

► OPNET Optimises IT Governance

One of the keys to implementing an effective IT Governance programme is to understand that it is not just about more effective management of IT assets, people, and processes, but also involves aligning these components with the strategic and operational goals of the organisation. In some areas, the methodology for doing this is readily evident – a good example being the evaluation, selection, and monitoring of IT projects using portfolio management techniques. Other domains, such as those of solving application and infrastructure problems, are perceived as more technical in nature, and whilst here the divide between IT and business still exists, the need to bridge this gap is even more important.

OPNET, based in Bethesda, Maryland, specialises in management software for networks and applications, and having spoken to the company's European executives recently, I was impressed with their understanding of these IT Governance issues, and the positioning of their solutions to address business problems, rather than purely technical ones. OPNET provides products for application troubleshooting, intelligent network auditing, and predictive network planning, to enterprise customers, government and defence, and service providers, based on the company's deep expertise in network modelling and analysis.

At a time when the majority of organisations are attempting to optimise their IT infrastructures and the performance of their applications, these solutions present a powerful proposition: OPNET asserts that by more intelligent infrastructure planning, its customers can better understand the impact of this optimisation process on their organisations, avoiding unnecessary upgrades, and reducing IT-related risk.

Similarly, with application troubleshooting it is the ability to relate performance problems to daily operations that adds considerable value, reducing the time to resolution, enabling improved service quality, and helping organisations to understand the impact of infrastructure changes on end-to-end response times.

OPNET's VNE Server solution creates a comprehensive model of an organisation's infrastructure, including its applications, servers, and protocols, as well as details of the physical network and its components. Utilising this model, OPNET's tools, including IT Guru and IT Sentinel, are able to address areas including problem and incident management, release management, configuration and change management, capacity management, and security management. Those of you who are familiar with ITIL will recognise these headings as some of the processes defined with that standard, and OPNET's capabilities do map closely on to these.

Optimising an organisation's infrastructure and formalising an enterprise architecture are two of the most overlooked aspects of the whole IT Governance issue, but without these, subsequent efforts are significantly weakened. The infrastructure is the foundation that must support the organisation's information systems, and if you cannot keep it running effectively, solve problems when they arise, plan for the future, and effectively manage change, then you have little hope of getting good value from your IT investments.

Additionally, much of the IT-related risk that has caused headaches for CEOs around the world, arises from these very issues. The best laid plans go awry when a pilot project will not scale up, a distributed system performs poorly, or a new application has an unforeseen impact. These are just the sort of problems that OPNET's solutions can help with, and many enterprise customers are now taking advantage.

In This Issue

OPNET Optimises IT Governance

Interwoven Solutions

ROI – As Good As It Gets!

Fujitsu – Stealth Operator



There have been a substantial number of acquisitions in this sector over the past two years, but in reality, much of this has been a land-grab exercise, with vendors building a portfolio of capabilities to address a wide range of information management problems.

► Interwoven Solutions

As the market for Enterprise Content Management (ECM) products evolves, it is a sign of growing maturity that the focus is now swinging towards solutions, rather than technology. There have been a substantial number of acquisitions in this sector over the past two years, but in reality, much of this has been a land-grab exercise, with vendors building a portfolio of capabilities to address a wide range of information management problems. Firstly it was enterprise portals, then collaboration became the must-have feature, and most recently, we have seen records management as flavour of the month. It does not surprise me to see that success in integrating these different pieces varies enormously from vendor to vendor, and of course it must happen from both marketing and technical perspectives.

Whilst I continue to advocate a holistic approach to content management, customers are first and foremost concerned with solving business problems, and it is here that packaging these components into a true solution becomes important. Interwoven was one of the pioneers of the Web content management boom in the late 90s, and whilst its strategy has taken some twists and turns in the interim, it now has its attention fully focused on solutions, which I believe will be good news for existing and prospective customers. Interwoven shared in the land-grab, in particular with its acquisitions of Digital Asset Management (DAM) specialist MediaBin and collaboration vendor iManage, and these form an important element in a number of the company's solutions.

A current focus for Interwoven is product innovation in an FMCG environment: many organisations have formalised the process of capturing new ideas, developing products, and bringing them to market, but there are few technologies available to support this. Interwoven's High-Velocity Innovation solution draws together collaboration, document and content management, DAM, and Web content management into an integrated whole that is an excellent example of the solution-oriented approach at work. The key to this strategy is to incorporate domain expertise in the form of processes, templates, and best practices into the underlying technologies, to add real value. Customers deploying this solution should be able to bring new products to market more quickly, whilst retaining control of their IP, managing the risk associated with this activity, and reducing the associated costs.

Interwoven was one of the pioneers of the Web content management boom in the late 90s, and whilst its strategy has taken some twists and turns in the interim, it now has its attention fully focused on solutions...

With the iManage product now fully integrated and rebranded as Interwoven WorkSite, the company is a leading player in the legal sector, and also offers solutions for marketing, sales, finance, customer service, and IT (using the OpenDeploy Distribution Server), in addition to its generic content management applications. Interwoven has also defined a solution to support compliance with the raft of new information legislation and regulations, which is a good example of the synergy between content management, records management, and collaboration technologies.

When vendors talk about their vertical or horizontal solutions, it does not take too long to discover whether this is solely a marketing effort, or whether there is genuine added value underneath the cover. There is often the temptation to take the former course, but there is no substitute for a real understanding of the problem, and the expertise to solve it. Encouragingly, Interwoven is not trying to spread itself too thinly, and is putting careful thought into each of its target areas.

► ROI – As Good As It Gets!

The much heralded ROI calculation that is used to justify many IT investments is often a work of great creative skill. As the investments get larger so the creativity required to calculate a ROI becomes more significant. Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems have stretched ROI skills to the limit and many organisations really do not know if they will ever get a return, because no one can understand the original investment case. Smaller investments are often easier to justify and measure. Here is an example I came across recently.

Neurascript is part of the Autonomy empire. The technology performs the simple act of Optical Character Recognition (OCR) with amazing accuracy – often measured in the high-nineties percentages. Most organisations still have paper forms that need to be completed by customers, suppliers, and employees. Typically this data is entered into computer systems through manual effort – very costly and time consuming. Neurascript automates this task and provides sufficient accuracy so that corrections are few and translation rates are very fast. So here is a simple ROI: replace all the manual effort with a scanner and some pretty clever OCR software. As far as ROI is concerned this is as good as it gets – there will be no ambiguity on the benefits derived.

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems have stretched ROI skills to the limit and many organisations really do not know if they will ever get a return, because no one can understand the original investment case.

You might be thinking that the free software you get with the scanner might do the job. Well, it will not. For this type of task the freebie software will be around 70% accurate and you will spend more on correcting the mistakes than entering the data manually. The freebie software will not really know what to make of the structure of a form either, and all in all is just not suited for this type of task. Neurascript does not seem to be particularly expensive, and if you have people manually taking data from forms and entering it into a computer system, it might be worth a look.

► Fujitsu – Stealth Operator

As the third-largest IT company in the world (by turnover), Fujitsu is in many ways a forgotten force. To begin with most of its revenues come from Japan and its IT products and services do not generally get the coverage of its American counterparts – IBM and HP. Nonetheless, Fujitsu is becoming a power to be reckoned with; its managed services business flourishes in Europe and the portfolio of Content Management technologies it offers are used by some of the world's largest corporations. Its acquisitions, in the form of Amdahl and ICL, are now fully integrated into the business and the original brands have totally disappeared.

Fujitsu is a huge organisation and, as with IBM and HP, its products and services cover a very broad spectrum. After some difficult years the company is returning to profitability and should find the Japanese approach to things very much attuned to post-dot.com IT. Organisations are more cautious and are aggressively seeking out value. Fujitsu brings with it conservative values along with the Japanese obsession with detail and quality – just what the IT market is looking for. As I have pointed out in previous articles the Japanese have a track record of coming to dominate maturing markets – motor cars and electronics are obvious examples.

The IT industry is maturing too – with less desire for everything that is new and novel, and more concern around value and quality. Two years ago I argued that the Japanese present a real threat to American domination of the IT industry and today I am even more confident that this is the case. Fujitsu will undoubtedly lead the way in this assault, but most of us will not even see it coming.

Just as we suddenly became aware of Japanese cars and electronics during the 60s and 70s, so the IT industry as a whole will not wake up to the emergence of Japan in the IT sector until dominance is all but complete. Fujitsu is a stealth operator – no fuss and very little hype – but it does have the potential to transform the nature of the IT industry during the coming decade.

The IT industry is maturing too – with less desire for everything that is new and novel, and more concern around value and quality.

About Butler Group

Butler Group is the premier European provider of Information Technology research, analysis, and advice. Founded in 1990 by Martin Butler, the Company is respected throughout the business world for the impartiality and incisiveness of its research and opinion. Butler Group provides a comprehensive portfolio of Research, Events, and Subscription Services, catering for the specialised needs of all levels of executive, from IT professionals to senior managers and board directors.

Important Notice

This publication contains data and information up-to-date and correct to the best of our knowledge at the time of preparation. The data and information comes from a variety of sources outside our direct control, therefore Butler Direct Limited cannot give any guarantees relating to the content of this publication. Ultimate responsibility for all interpretations of, and use of, data, information and commentary in this publication remains with you.

Butler Direct Limited will not be liable for any interpretations or decisions made by you.

© Butler Direct Limited. All rights reserved.

This publication, or any part of it, may not be reproduced or adapted by any method whatsoever without prior written Butler Direct Limited consent.

Butler Group ▶

Europa House, 184 Ferensway,
Hull, East Yorkshire HU1 3UT, UK

Tel: +44 (0)1482 586149

Fax: +44 (0)1482 323577

www.butlergroup.com