**Enterprising application integration**

EAI is a very broad term that describes the sharing of information, application services and processes between systems existing within the same enterprise. There are many components to an EAI solution including information exchange and transformation, business process integration, portals, use of standards (e.g., JCA, XML, etc.), use of middleware technology, you get the idea.

Web services fall in the domain of EAI as both an enabling technology and set of standards (e.g., UDDI, WSDL, SOAP), but I would not use the terms interchangeably. For instances, Web services are to EAI what JDBC is to database design and management, and what Java is to application development. One is a concept (EAI), the other is an approach and technology (Web services).

Web services allow EAI architects to integrate many back-end systems through the creation of loosely coupled composite applications. Distributed objects perform a similar trick (albeit they are more tightly coupled). Web services is a technology and set of standards existing in the application service-oriented approach to EAI, which is only one of many approaches.

**EAI** (enterprise application integration) is a business computing term for the plans, methods, and tools aimed at modernizing, consolidating, and coordinating the computer applications in an enterprise.

Typically, an enterprise has existing [legacy application](http://searchdatacenter.techtarget.com/definition/legacy-application)s and [database](http://searchsqlserver.techtarget.com/definition/database)s and wants to continue to use them while adding or migrating to a new set of applications that exploit the Internet, [e-commerce](http://searchcio.techtarget.com/definition/e-commerce), [extranet](http://searchenterprisewan.techtarget.com/definition/extranet), and other new technologies.

EAI may involve developing a new total view of an enterprise's business and its applications, seeing how existing applications fit into the new view, and then devising ways to efficiently reuse what already exists while adding new applications and data