things like connected whiteboards that allow two engineers to work on the same drawing simultaneously. Also, Cisco is working on a “HealthPresence Pod,” a kiosk with connectors for medical equipment, such as a stethoscope or blood pressure cuff, that allow doctors to examine patients over distances. He said enterprises need to ask themselves, “Where do you collaborate?” to make the most of this kind of technology.

What technologies outside your own labs impress you?

Jouret: Advances in the automation of programming. Neural network models may help develop more sophisticated applications.

What is most important to drive innovation?

Strong enterprise leadership with vision, good communication and networking inside the enterprise. Hoover said: "Above all, know your customers."

What People Asked About

How do you get business-oriented executives to consider OSS?

Establish the business value of OSS. Show executives how it can help your company achieve a competitive advantage. Explain your case in terms that executives understand, such as total cost of ownership and quality. Also, show them what the big vendors such as IBM and Microsoft are doing with OSS — all major vendors have it in their product portfolios.

What do we lose from mashups? What about security?

Mashups run on Internet standards such as Web-oriented architecture and HTTPS. That part is not a security challenge. Single sign-on for mashed up applications from multiple sources is a challenge. In terms of governance, recognize that you have to give up some control. Give users a service-level agreement for gadgets that you're comfortable with, but not all of them. Take gadgets under your control when they achieve widespread use within the enterprise.

Is there a gender gap in gaming, and what is the implication for business?

Some companies are already using gaming to train executives. In addition, your middle managers probably play online games that build skills valuable for the business — but they don't like to admit it to you. For example, a Level 60 Guildmaster in World of Warcraft selects a combat team from among his wider contacts, motivates them, and maneuvers them against the opposition. This is not far different from project management. The gender gap is actually small, with men making up only a little over half of players. Women predominate on social networking sites.

How do we overcome the perception that we're not innovative but focused on operations?

IT organizations don't have this problem if their CIOs have credibility with the business. Look at your internal processes and capabilities. If you're not engaging with the business and delivering projects on time, you lose credibility.

How separate should innovation teams be from operations?

Of course, you should have to have a core of people who are good at innovation on your teams, but you should never turn down volunteers. If innovation teams get a reputation for being elite, that will make it harder for operations teams to accept innovations. So you need to get buy-in from the operations teams or perhaps transfer members of the innovation team to operations. Diversity counts. You need people who know the business purpose for the innovation, who focus on the business. That means involving a variety of roles: marketing, your retailers and so on.

Things to Watch For

Digital Natives: Companies will have to learn to accommodate digital natives. They have grown up with technology, so they don't view it as "technology" but as just stuff. They use it without thinking as the way to get things done. In fact, they don't even understand technology; they accept it as given. If you close down social network sites such as Facebook, they'll go work somewhere else. That would place you at a competitive disadvantage in the battle for talent.

Social Networks: The phenomenal growth of social networks is something to reckon with. The typical successful social network peaks at 5 million subscribers and 500,000 active users. It hasn't hit the enterprise yet, but it's coming. There are 80 different white-box tools that allow companies to develop their own social networks. Invest in instrumenting code to find out what users are doing and then adjust the site to facilitate the activities. Don't just blindly add functions.

Mashups: The key application will be situational awareness. Mashups allow users to assemble applications from disparate sources to gain insight that can help them with their tasks. Another advantage is the long tail. Enterprise developers build 20% of the applications that workers could use. Mashups address the other 80% with more specialized applications.

Web 2.0: This is about using communities to speed innovation, improve processes and so on. The first impulse of many IT organizations is to shut down or try to control communities. They view it as a threat — a time waster or a way for intellectual property to slip out of the enterprise. Successful companies will harness communities to solve problems, such as by using a community approach to keep innovation efforts from being short-circuited by managers who think they know best.

Consumerization: People often have more computing power at home than they do at the office, whose PC replacement cycles are three or four years. The use of consumer technologies within the enterprise does mean that quality will go down in the search for immediacy and relevance.

Interactive Polling Results

A number of sessions polled attendees about hot topics.

Does your organization ban access to social sites such as Facebook?

Yes — 25%
No — 68%
Don't Know — 7%

IT professionals should manage all the technology in the business.

Agree — 32%
Disagree — 64%
Undecided — 4%

IT practitioners create innovative solutions to business needs almost all the time.

Agree — 35%
Disagree — 57%
Undecided — 8%

I am confident that we have successfully designed our roles, workforce competencies and skills to support the future state.

Strongly Disagree — 35%
Somewhat Disagree — 35%
Somewhat Agree — 29%
Strongly Agree — 1%

My company is well-positioned to anticipate and manage the changes that business transformation introduces:

Strongly Disagree — 23%
Somewhat Disagree — 42%
Somewhat Agree — 30%
Strongly Agree — 5%

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