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**USING WEB SERVICES IN ENTERPRISE COMPUTING AND INTERNET APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Web services extend the World Wide Web infrastructure to provide the means for software application to connect to other software applications. Applications access web services via a set of web protocols and data formats such as HTTP, XML, and SOAP, with no need to worry about how each Web service is implemented. Web services combine the best aspects of component-based development and the Web. This paper discusses the use of web services in enterprise computing and internet application development. Web Services promise to make it simpler and cheaper than ever before for different software applications to work together. Simple and ever-present standards are in place, and with the backing of major hardware and software players, Web Services may become the new foundation for enterprise computing and the most dynamic technology since the original web. Web Services promise to change the way companies do their business, and people use the Internet and are poised to be an important block for business integration.*

**KEYWORDS**

Web Services, XML, UML, SOAP, UDDI, WSDL, HTTP, TCP/IP.

**INTRODUCTION**

A web service is any piece of software that makes it available over the internet and uses a standardized XML messaging system. XML is used to encode all communications to a web service. For example, a client invokes a web service by sending an XML message, and then waits for a corresponding XML response. Because all communication is in XML, web services are not tied to any one operating system or programming language like Java can talk with Perl, Windows applications can talk with UNIX applications.

Web Services are self-contained, modular, distributed, dynamic applications that can be described, published, located, or invoked over the network to create products, processes, and supply chains. These applications can be local, distributed, or Web-based. Web services are built on top of open standards such as TCP/IP, HTTP, Java, HTML, and XML. Web services are XML-based information exchange systems that use the Internet for direct application-to-application interaction. These systems can include programs, objects, messages, or documents.

A web service is a collection of open protocols and standards used for exchanging data between applications or systems. Software applications written in various programming languages and running on various platforms can use web services to exchange data over computer networks like the Internet in a manner similar to inter-process communication on a single computer. This interoperability (e.g., between Java and Python, or Windows and Linux applications) is due to the use of open standards.

To summarize, a complete web service is, therefore, any service that:-

- ✓ Is available over the Internet or private (intranet) networks
- ✓ Uses a standardized XML messaging system
- ✓ Is not tied to any one operating system or programming language
- ✓ Is self-describing via a common XML grammar
- ✓ Is discoverable via a simple find mechanism

**WEB SERVICE COMPONENTS**

The basic Web services platform is XML + HTTP. All the standard Web Services works using following components-

- **SOAP** (Simple Object Access Protocol)
- **UDDI** (Universal Description, Discovery and Integration)
- **WSDL** (Web Services Description Language)

**USING THE WEB SERVICE**

Consider a simple account-management and order -processing system. The accounting personnel use a client application built with Visual Basic or JSP to create new accounts and enter new customer orders. The processing logic for this system is written in Java and resides on a Solaris machine, which also interacts with a database to store the information. Than following steps illustrates above as web service communication:-

- 1) The client program bundles the account registration information into a SOAP message.
- 2) This SOAP message is sent to the Web Service as the body of an HTTP POST request.
- 3) The Web Service unpacks the SOAP request and converts it into a command that the application can understand. The application processes the information as required and responds with a new unique account number for that customer.
- 4) Next, the Web Service packages up the response into another SOAP message, which it sends back to the client program in response to its HTTP request.
- 5) The client program unpacks the SOAP message to obtain the results of the account registration process. For further details regarding the implementation of Web Services technology, read about the Cape Clear product set and review the product components.

A customer visits an airline Web site and makes requests to buy an airline ticket, rent a car and reserve a hotel room. The airline Web site server, linked via XML-based Web Services to the servers of the car rentals and hotel sites sends requests. After the customer has been authenticated, a confirmation is sent via XML to the airline Web site server. The customer trip is planned after one visit to only one web site. If the return flight is delayed, the customer's calendar is automatically adjusted, e-mails are sent to reschedule meetings, and a car rental office or relatives are notified of a change in pickup time. This is an example of what we expect to experience as we enter the third wave of Internet development. The first wave was characterized by widespread use of emails to connect people to people, the second wave connected people to information in web sites, and the era of Web Services connects applications and processes to one another for business to business interoperability.

In the last 10 years the concept of Web Services has created a stir among companies in the Internet and electronic commerce fields. A standard definition does not exist quite yet; however of the several that has been advanced the following stands out as being the easiest to understand from a non-technical perspective: "A new technology that makes it easier for different business software applications to talk with each other. Where the traditional web allows any person with a browser to visualize data published by an Internet site, Web Services allow any computer program equipped with the right interface to connect to any other program on the Internet that has been set up as a web service. The client programs can then get data from the program providing the Web Services or ask it to perform some useful task or transaction"

Other more technical definitions describe Web Services are self-contained, modular, loosely coupled web applications, which perform many functions from simple requests to complicated business processes via a set of standards based on XML data description language. Web Services can be invoked from any platform and devices and once it is deployed, other applications including other Web Services can invoke the deployed application. They can run on a server, a PC, an embedded system or a mobile device.

Exactly what makes Web Services such a great technology that major vendors of the caliber of IBM, Microsoft, Oracle, Sun, HP invest billions of dollars on it? Let us now concentrate on the characteristics of this technology that distinguishes it from previous one such as EDI or CORBA, which also promised seamless business integration.

## ADVANTAGE OF USING WEB SERVICES

### 1). FLEXIBILITY

Web Services represent an evolution of the Web to allow applications to interact in a dynamic, open and reconfigurable execution environment. It connects private or public networks, can work with existing programs written in different languages, developed by different vendors or in-house IT departments.

XML (Extensible Markup Language) is at the core of the technology and is used to encode all communications to a Web Service. For example, a client invokes a Web Service by sending an XML message, and then waits for a corresponding XML response. Because all communication is in XML, Web Services are not tied to any one operating system or programming language--Java can talk with Perl; Windows applications can talk with UNIX applications. Programs can talk to one another regardless of how the companies build their own internal systems.

Many Web Services are wrappers for existing applications so that these applications can be accessible on the Internet or an intranet. As such, many are very simple and can be generated automatically by tools. As a result they work with heterogeneous operating environments rather than homogeneous, totally controlled environments. Web Services could be shared or rented rather than installed and owned. All these features make them independent of the interactions from the platform, programming language or application. This new ease of communications will make enterprise software as we know it obsolete, inciting companies to dump expensive in-house packages in favor of the new breed of mix-and-match software functions piped in from outside providers in the form of web applications or components.

### 2). SCALABILITY

A company can invest modestly at first and scale up as Web Services mature, starting perhaps by web service enabling existing applications. With most Web Services of moderate complexity little restructuring and fewer skills are needed, and an installation can be completed in days or weeks rather than months or years. This gradual approach is not only less invasive but minimizes migration costs.

Exposing existing applications as XML Web Services, will allow users to build new, more powerful applications that use XML Web Services as building blocks. For example, a user might develop a purchasing application to automatically obtain price information from a variety of vendors, allow the user to select a vendor, submit the order and then track the shipment until it is received. The vendor application, in addition to exposing its services on the Web, might in turn use XML Web Services to check the customer's credit, charge the customer's account and set up the shipment with a shipping company.

### 3). INTEGRATION

Rather than replace or restructure existing systems to achieve uniformity across facilities, companies can now create a common front end using Web Services standards. At GM parties inside and outside the company require access to the VIN number that GM assigns to each car it makes. Until now GM had to build hundreds of custom interfaces to link user applications to the VIN database. With Web Services, all those applications are interfaced effortlessly in a more simplified manner.

Dell Computer was able to connect its assembly plants (each with its own manufacturing and database management systems) to share the data vastly improving utilization and cutting logistics costs throughout the production network. It also served as the basis for automated communication with the company's supply chain partners. Dollar Rent A Car Systems built a Web Service to connect its reservation system with Southwest Airlines, allowing passengers to reserve a car through the airline's Web site. The operation, which can be duplicated for other airline partners, took only two months--well short of the estimated eight months it would have taken before today's Web Service technologies were available. It costs the company just \$1 per online transaction routing customer reservations through airline sites compared to the travel-agent networks that charge as much as \$5 per online transaction.

This interoperability also works well in outsourcing situations. Thus, Web Services ensure seamless transfer of data from the outsourcer to the outsourced company and vice versa. Integrating disparate systems after a merger or acquisition for instance, can be done fairly cheaply and quickly with Web Services. Rather than forcing companies to throw out old technology, Web Services tie together old software systems, including mainframes, that hadn't been able to talk before, and that way it solves the industry's biggest problem, which is that systems built over 30 years using different technologies now have to be integrated and delivered in ways that nobody intended.

### 4). STANDARD BASED

Just 20 years ago the Internet consisted of many disparate network technologies. Since then, the widespread standardization of TCP/IP as the core Internet transport has greatly simplified global communications for both businesses and consumers. A similar widespread agreement on the use of standard web protocols, namely XML, SOAP, UDDI and WSDL has sparked the same revolutionary simplification for business-to-business collaboration. Because Web Services are based on standards, it keeps companies from having to cope with pricey, proprietary software that can cost 10 times as much as Web Service software.

A significant number of companies already have a Web infrastructure, and people with knowledge and experience in maintaining it, so the cost of entry for XML Web Services is significantly less than for previous technologies. Software and hardware manufacturers have learned a lesson from past rivalry among competing technologies and they now know that anything proprietary, no matter how big it is, can't dominate. That is why in an unprecedented display of cooperation has characterized the early stages of Web Services standard development. Hewlett-Packard, IBM, Microsoft, Oracle, and Sun Microsystems among others, in a historic show of unity, have collectively blessed the core set of Web Services protocols by creating the Web Services Interoperability (WS-I) consortium. The nonprofit group's aim is to ensure that software by rival technology makers is compatible, and to promote harmony in the Web Services sector so that customer information can freely move across platforms, applications and programming languages.

The potential rewards of universal connectivity are untold savings in time and money, increase of software sales, and a major boost in productivity. A catalog company for instance, that needs to communicate with FedEx and UPS could rely on a single Web Service to dispatch orders to both shippers, instead of having to separately integrate its applications with each company.

### 5). COOPERATION AND EFFICIENCY

Web Services provide better connection among trading partners not only streamlining their activities but also collaborating to deliver more value to customer. Companies like Dell Computers, General Motors, and Merrill Lynch are using Web Services protocols to connect selected activities to suppliers, dealers, or customers. What it means is that a company with a broad range of partners for example, will be able to connect its own technology to that of its suppliers more efficiency reducing the need for manual data reentering. Data exchanges could be expanded transforming the development and distribution of products and forging business alliances. Coordination efforts obviate the need for expensive enterprise application integration software or high-priced integration talent. Furthermore, Web Services boosts customer relationship by building more effective websites.

## WEB SERVICES STANDARDS

It is widely accepted and recognized the fact that Web Services are based on four platform-neutral standards: XML, SOAP, UDDI and WSDL. The whole process is likened to an ordinary phone call. XML represents the conversation, SOAP describes the rule for how to call someone, and UDDI is the phone book. WSDL describes what the phone call is about and how you can participate. From a standards point of view, Web Services is defined an XML Web Service as a software service exposed on the Web through SOAP, described with a WSDL file and registered in UDDI.



The lingua-franca of Web Services is XML (Extensible Markup Language), classified as a page description language. XML allows companies to more easily exchange data online by defining the element of the document that describe its various pieces, the names you call the data, and the relationship of all data to one another. SOAP (Simple Object Access Protocol) describes how Web Services communicate over the Internet. It is a specification that defines the XML format for messages and acts as a wrapper around it.

WSDL (Web Services Description Language) describes Web Services and how to access them while UDDI (Universal Description, Discovery, and Integration) lets businesses register, advertise and find Web Services in a directory. UDDI is the yellow pages of Web Services. As with traditional yellow pages, you can search for a company that offers the services you need, read about the service offered and contact someone for more information. You can, of course, offer a Web Service without registering it in UDDI, just as you can open a business in your basement and rely on word-of-mouth advertising but if you want to reach a significant market, you need UDDI so your customers can find you. There are three parts to an entry in the UDDI directory. The "white pages" describe the company offering the service: name, address, contacts, etc. The "yellow pages" include industrial categories based on standard taxonomies such as the North American Industry Classification System and the Standard Industrial Classification.

The "green pages" describe the interface to the service in enough detail for someone to write an application to use the Web Service. The UDDI directory also includes several ways to search for the services you need to build your applications. For example, you can search for providers of a service in a specified geographic location or for business of a specified type. The UDDI directory will then supply information, contacts, links, and technical data to allow you to evaluate which services meet your requirements.

### CHALLENGES IN USING WEB SERVICES

As much as there is a tremendous interest and support behind Web Services, and companies are deploying them, there are a few challenges that need to be overcome before the technology moves into the next phase of development. Forrester Research Inc. predicts that traditional application integration technologies will prevail until 2004, because Web Services standard for security, auditing, and transactions won't stabilize until then. It will not be until 2006 that business will apply more complex technologies as their confidence increases. In survey on utilization of Web Services, respondents said that their biggest stumbling blocks to Web Services were lack of security and authentication. Part of the concern is the current lack of universal online identification system. Without it is difficult for machines to know whom they are dealing with and to protect people's privacy. Furthermore, external transactions must be authenticated and remain confidential and intact, and the transactions have to be verifiable, so they can't be disavowed if there is a dispute.

A key benefit of the emerging Web Services architecture is the ability to deliver integrated, interoperable solutions. Ensuring the integrity, confidentiality and security of Web Services through the application of a comprehensive security model is critical, both for organizations and their customers. Security standards in particular are of primary importance, since connecting to expose Web Services interfaces over the Internet will require new levels of trust between business partners. Before we see a rush of companies web service enabling their mission critical applications, the technology needs to operate as reliable as the telephone system, always on – no breakdowns of servers computers and networks and it has to be difficult for hackers to break in.

This concern is not lost in the ears of the industry's movers and shakers. The World Wide Web Consortium which has given full support to the technology from its inception recently approved two XML encryption specifications that enable web pages using XML to encrypt parts of a document for instance, a credit card number entered in an XML form being exchanged between web sites. In addition, six new Web Service specifications aimed at advancing security capabilities and streamlining business policy for organizations implementing Web Services have been outlined by IBM and Microsoft. They are part of second wave of proposed Web Services security capabilities, which is crucial to making Web Services fly on a global scale.

### CONCLUSION

Web Services await a bright future as electronic marketplaces, inter-company collaboration and E-commerce grow. The potential is there to save money and even find new ways to generate revenue. For companies that have not yet implemented Web Services applications, it is recommended to start with a pilot program and get educated on the intricacies of the technology. Until this is done it may be difficult to do a proper risk assessment. Gradually wrapping one application after another will soon form a base of components that it could connect together to build new services.

In summary, Web Services have a profound implication for business. The promise of business interoperability, with the ease with which Web pages flow over the Internet, is what will fuel the demand for Web Services. The speed with which Web Services are deployed will be determined by a combination of how quickly additional standards are finalized, how strong customer demand is, how fast the market rolls out support tools, and how encompassing is the synergy that is produced as more Web Services are created and interfaced.

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