Canon's Enterprise Imaging Platform Continues to Impress

History

Integrating enterprise applications has been the goal of many IT managers. Early on, applications running on monolithic systems were implemented to serve individual departments, but information exchange between the systems was very limited. As client-server technology gained a foothold and improved relational data management technologies became available, integration started expanding. The introduction of these new technologies to tie standalone applications together added complexity but signaled the genesis of true enterprise applications including Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP).

In the late 1990s, the Internet gave enterprises a common communication channel and created collaborative demands on IT systems. This is when other enterprise applications such as Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Enterprise Content Management (ECM) emerged and likewise put demands on integration across the enterprise. Enterprise software vendors did not include connectors to integrate their software with other packages, so independent software developers picked up the slack and introduced Enterprise Application Integration (EAI) middleware into the equation to enable this integration.

A major challenge of EAI is the fact that many of these applications that need to be linked use different databases, reside on different operating systems, and use different computer languages. In some cases, the applications are legacy systems that are not supported by the original vendor who created them. Some analysts call them "stovepipe systems" because the components have been cobbled together and it is difficult to modify them.

Announcement

Almost two years ago at Oracle OpenWorld, Canon Information and Imaging Solutions, Inc. (CIIS), a wholly owned subsidiary of Canon U.S.A., Inc. (CUSA) previewed an IT platform called Enterprise Application and Imaging Integration platform. The platform was based on a Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA) and the main intention was to help organizations improve office productivity. Canon's plan was to combine its imaging expertise with Oracle's SOA technology to create a new middleware application that would connect ERP, ECM, and CRM applications to help organizations improve their business processes.

Traditionally, this middleware was placed in the EAI software segment. Canon intended to go a step farther and offer an additional level of functionality by connecting input and output document-related processes to the business process

workflow. This SOA-based platform would allow customers to integrate enterprise applications with business processes involving manual and sometimes automated processing of documents.

Move the clock ahead to July 9 and CIIS announced its Enterprise Imaging Platform (EIP), building upon its original announcement two years ago. Canon IT Solutions, Inc. of Japan designed this platform as part of a global alliance between Canon and Oracle. EIP leverages Oracle Fusion Middleware and Canon's imaging technologies.

This new middleware includes ready-to use SOA adapters that will let IT managers create and launch new workflows and deliver additional benefits of EIP including cost reductions, improved information value, and increased scalability.

What Is So Special about Enterprise Imaging Platform?

EIP is an innovative middleware platform that enables customers to integrate enterprise applications and automate document-related business processes. One of the highlights of EIP is that the platform provides input and output device integration, and document creation, capture, and processing services. It has the ability to render professional-looking documents and reports on the output side, as well as automating the capture, classify, and index data paper based and electronic documents on the input side.

Its unique value proposition is that it provides a packaged end-to-end platform integrating imaging and enterprise applications, to reduce solution development complexity which, in turn, reduces implementation time and cost. It connects and utilizes information not only from various backend systems but also with documents.

The market is growing - various analysts that cover the industry say that EAI industry revenues for 2013 will be in the range of $11.5 billion to $19.3 billion.

From Photizo's viewpoint, this platform does not have any direct competitors today. The reason is that EIP comprises three main areas bundled into one solution.

- Enterprise Application Integration
- Input – Capture
- Output – Reporting

Because of the global alliance with Oracle, Canon uses Oracle's Fusion Middleware as the EAI portion of the solution. The competitive landscape for EAI products includes IBM's WebSphere, Tibco, Web Methods and others. As far as the competitive landscape for capture, Canon competes with Captiva, Kofax, Perceptive,

and others. And finally, in the competitive landscape for output, Canon competes with Adobe, Oracle BI Publisher, and HP OpenView reporting. There is not one hardcopy OEM competitor that has all of these functions integrated in one software solution.

Go-to-Market Strategy

CIIS has been recruiting channel partners in order to roll out this platform. This is not a user configurable solution and requires Canon Professional Services or system integrators to deliver the benefits of EIP. To date, Canon has recruited more than 10 system integrators, including such stalwarts as Apps Associates, Fujitsu America, HyperGen, iBizSoft, InfoGain, Tier1, Inc., and Volo, LLC. These system integrators have existing practice areas in enterprise applications. Now, being able to offer EIP allows them to expand their market to those organizations that require a complete solution, including document processing.

Canon is targeting organizations that use enterprise applications and have revenues beginning at about $500 million. This puts them in medium- to large-sized corporations with a definite movement toward enterprises. One tip that Canon uses with their system integrators is that the integrators should note if that organization currently has IT consultants in the facility. If so, that is a good clue to sell EIP. Additionally, system integrators should check to see if that organization could benefit from connecting input/output to their backend systems or business processes. Likely scenarios would include ERP, SCM (Supply Chain Management), accounting, contract management, travel and expense processing, internal approval processing, and integrated marketing. The average opportunity is sizable at $300,000 and up for the EIP server and Professional Services.

Canon U.S.A. Implementation

Canon "puts their money where their mouth is" by implementing an EIP invoice solution. CUSA has an in-house, ERP system that manages a lot of transactions. Everyday the company processes tens of thousands of invoices and pulls information from many sources experiencing challenges with long invoice processing time, error recovery, and print management capability.

So, CIIS designed a scalable EIP solution that reduces the processing time by 400 percent, improves error recovery, and supports print management and e-mail and fax capability. The future looks bright, and the plan is to upgrade the system and expand it to other Canon subsidiaries.

Benefits

"EIP provides a variety of benefits to not only increase the efficiency and reduce the burden created by complex business processes but to also fully utilize the important information stored on paper based documents," said Greg Ryan, CIIS Senior Director, Marketing and Sales Division.

An EIP-based solution can deliver a number of benefits to help a company manage their business, not paper.

- **Decreased costs** through a reduction of labor used to locate and process paper-based documents;
- **Increased accuracy** with the ability to eliminate manual data-entry errors by transforming paper documents into digital documents and data;
- **Reduced paper** by storing digital copies of the necessary documents; and
- **Increased efficiency** to help companies focus on their customers.

Our View

Industry veterans may immediately note that Xerox also uses the acronym EIP, which stands for Extensible Interface Platform. Xerox's EIP is an embedded software platform used by Xerox's own MFPs. However, Canon's EIP is completely different than the similarly named technology from Xerox and does not rely on MFPs for the process to function, unless the process is specifically designed to include these devices. While the overlap in naming initially confused us, it was pretty clear the offerings were very different from the beginning.

Canon provides a platform that includes SOA technology, document imaging capability, and EAI in an end-to-end solution. This platform steps beyond simple document management (Photizo's Stage 3). It allows skilled providers the ability to truly optimize the underlying business processes (Photizo's Stage 4) and fundamentally change the way in which the business processes its information

The cost is significantly less than comparable solutions that utilize individual EAI, input, and output offerings. Oracle Fusion Middleware Suite, can cost in the millions of dollars along based on Oracle's price list from December 2012.

As far as solidifying Canon as an IT company, this platform has raised the bar to the next level and demonstrates the bench strength, strategic alliance with Oracle, and foresight that is needed as hardcopy firms search for transitioning services.