

ZAPTHINK ZAPNOTE™

TIER1 INNOVATION *BUILDING DYNAMIC SYSTEMS WITH SOA*

Analyst: Jason Bloomberg

Abstract

Tier1 Innovation is a midsize IT professional services firm who is building an SOA practice on top of a successful Siebel implementation practice. Their SOA approach is iterative: they help companies understand and plan SOA while they implement pilot projects that take advantage of their clients' existing IT infrastructure—an approach that helps them build trust among their clients.

Tier1 offers a remarkably innovative approach to building and implementing SOA. Rather than simply considering Services to be thin veneers over traditional, tightly-coupled systems, Tier1 sees SOA as an overarching approach toward building highly dynamic systems that companies can quickly reconfigure using metadata and events—a flexible approach to SOA ZapThink calls *just-in-time integration*.

All Contents Copyright © 2005 ZapThink, LLC. All rights reserved. Reproduction of this publication in any form without prior written permission is forbidden. The information contained herein has been obtained from sources believed to be reliable. ZapThink disclaims all warranties as to the accuracy, completeness or adequacy of such information. ZapThink shall have no liability for errors, omissions or inadequacies in the information contained herein or for interpretations thereof. The reader assumes sole responsibility for the selection of these materials to achieve its intended results. The opinions expressed herein are subject to change without notice. All trademarks, service marks, and trade names are trademarked by their respective owners and ZapThink makes no claims to these names.



Crawl, Walk, and Run to SOA

Founded in 1999, Tier1 Innovation is an 80-person, Denver-based IT professional services firm whose core business has traditionally been Siebel implementation and customization for midsize and Fortune 500 customers. While their Siebel practice continues to generate significant revenue, they are now experiencing growth in their Enterprise Integration Solutions division, which provides architecture and implementation services to integrate applications, data and business processes across the enterprise and across the supply chain. This emerging practice specializes in SOA and agile project methodologies, and Tier1 focuses their efforts on becoming the thought leader in the design and implementation of enterprise Service architectures for the creation of composite applications that span enterprise systems.

After building their SOA practice in stealth mode over the last two years, Tier1 is now ready to make a significant splash in the market. The company has built some intellectual property for SOA best practices, and they can implement their approaches using a their customer's existing IT infrastructure. They maintain partnerships with ESB vendors including Sonic Software, Fiorano, and Cordys, but the company can also build out SOA-based solutions on existing infrastructure from companies such as IBM, BEA Systems, and Microsoft.

More important than implementing partners' products, however, is their realization that companies often can't accept the entire SOA vision at once. Instead, they must often adopt SOA in an incremental, "crawl, walk, run" fashion. As a result, Tier1 provides a set of five core services they offer their clients: *Enterprise Services Vision Briefing*, *SOA Assessment*, *Enterprise Services Architecture Roadmap*, *Enterprise Services Solution Pilot*, and *Enterprise Services Solution Delivery*. These services provide companies with the incremental approach to SOA they need as they plan and implement their architectural initiatives.

Real SOA for Highly Dynamic Situations

One of the primary reasons Tier1 moved to provide more than ESB implementations is that they found that they were able to build working SOA pilots in clients' IT environments using the middleware technology in place, without the need for additional integration technology like ESB. Such environments typically include a J2EE application server like WebSphere or WebLogic, but can also include more general infrastructure such as message-queueing technologies from IBM or TIBCO, .NET-based solutions, or proprietary integration infrastructures like those from webMethods or Vitria. As a result, Tier1 is able to go into a client and offer an inexpensive, one-month SOA pilot that will work in the clients' existing environment, what they call a "leave and layer" approach, as opposed to "rip and replace." The power of a working SOA for little cost or trouble then helps them sign up their clients for more complete SOA initiatives.

The core of Tier1's approach to building SOA that helps them offer such effective pilot engagements is their intellectual property, consisting of their *SOA Compliant Frameworks*. These frameworks include approaches for Service-oriented application development, security, Service-oriented business process management, operations, and error handling. All of the

Thank you for reading ZapThink research! ZapThink is an IT advisory and analysis firm that provides trusted advice and critical insight into the architectural and organizational changes brought about by the movement to XML, Web Services, and Service Orientation. We provide our three target audiences of IT vendors, service providers and end-users a clear roadmap for standards-based, loosely coupled distributed computing – a vision of IT meeting the needs of the agile business.

Earn rewards for reading ZapThink research! Visit www.zapthink.com/credit and enter the code **TIERJIT**. We'll reward you with ZapCredits that you can use to obtain free research, ZapGear, and more! For more information about ZapThink products and services, please call us at +1-781-207-0203, or drop us an email at info@zapthink.com.



frameworks provide a fundamental level of SOA compliance in that they provide functionality available as a Service. Use of a *Common Data Model* (CDM) approach models data and interactions that traditionally fall outside the bounds of typical SOA implementations. The CDM models the client's data within the scope of the SOA project. It captures database descriptions and data models, promotes data integration and sharing by providing common views of data, reduces inconsistencies, enables the joining of different databases, and provides business users with access to metadata. The CDM is not typically an enterprisewide model, and Tier1 intends to create it iteratively, where they continually refactor and improve it. In other words, Tier1 takes an agile approach to creating the CDM which provides the underlying data infrastructure for building the Services in the SOA implementations they create.

Building SOA implementations with the CDM also enables Tier1 to build dynamic Services that Service consumers can not only access, but can also *change* dynamically at runtime—what ZapThink calls “just-in-time integration.” In essence, a Service contract might change depending on events that might be sent to the Service, dynamically reconfiguring itself based on new requirements that the policy and metadata for that particular Service govern. For example, a traditional, static data-access Service limits itself to the sorts of data interactions that the creator of that Service envisioned, and that Service would generally consist of a wrapper around a specific database query. However, with just-in-time integration, the Service represents topics that consumers can subscribe to, where that Service sends events containing the desired data, and the underlying infrastructure persists the events (along with their metadata) as opposed to the data themselves. In fact, the Service itself can consist of a series of events that detail how the Service should respond to other event queries. In this way an event can essentially “reprogram” a Service that has a contract that requires the return of data in one format to return data in a different format, since such events always contain their associated metadata.

The ZapThink Take

Tier1 Innovation lives up to their name—they have truly taken an innovative approach to defining and implementing SOA. The just-in-time integration approach is an advanced application of SOA, and ZapThink places it well down the road on ZapThink's SOA Implementation Roadmap. The challenge Tier1 faces, therefore, is in bringing its clients to the point they are able to understand and take advantage of such dynamic Services. Tier1 rises to the challenge, however, with their “crawl, walk, run” approach to tackling leave-and-layer projects that build acceptance and trust among their clients in the early phases of a longer engagement. Building a CDM and implementing dynamic Services then depend on what Tier1 calls their clients' appetite for change.

Even though Tier1 is still ramping up its SOA practice, the combination of a senior team, the SOA Compliant Frameworks, and their incremental, agile, leave-and-layer approach to implementing SOA offer companies that are still struggling with the variety of issues surrounding SOA planning and implementation a great starting point for their SOA initiatives, as well as a proven roadmap for planning and rolling out SOA implementations. The fact that they are able to implement just-in-time integration for their clients is a remarkable accomplishment, and illustrates both their technical capabilities as well as their innovative understanding of SOA.

Tier1 Innovation Services

Enterprise Integration Solutions

Overview:

Tier1 Innovation provides architecture and implementation services, specializing in SOA and agile methodologies. They have a deep understanding of SOA, and an advanced approach to SOA that allows their customers to realize incremental and continuing returns from their SOA initiatives that help build trust as projects progress.

Value Proposition:

Because Tier1 has the ability and willingness to implement SOA in their clients' existing IT environments, they are able to offer cost-effective solutions that also reduce the risk of SOA implementations for their clients. Furthermore, their ability to build just-in-time integration solutions for their clients suggests that they are able to build extraordinarily flexible, agile SOA implementations in a wide range of different IT situations, leveraging existing customers' IT infrastructure while providing for advanced, innovative SOA implementations.

Profile: Tier1 Innovation

January 2005

Funding:

Privately held

Co-founders and managing directors:

Mark Johnston and Jay Johnson

Employees:

80

Service:

Enterprise Integration Solutions

Address:

7979 East Tufts Avenue
Suite 1100
Denver, CO 80237

URL:

<http://www.tier1innovation.com>

Main Phone:

303-376-3500

Contact:

Gary Jaycox, Director, Business Development

gjaycox@tier1innovation.com

Related Research

- *SOA Consulting* Foundation Report (ZTR-WS109)
- *MphasiS* ZapNote (ZTZN-1151)
- *EDS* ZapNote (ZTZN-1154)
- *Accenture* ZapNote (ZTZN-1155)
- *SAIC* ZapNote (ZTZN-1160)
- *Infosys* ZapNote (ZTZN-1162)
- *Samsung SDS* ZapNote (ZTZN-1163)



About ZapThink, LLC

ZapThink is an IT advisory and analysis firm that provides trusted advice and critical insight into the architectural and organizational changes brought about by the movement to XML, Web Services, and Service Orientation. We provide our three target audiences of IT vendors, service providers and end-users a clear roadmap for standards-based, loosely coupled distributed computing – a vision of IT meeting the needs of the agile business.

ZapThink helps its customers in three ways: by helping companies understand IT products and services in the context of Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA) and the vision of Service Orientation, by providing guidance into emerging best practices for Web Services and SOA adoption, and by bringing together all our audiences into a network that provides business value and expertise to each member of the network.

ZapThink provides market intelligence to IT vendors and professional services firms that offer XML and Web Services-based products and services in order to help them understand their competitive landscape, plan their product roadmaps, and communicate their value proposition to their customers within the context of Service Orientation.

ZapThink provides guidance and expertise to professional services firms to help them grow and innovate their services as well as promote their capabilities to end-users and vendors looking to grow their businesses.

ZapThink also provides implementation intelligence to IT users who are seeking guidance and clarity into the best practices for planning and implementing SOA, including how to assemble the available products and services into a coherent plan.

ZapThink's senior analysts are widely regarded as the "go to analysts" for XML, Web Services, and SOA by vendors, end-users, and the press. Respected for their candid, insightful opinions, they are in great demand as speakers, and have presented at conferences and industry events around the world. They are among the most quoted industry analysts in the IT industry.

ZapThink was founded in October 2000 and is headquartered in Waltham, Massachusetts. Its customers include Global 1000 firms and government organizations, as well as many emerging businesses. Its analysts have worked at such firms as IDC, marchFIRST, and ChannelWave, and have sat on the working group committees for standards bodies such as RosettaNet, UDDI, and ebXML.

Call, email, or visit the ZapThink Web site to learn more about how ZapThink can help you to better understand how SOA will impact your business or organization.

ZAPTHINK CONTACT:

ZapThink, LLC
11 Willow Street, Suite 200
Waltham, MA 02453
Phone: +1 (781) 207 0203
Fax: +1 (786) 524 3186
info@zapthink.com

