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Frontera Corporation

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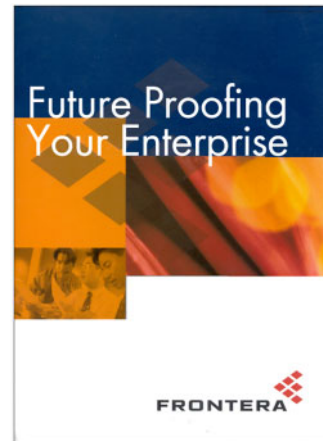
White paper

Objective:

Present benefits of seamless integration of applications

Frontera is an application service provider that hosts applications for a wide range of companies.

This white paper was written to present new ideas on how to eliminate the potential for obsolescence – to “future proof” the enterprise. The audience is senior IT executives.



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Future Proofing Your Enterprise

Integration and obsolescence: Still a critical IT challenge

Although the growing use of the Internet has created tremendous new benefits for organization in improving connectivity, cutting costs and developing better customer service, it is disappointing that we still face many obstacles in truly developing its full potential.

In fact, years after businesses started adopting an eBusiness model, many solutions still fail to deliver on the promise of a truly integrated enterprise. They still fail to mirror the multi-faceted nature of real world business processes that exist outside of the neat acronyms such as CRM, SCM and ERP.

As the customer value proposition has grown from transaction centric (procurement automation) to one that is increasingly value chain centric, today's monolithic vendors such as SAP and Siebel, each with its many different applications, fail to offer solutions that allow small- and mid-sized organizations the opportunity to deploy solutions that meet their needs—now and into the future.

What's more, the use of the Internet has changed greatly over the past few years, exponentially increasing demand. In the “old days,” just a few system users required access to information. Today, an enterprise may have thousands of users – vendors, customers, employees – all demanding access to all information at all times.

Obsolescence: The risks of deploying applications

As eBusiness grows and the Internet changes, IT executives still have a vision of enabling web-based and intranet technologies to better tie their enterprises together.

Yet companies that have embarked down this path have faced many challenges:

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- Some have purchased expensive applications to meet specific goals, but later found that expensive customization would be required to meet later, unforeseen objectives. Or worse, found that applications providers abandoned products and created orphaned users.
- Some have purchased applications, but became bogged down in hiring the large staff of experienced professionals necessary to maintain those applications – resulting in deployment delays and increasing costs.
- Some have developed their own proprietary solutions only to find that the cost of creating, testing and deploying such applications was highly unpredictable and cost far more than envisioned.
- And some companies purchased applications that met their specific goals but weren't scalable to new platforms required to meet other needs.

In short, deploying applications – with the chance of spiraling costs, scalability issues or obsolete solutions – has been a risky business indeed.

Future proofing: The promise of open standards

Instead of suffering through complete redeployments each time an enterprise outgrows its current platform, why not just end the obsolescence forever? Why not create solutions that can be portable and scalable, so that problems can be solved once and work in virtually any platform configuration?

Under that scenario, an enterprise could be future-proofed. Applications would run on any platform, working with other applications (even those yet to be written). And hardware and other infrastructure elements would be virtually guaranteed to run those applications to meet future needs.

There has been much work done in recent years to develop methods of creating applications that fulfill this promise of “write once, run anywhere,” and this has been the particular focus of J2EE technology and the trend toward open standards.

Because J2EE applications servers use the J2EE standard as the platform for application development and delivery, they work anywhere. And a J2EE-compliant application is guaranteed to interact with applications (even future applications) that conform to the standard. Because it is portable, any application written in J2EE will perform regardless of scale or platform.

This makes a great deal of sense to those who want to develop applications destined for such an integrated world. And most organizations (except, it seems, for Microsoft) are jumping on the J2EE bandwagon – to assure a standardized environment for comparison and connection of applications and improved compatibility.

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Open standards are not enough: Infrastructure and the ASP model

Even though open standards offer great promise in solving these applications-oriented issues, it is important to realize that this is not a complete solution to the goal of future proofing the enterprise.

It is clear that the application server itself, and its related networks and other infrastructure are another critical key to ending obsolescence and meeting future proofing goals.

While applications may run more effectively when written to comply with open standards, running the enterprise also requires a significant investment in infrastructures if the full value proposition is to be achieved.

Many companies take on these challenges by deploying inhouse hardware, networks, etc. But costs can be difficult to predict. Hardware must be maintained and upgraded. Staff must be hired, trained and managed. Support must be provided and security issues must be fully addressed.

If changes become necessary to scale up or meet additional needs, there is no guarantee that the infrastructure and associated personnel will be able to meet those new objectives or support them without significant additional cost.

Therefore, a truly future proofed organization must be one that can adapt to changes in the infrastructure environment as well as the applications environment.

One alternative that has emerged over the past few years – and one that offers great promise to an enterprise interested in future proofing, is the application service provider model (ASP).

ASPs such as Frontera provide IT services on a pay-as-you-go basis, offering a complete, full-service environment where fully customized hardware and software solutions are provided in one complete package.

Because a package of applications and hardware/infrastructure solutions is rented, rather than owned, costs are more predictable and there is no risk of obsolescence. The burden of responsibility shifts to the ASP, which is responsible for hosting, managing, testing and deploying applications – also offering a wide variety of services to guarantee security and reliability.

In addition to eliminating obsolescence of applications and hardware, adopting the ASP model eliminates financial risk, making costs more predictable—a particular advantage to small and medium sized businesses.

Under the ASP model, companies enjoy enhanced support, access to faster and more dependable applications and quick deployment. With a predictable monthly fee and no large capital expenditures, total cost of ownership is usually lower and return on investment is usually higher.

Because the ASP can be viewed almost as an extension of a company's IT department, it can be well positioned as a partner in meeting an organization's objectives. But because it also runs independently, it will always maintain the very latest best-of-breed software and hardware.

It is clear that as organizations continue to grow and expect more from their enterprise solutions, there should also

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be leadership in creating solutions that prevent obsolescence. ASPs provide both the applications and infrastructure solutions needed to truly future proof the enterprise.

About Frontera Corporation

Frontera is a full-service provider of customized, front-office applications, enabling corporations to offer the best online content, commerce, and customer service available.

Committed to development of applications through state-of-the-art J2EE-compliant technology, Frontera handles the entire application lifecycle including design, development, implementation, hosting, and management – enabling quick, cost-effective, and successful use of these mission-critical applications.

Frontera’s applications are customized to fit specific industry needs and integrate with back-office applications. Customers include Pioneer Electronics, the Dallas Cowboys, and Conseco. Frontera is headquartered in Los Angeles, California. For more information, please visit www.fronteracorp.com.