

1 Background

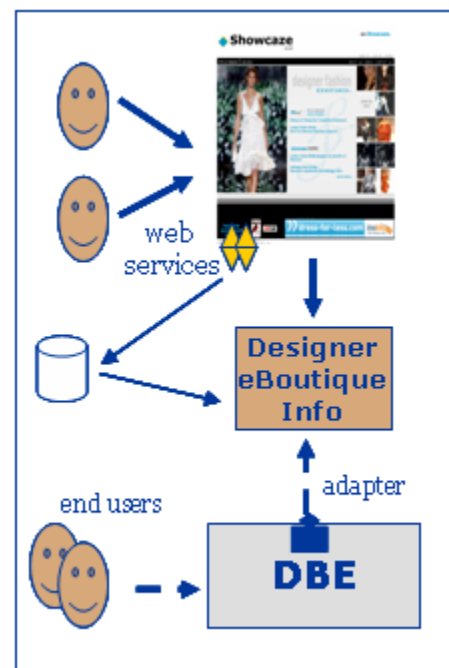
The e-Showcasing software as a service (**SAAS**) solution was first developed by Excellis to address a specific market requirement of a number of its client organisations. Independent fashion designers (**IFDs**), mainly operating as small- and medium-sized (SME) businesses, need cost-effective and flexible channels to market to promote their brands, collections (usually produced twice yearly), and to generate additional business opportunities in both retail and wholesale sectors. Although sales generation is an important aspect¹, the main emphasis is on showcasing and brand building. Hence, participation in leading fashion events (London, Paris, New York, Milan, etc.) is an important showcasing activity.

2 Project Overview

In 2006, Excellis decided to join the DBE project in the role of an ICT Developer, as we recognised the future potential of the DBE platform and its strategic alignment to our objective of expanding the service to the next level, as well as offering it to IFDs globally, via a dedicated website www.showcaze.co.uk. Whilst there is a huge array of marketing and online services already available to IFDs, none offer a “total” business solution, with built-in user-manageable (and Web 2.0 style) features and a menu² of complementary services, at a starting price point of €13 per month.

Working closely with our regional catalyst, the University of Central England (UCE), we jointly scoped a project to successfully integrate pre-selected, publicly accessible, features of a live instance of e-Showcasing. The project encompassed the following three core activities:

- Conversion of the existing ASP.NET modules to web services.
- Creation of Java classes.
- Development of a DBE adapter.



¹ This is particularly true for apparel, where sizing and fitting issues become more prominent and SMEs have limited order fulfilment processes and capacity.

² See <http://www.showcaze.co.uk/showcazeshome/ShowcazeBro.PDF> for further details.

3 Project Outcomes

The adapter development and integration of e-Showcasing with the DBE technology platform proved to be satisfactory, as a proof-of-concept exercise. Specific noteworthy points are:

- Installation and configuration of DBE Studio is a fairly straightforward process for the technically competent. However, the process could have been even more streamlined with better organised documentation and knowledge bases.
- Some architectural changes were necessary in the e-Showcasing source code to facilitate the conversion.
- Conversion of ASP.NET to web-services for DBE integration is technically feasible, although somewhat complicated (multi-step process with Web Service Description Language – WSDL, and Java class generation), and requires in-depth knowledge of .NET and Java.
- Configuration management issues surfaced when bugs were discovered; e.g. which version of Axis, Java, servENT, etc; even with the All-In-One installation.
- In future, additional time should be allowed to attain full familiarity with the DBE functionality and application structure.

4 Future Outlook

The DBE initiative is consistent with our own approach to addressing the current and future needs of the SME market. Assuming a mature, stable and commercially viable DBE platform, we anticipate that future benefits could include:

- Vertical and horizontal integration of further services within e-Showcasing applications and future adaptations to other industry sectors. *E.g. Supply chain integration, involving fashion designers, manufacturers, textile/fabric and print designers, retailers, private and corporate buyers.*
- Speed up the inclusion of secondary user groups: event organisers, PR, travel agents, etc.
- Yield significant cost and time savings in development, marketing, and advertising.
- Help facilitate SME mind shift with the take-up and exploitation of ICT – especially, ICT asset ownership versus value generated by the asset.

