

## [Update on Web Services technologies: 2002-2004](#)

**Softonomy Ô**, launched in 2001 and headquartered in Dublin Ireland, are builders of Software solutions and providers of related services for businesses in the Financial Services, Telecoms, Pharmaceutical and other sectors. In April 2002, we researched the technology phenomenon known as **Web Services** and published a white paper on the topic. This update document briefly reflects some of the developments that have taken place since that time.

### **Q: What are Web Services?**

In 2004, there is still much talk in the industry about Web Services - that family of standards consisting of WSDL, SOAP, XML, UDDI and related standards that can be used to build software applications. The term is still misrepresented on a frequent basis as some people call services over the web a "web service". This confusion is unfortunately likely to continue and the industry has, to the detriment of adoption, not changed the name, alas. Many business people will glaze over when they hear someone pitching the term at them and it is far from intuitive ie: it is still a *misnomer*.

### **Q: What's happening with Web Services standards?**

The standards still are incomplete in functionality but they have evolved and are continuing to evolve and there has been much progress. Just recently, agreement has been reached by OASIS on one of the key security standards, an important aspect. As expected, progress does take years but as standards go, Web Services is getting a lot of focus from vendors and progress has been quite good all things considered.

### **Q: What problems are Web Services addressing?**

As predicted in 2002, the main area of focus is on integration such as *intra* EAI (Enterprise Application Integration). EAI within an organisation, the so-called *intra* scenario, is where most Web Services-based deployments have taken place and with it, it has to be said, a good deal of success. This is not too surprising given that the Web Services application model is a very simple and proven model (similar to client/server) and the standards are readily available.

### **Q: Are Web Services the best way to solve these problems?**

No, not necessarily. Web Services do not solve problems in a new way. The choice of technologies used for EAI purposes is really determined by the skillsets available, the applications to be integrated, the architecture already built, the available budget, etc, rather than the pure functionality of the underlying technologies and standards. It is of course necessary that any chosen technology set can deliver the required functionality. Web Services can to a large extent, but so can others. Hence, EAI problems are still being solved successfully with J2EE and CORBA. Many vendors are seeing slow adoption of their Web Services solutions, and overall sales are behind alternatives.

**Q: Will Web Services become the dominant way to solve these problems?**

The answer to that is unclear and can only be answered in the future. Web Services are still only being used to any great extent by early adopters and the main area of application is EAI which only suits large businesses. So overall, there have been few deployments. The good news is that most of the early projects have proven to be successful and a lot of businesses are trying out the technologies. This success should continue in terms of momentum as should the evolution of the standards and it is likely that at some point in time Web Services should become dominant in some areas, such as EAI. Web Services won't go away. However, the original vision of Web Services being used for all applications does not look likely to happen in the next 5 years or perhaps ever. Vendors and guru's in the space are now readily admitting that Web Services are not good for developing applications. Their real benefit is with EAI.

**Q: Will Web Services be a cheaper way to solve these problems?**

No. Building EAI solutions should cost more or less the same whatever technologies are used. Yes, there will be differences and that will depend on the usual factors as well as the particular projects. But the ROI for Web Services projects can take many years as businesses need to change their application interfaces to *speak* the standards, establish architecture changes such a *software bus* and *SOA*, etc.

**Q: My company hasn't used Web Services to date – what should we do?**

Companies should at least educate themselves about the technologies so that they can cut through any hype that still exists. Secondly, companies can prepare some applications and prepare their capability and perhaps establish a strategy. For those that have obvious *intra* EAI needs, perhaps selecting a small project in this area to start with is a safe additional step to take. Many analysts are suggesting that the earlier an organisation starts, the better position it will be in to exploit the benefits of the Web Services technologies as they progress and develop. Getting into Web Services is probably best done gradually.

~~~

For further information on **Softonomy** and other white papers, please refer to our website located at [www.softonomy.com](http://www.softonomy.com) . If you have any questions on this or any other topic, please send them via email to: [info@softonomy.com](mailto:info@softonomy.com)