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Top Reasons to Implement SOA Governance

Executive Overview

Service-oriented architecture (SOA) promises unlimited agility and organizational flexibility. However, achieving these benefits is entirely contingent upon the ability to effectively manage the SOA environment across the enterprise. This paper presents an overview of strategies and practices for governing the transformation to, and the evolution of, SOA. In particular, it explores the role of governance throughout the SOA lifecycle as well as the technology enablers that help organizations develop and maintain an SOA that delivers measurable, sustainable business value.

Introduction

Service-oriented architecture (SOA) has moved to widespread acceptance as an IT strategy for delivering business value. SOA promotes the notion of modularity, providing overwhelming flexibility and superior economics for addressing business demands. However, undertaking the transformation to SOA is not without its challenges. SOA is a change in the underlying philosophy of operations of an organization and unless there is buy-in across the board, it can fail. SOA Governance provides the ability to measure returns and articulate the ongoing value of SOA at every level within the organization to encourage adoption and buy-in. In addition as SOA adoption increases, without Governance, SOA assets can become unmanageable, and reuse of services will diminish in favor of custom development; or even worse, modifications will be made to your existing services that break other business processes.

This paper outlines the most compelling reasons for you to establish SOA governance within your organization.

SOA GOVERNANCE DEFINED

Effective SOA governance provides you with visibility into, and oversight of, the relationships and interdependencies that connect services to other elements of SOA across the organization. It encompasses people, process, and technology to effectively manage and optimize your organization's investment in SOA and improve decision-making. The primary governance responsibilities include

- Defining the decision-making process and identifying the decision-makers
- Reviewing service designs to ensure they are optimized for reuse

- Documenting and managing policies for reusing and modifying services
- Analyzing the return on investment (ROI) for service assets and business processes

SOA governance is a process you implement, not a product you buy. Embracing this process is essential—in its absence, few SOA initiatives succeed. However, when implemented properly, SOA governance delivers significant, tangible benefits that optimize the ability for your organization to achieve the expected business value from its SOA investments.

TOP REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD IMPLEMENT SOA GOVERNANCE

In today's economy, any investment requires justification—a governance body is no exception. Fortunately, SOA governance provides numerous benefits that simplify the process of building a compelling business case. The value of SOA governance is so abundantly clear, that as an IT executive, you owe it to your organization to become an advocate for, and architect of, a sound governance strategy for your SOA infrastructure.

Reason #1—Improve Decision-Making

Making bad decisions—or taking too long to make the right ones—costs time and money that your organization cannot afford. The right decisions require visibility into the right information. What's working? What's not? What services should you build or retire? In the absence of a

Effective SOA governance provides visibility into, and oversight of, the relationships and interdependencies that connect services to other elements of the SOA. This visibility is essential in eliminating the unintended consequences of change.

structured approach to component-based development, you cannot answer these questions with confidence. SOA governance defines the process by which you collect and disseminate the necessary information to make critical IT investment decisions. The right solution facilitates a closed-loop information exchange between all of your stakeholders to ensure timely, accurate decisions on key business issues.

Reason #2—Promote Value-Based Innovation

The SOA value proposition is built on flexibility and innovation. Creating an environment where services can be mixed and matched to develop new applications in response to changing business requirements promotes creativity. Although every organization strives to maximize the value of human capital, if left unchecked, the freedom of an SOA infrastructure could result in lost time or misguided efforts.

SOA governance allows you to support and encourage innovation within a framework of predictability that protects against unnecessary wasted resources.

Understanding your organization's SOA literacy and general skill level is essential to selecting an SOA governance model that nurtures the kind of innovation that delivers real business value.

Reason #3—Effectively Manage Change

With SOA, the speed and ease with which you can affect change improves substantially. However, the ability to move that fast is only an advantage when you understand the impact of change. Even the tiniest modification in the SOA can impact your entire organization. Without the ability to understand and manage change, you are effectively blind to its potential impact. SOA governance establishes visibility into the relationships and interdependencies of an organization's SOA components so you can foresee the impact of change. This visibility is essential in reducing the risk associated with change and ensuring desired business results.

Reason #4—Align Business Objectives and IT Investment

Success depends upon alignment between business and IT. When business and IT are not in sync, your business suffers. Whether SOA is simply on your radar, or already a guiding principle behind your infrastructure, your initial consideration of SOA was likely driven by its potential to gain this alignment. Due to the number of moving parts, lack of SOA governance presents a significant challenge to maintaining business alignment. SOA governance instills the measures and policies necessary to ensure that your stakeholders can understand the rationale behind business goals and IT investments, as well as your timeline and plan to achieve those objectives.

Reason #5—Foster Enterprise-wide Collaboration

A successful SOA requires seamless collaboration among all stakeholders. SOA governance is essential in fostering that interaction by defining roles and responsibilities and clearly articulating a role-relevant perspective for each participant—especially the IT executive—so they can understand how their actions relate to the big picture. Through cross-functional collaboration, SOA governance makes it easier to proactively identify and resolve issues and prevent negative impacts on development and production timelines.

Reason #6—Increase the Likelihood of SOA Success

The mounting body of generally available evidence suggests that a leading cause of stalled or failed SOA initiatives is the lack of effective SOA governance. SOA governance is something that you do, not something that you buy. Having a skilled, informed oversight body helps you to disseminate SOA knowledge throughout the organization.

Reason #7—Track IT Investments and Returns

Understanding the landscape of existing IT investments, future IT needs, and their associated financial impact has always been an important challenge—even more so with SOA. Such an architecture shifts away from lumbering, monolithic applications to an environment where individual services get combined on the fly to form dynamic composite applications. In this situation, your investment decisions rely upon a much more granular view of the infrastructure.

With SOA, the focus moves from the application down to the underlying services, business processes, and other assets that comprise the application. SOA governance tracks and analyzes IT performance at the component level to empower you with pinpoint management and control over investments. SOA governance uses this granular view to determine the value of individual services as part of the calculation of overall ROI.

"At the beginning, risks of project failures are small but as the SOA project develops the risk curve increases. For this reason, organizations should never think of SOA without establishing a set of governance processes around service definition, implementation, and maintenance."

*—Paolo Malinverno,
Research Vice
President, Gartner*

Reason #8—Link Vision and Strategy

SOA governance is the means by which you connect vision and strategy directly to the services, business processes, and other assets and artifacts within your SOA. It is about understanding when, where, how, and by whom SOA assets are being developed and used, and whether that use accomplishes your goals. With this alignment and oversight, you can translate corporate objectives into real, tangible solutions that address business challenges.

Reason #9—Enhance Ecosystem Visibility

Conceptually, SOA revolves around transitioning monolithic applications into individual services and decentralizing the ownership of those services to increase organizational flexibility. That an individual service could be used by multiple composite applications—or be a composite of other services—creates a high level of interdependence in your IT infrastructure. This interconnection demands

unprecedented visibility into the ecosystem and strong collaboration between distributed stakeholders. Visibility is a defining characteristic of effective SOA governance. The right SOA governance solution will support the necessary visibility by providing all of your stakeholders with a role-relevant view into the SOA ecosystem, and by automating workflow to make SOA governance an intrinsic part of each stakeholder's job.

CONCLUSION

SOA transformation represents not only a dramatic shift away from more-familiar approaches to IT, it also signals the crossing of an important threshold in the evolution of IT itself. Despite faulty perceptions and opinions to the contrary, IT has never been more essential to business. This importance will only increase as SOA, virtualization, enterprise social computing, and other factors weave IT inextricably deeper into the very fabric of the enterprise.

What does this mean for you? It means that IT is getting bigger by dividing itself into smaller pieces. As an IT executive, it is up to you to control that process, control the pieces, and keep everything on track to deliver sustainable business value. A sound SOA governance strategy is the key.

For more information on SOA governance and on Oracle's SOA governance solution, please visit: oracle.com/technologies/soa/soa-governance.html



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Hardware and Software, Engineered to Work Together