

Oracle Head Outlines Application Integration Architecture

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Company president promises to take on integration for users and finally provide a way to bridge functionality between Oracle and third-party apps.

Charles Phillips, Oracle's co-president, talked about promises - ones made last year and new ones announced this year.

Phillips, during his April 16 keynote address here at the annual Oracle Application User Group conference, discussed Applications Unlimited, a promise Oracle made last year at OAUG to support PeopleSoft, JD Edwards and Siebel applications, which Oracle had just acquired, for as long as users were willing to pay for it.

His assurance included the development of new versions of each suite. Earlier this year, Oracle announced the next iterations of each suite. The Applications Unlimited program sent a simple message to Oracle's newly acquired user base: The company would not, contrary to earlier expectations, force users to migrate to Oracle's products.

"Having multiple products is a strength for us. That's fine with us," Phillips said. "As long as we get the leverage on the back end, which we do - with common middleware, common database - the economics make sense for us."

The promise Phillips made at the opening of OAUG this year - to take on integration for users - further cements the idea that multiple products

is a good thing for Oracle. Phillips announced the company's Application Integration Architecture, a platform for business process management across Oracle, third-party and custom applications that finally bridges the gap between Oracle's myriad applications - and third-party applications as well.

As part of the platform, Oracle will build what it's calling Process Integration Packs that are essentially pre-built integrations across Oracle Enterprise Resource Planning, Customer Relationship Management and other industry applications, based on a business process.

The integration packs are essentially composite applications, which are assembled services or functionality from various applications and systems that are brought together in a new application to perform a specific process.

SAP first started developing an integration platform and services to enable composite applications in 2002. Since then, several applications and middleware companies have picked up on the concept.

Where Oracle differs, according to Phillips, is in two key areas: Oracle's Application Integration Architecture is standards-based and is built using a common data model. The process integration packs are based on BPEL (Business Process Execution Language), a common standard for process execution.

"We will take care of integration," said Phillips. "We are starting out with core objects - common objects across - applications - like customer invoice, order, item, product. We are defining hundreds of these business objects and we will maintain those."

The key for users, according to Phillips, is if their systems can talk to business objects, you can talk to Oracle's applications.

All of them. The company has made 32 acquisitions in the past 34 months.

Like SAP's NetWeaver platform, Oracle plans to extend its application integration platform to ISVs (independent software vendors) and system integrators who wish to build third-party composite applications. Those who want to extend the platform vertically, based on specific industry processes, will have an industry reference model from Oracle. Users also will have the ability to extend the platform to build custom applications that integrate different services - and objects - from Oracle.

For its part, Oracle will build both horizontal and vertical Process Integration Packs, which will require Oracle's Fusion Middleware platform to run. The initial packs include Oracle's Siebel CRM On Demand Integration Pack for Oracle E-Business Suite, a composite application that will support the opportunity-to-quote process and includes auto conversion of opportunities to quotes and quotes to orders. An Oracle Siebel CRM Integration Pack for Oracle E-Business Suite Order Management will support the order-to-cash process lifecycle including capabilities for complex product configuration, inventory availability, automated order processing, price synchronization and real-time order status.

Oracle has less than a dozen additional packs in the works, including Oracle Siebel CRM Integration Pack for i-flex FLEXCUBE Account Originations, which will provide an integrated front-to-back-office banking composite application that gives banks a single view of the customer and a streamlined account opening and fulfillment process.

A Siebel Call Center Integration Pack for Oracle Adverse Event Reporting System is a composite application in development for the life sciences industry to support a closed-loop adverse event and complaint solution from notification through reporting and monitoring.

A Siebel CRM Trade Promotions and Deductions Integration Pack for Oracle E-Business Suite will provide a closed-loop trade promotional process for consumer-goods companies, encompassing trade-promotion creation and settlement.

"There are others," Phillips said during his keynote address. "Siebel is popular. Customers seem to like it. Finally someone can take over integration."

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