

right questions about your infrastructure in the first place, notes Rick Parry, MD of Progress Software. "Imagine asking a CEO if he knew where all his enterprise applications were, how secure they were, and if they were being properly managed," he says. "He'd probably treat you as if you were loony, and he'd be right to do so. Amazing, then, that many salespeople are trying to sell services-oriented architecture without being able to answer precisely these three questions."

The fact is that, for all its promised benefits, SOA as an environment is inherently more difficult to control than its predecessors. Host-based computing, by centralising all logic and data, was easy to manage, secure and monitor. Client-server computing, by separating the logic, data and user interface, created a level of chaos and runaway costs that has never really been brought under control.

"The key factor here was the loss of control from the centre, and it has defined computing for the last 15 years. Now we have SOA, which offers us the promise of agility, flexibility, legacy extension, return on investment and much more. The downside is that SOA can be infinitely distributed, making it hardest of all to control, unless the appropriate infrastructure is in place," says Parry.

"As companies increasingly make use of widely distributed architectures, they need to be able to answer with total clarity the questions: Do I know what I have? Do I know where it is, and how it is performing? Am I managing it correctly? And is it secure?"

Parry says many companies are going down the SOA road without the ability to answer these questions, even though they would never have done such a thing with legacy computing paradigms.

### GETTING IT RIGHT

According to Softline Accpac sales director Keith Fenner, one of the advantages of an SOA-BPM partnership is that it enables better integration between disparate vertical applications, adding more value to an ERP system, and making organisations that much more agile.

"While SOA and BPM have traditionally been distinct they are now being seen as more complementary than ever before," he says. "The reason for this new partnership is that SOA can give BPM new life, helping it to deliver on the promise of agility. At the same time, BPM puts a business face on SOA and

helps it to bring business and IT closer together. If an organisation has one set of technologies, all of which speak to each other, then integration and agility are not as much of an issue. However, most businesses, as a result of legacy systems or different user approaches, have disparate systems that have to start speaking to each other. This makes the SOA-BPM partnership ideal for



KEITH FENNER,  
SOFTLINE ACCPAC SALES DIRECTOR

**“To successfully implement an SOA and get the appropriate levels of re-use, organisations need firm support from all levels.”**

—MARK STRATHMORE,  
PARTNER DIRECTOR  
AT SOFTWARE AG

enhanced collaboration and integration at a vertical application level as well as from a business process modelling perspective," he says.

Ashley Ellington, managing director at Softline Enterprise, agrees that SOA and BPM are two flavours that work well together. "According to Forrester, in the next five years SOA will be used by architects and developers to create

the next generation of 'design-for-people, build-for-change' applications," he says. "Interestingly enough, SOA won't do it alone. Architects and developers need to think holistically about SOA and consider what Forrester calls the B3 technologies: business process management, business intelligence and business rules."

He believes that SOA will result in the transformation of business software. "In a recent trends report, Forrester said SOA will transform how business people work in the same way that in the 1990s the World Wide Web transformed buying and selling, marketing, software development through open source, and most other aspects of IT."

### GAUGING ITS SUCCESS

Steve Mabbutt, technology director of Khanyisa Real Systems, says there is now enough experience and feedback from SOA projects in a variety of organisations to gauge its strengths and weaknesses. For example, Information Week did a survey of 273 business technology specialists in 49 large firms where SOA/web services implementations did not meet expectations.

"55% of respondents felt that it introduced more complexity into their IT systems; 41% believed that it directly contributed to cost overruns; 35% judged that it failed to provide the expected level of integration. This is not unexpected: all the preceding distributed software technologies (assorted flavours of middleware, CORBA, DCOM, EJB, etc.) experienced bubbles of overwrought expectation and marketing hype, and carried the same risks of complexity, cost and infrastructure requirements," Mabbutt says.

He says feedback indicates that there is a distinct need for selective application of SOA. "But best results are more likely in areas that have undergone careful cost-benefit analysis. And, a smaller number of well-defined system boundaries are the best candidates for SOA. Typically, these involve identifiable challenges of geographical distribution, security or cross-platform integration (to name just a few) that justify the additional effort, risk and cost of a service-based implementation."

And in future? SOA may not even exist as a separate discipline. It will have been folded into enterprise according to a prediction made at The Open Group's 15th Enterprise Architecture Practitioner's Conference held recently in Austin, Texas.