



SOA REFERENCE ARCHITECTURE: APPLICATION TIER

SOA Blueprint

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Application Tier

IT organizations' greatest investments are in applications. Even though enterprises will invest in SOA moving forward, the application tier is not going away anytime soon.

Legacy Applications

These are the thick-client applications. They may be old versions of packaged applications that have not yet been upgraded. These applications may be best suited to run in the client/server mode.

These applications will typically have some published APIs or logical models for integration.

Mainframe Applications

Business solutions that run on proprietary mainframe systems may be integrated with other systems either through a messaging or database gateway. Mainframe software vendors are working to expose all their APIs as web services. However, in most cases, the best approach is to support the business requirements by leveraging middleware to develop an abstraction layer and exposing the services at the appropriate level.

Enterprise Application Integration

Enterprise application integration (EAI) typically uses middleware to provide the following capabilities:

- **Messaging:** message-oriented middleware (MOM) to enable resources to publish and subscribe to messages
- **Business process manager (BPM):** proprietary capability to automate business processes
- **Application adaptors:** pre-built connectors to various packaged applications that allow access to the application views or technology adaptors of other technologies such as databases, messaging (MQ, JMS), and web services.

The best practice for EAI is to leverage an integration hub. However, without the appropriate supporting methodology, this may result in a point-to-point solution on the hub. Even though the services tier provides the service bus and BPM, which enables enterprises to adopt SOA and migrate away from EAI, this migration is expected to take a long time, especially when IT organizations have invested heavily in EAI.

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