

Appendix II

Roundtable discussion in the last part of the workshop

After a brief introduction by Elmar Husmann (IBM), Petri Rasanen (TCH, Tampere) asked a few questions. These notes capture Elmar's comments and the discussions that ensued after Petri's questions.

Elmar: First let's talk about the business case for DBE technology

Business case:

Business case question came up in most presentations. We have also asked ourselves the same question regarding enabling technology to foster innovation. DBE is infrastructure, platform on top of which to build the solution. Means to an end. Speed up development. 20 years ago, in order to use a computer you had to know a programming language. Today that is not true anymore. DBE is about changing the way we interact with the internet in order to enable small firms to work together. Single service is already sufficient to connect to DBE because it connects to potential users. Owner of SME: DBE is a platform to enable collaboration between the users of my software. More complex: bringing multiple component solutions together. Finally, there is also the idea of providing electronic support for the aggregation and combination of services.

Petri: short and long term view

Elmar: separation between back-office and front-office, introduction of middleware has accelerated business processes and lowered cost. DBE enables faster adaptation in changing market conditions.

Technology:

1- Middleware level: execution environment. Completely distributed, p2p, scale-free. There is no centre and no central platform. ERP is dominated by a platform vendor. DBE will create a platform that is not dominated by one vendor but has open standards.

2- semantic level: how to get a service onto the DBE. Service factory is model-driven. Does not require you to program, requires you to describe your business using a number of specialised languages; however, we are also working on natural and local languages.

3- evolutionary environment: futuristic; to allow software components to fit more easily together, increase efficiency of search and matching.

Engagement approach:

As an empty platform the DBE is useless. As another example, there is no business case of GSM. As part of the engagement process we need to find good use cases, if we have something to show it will be easier to convince people to adopt the DBE. Driver engagement, current workshops. We need to speed up the engagement of new regions.

Open source:

Large platforms tend to drive innovation in a very narrow area. We can provide a platform that is able to evolve in directions that cannot be completely predicted right now. Open source fits very well the evolutionary approach of the project. One of the main issues we face is related to trust, IPR, legal problems.

Petri: What kind of companies in your regions would benefit from DBE?

North Denmark: Software production, accounting. How can we establish a platform that does not lock in small companies, that does not require them to invest in large IT systems? It is not fair to them. Can they pick and choose smaller solutions, assembling what they need? Interested in a dialogue to define a

business case. Switchbox would translate your system into another system, allowing multiple standards to co-exist.

Miguel: distributed system that allows to translate what's on one side of the world to what's on the other side. We are looking into solutions that work by construction, rather than forcing people to adopt standards.

Marco Conte (Legal-IST): basic need for their cluster is something that can be used to achieve a higher level of cooperation. Compatible with sustainable business model for all the stakeholders. The way a company can benefit from technology is much more complex than an individual.

Baden-Wuttenberg: 4 ideas:

- Develop best practice cases with DBE
- Public admin are moving toward OS
- Bring the idea to start-ups, universities
- Set up a competition between regions for best use of DBE platform

Elmar: There will be a public conference on DBE.

Claudio Inguaggiato (CSP):

Too many things together. Too confusing to include also public administration. Each word is very complex. Focus on SMEs.

- I focus on putting in infrastructure for SMEs.
- You put a large emphasis on Software SMEs, but there also User SMEs.
- Open source is a means, not an end.
- it is very challenging to make an analogy between DBE and GSM

Elmar: it is just an infrastructure. DBE is not about enforcing a type of business model or of user.

Miguel: to make an analogy, you now need a telephone, but by itself the telephone does not enforce a business model. DBE should simply enable you to do your business more efficiently.

CSP: for end-user or for software company?

Miguel: for both. DBE is agnostic from the business point of view.

CSP: Comment: in my experience, there is another way to move to these platforms, and that is by starting from the user point of view. If the user is not IT-literate, we will have less market for those companies who want to sell services on this platform. We have a long way to go before SMEs start using ICT solutions in their day-by-day activities. Happy to see a technology-driven model. However, I don't want to see a future with a very good platform and few users.

Elmar:

If there are only 50 users the platform is useless. If we ask software providers to contribute one component each, but each SW SME brings a significant number of clients, then the number of SMEs will grow very fast.

CDAPME Germany: Collaborate on regulation, taxation, contracts, with local authorities

Enrique (ITA, Aragon): We have the same approach in Aragon.

Luigi (Trento): Do you see public administration also as an end-user?

CDAPME Germany: Yes, in some cases. This applies to west Pomerania.

Trento: SMEs are selling services to public administration, so the latter is the main user.

Northern Denmark: We see a strong tendency by public administrations to outsource software development to small businesses.

Trento: The first sector should be the one closest to the market. In Trentino, that's tourism.

Aragon: In Aragon we have ski rental equipment. We are more focused on rural environment and on ski tourism. We will build the pilot tests of the DBE around these sectors.

Paolo: We put a large emphasis on regions to develop business models that are meaningful to them.

CDAPME Germany: ... (did not catch it)

Elmar: We grow from small application cases.

Nachira: Problem of bootstrap: interesting from the scientific, academic and socio-economic point of view. We can activate research in some aspects in order to highlight the advantages of ecosystem. Scalability, seamless connection and aggregation of components, to develop better value chains. OS is not the goal, it is a means. OS is a need for the basic infrastructure, to foster trust and buy-in. But it is not imposed on the services. In the research we can more easily focus on the technical infrastructure, but we can activate debates for the development of a regional vision.

Elmar: What would it mean if I migrate my services into the DBE? What is the governance structure behind it? What are the guarantees? If we can address these questions we will increase the trust in DBE. Basic services are included at the very beginning of the platform. What is a good set of basic components (accounting, ...)? What are the generic aspects of all B2B communications and transactions?

Trento: It would be good to have services tailored to a specific cluster of SMEs. VoIP, ...

Miguel: Which new services can we design? No sense reinventing TV to run on the DBE.

Elmar (to Luigi-Trento): You are thinking too high-level, think of release mechanisms for components

Comments of Freek Posthumus after the meeting: the project participants should look at a dual approach-

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- One for the hi-tech and highly skilled companies which are already “on the road” and need less coaching than the others; they will move faster to a virtual management mode; the disadvantage is that they are few and not representative for the bulk of SMEs,
 - One for the bigger mass of enterprises with very limited knowledge of good integrated (with back-office) solutions and no good business management structure; they are the majority and need more coaching; the attraction is that they offer much better efficiency gains by IT and so can contribute heavily to achieving the Lisbon goals.
 - The move to IT is an important part of the removal of the paradigm to change of many smaller enterprises as a way to profit from the ever-changing business environment. Big companies have learned to live and cope with change, SMEs often do not have that attitude, by lack of understanding, specialised advice and support mechanisms.
 - Hence the move to IT is much more an improvement of management methods than only a technical operations change.
 - Approaching the matter from this point of view will give a better result.
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Petri: I was surprised to see that several regions were quite supportive of Open Source:

What is the position of your region on OS?

Trento: We are working on OS in everything. Our region is looking at OS in an opportunistic way. If it is cost effective and reliable, they will adopt it.

CSP: We are pushing OS because we feel it is the only way SMEs can fill the gap between something on the market and their entrance. I get confused when we mix public and private. I prefer not to mix the commitment of public sector to OS with private sector motivation. I agree that public are a good customer.

Q for Miguel: OS and embedded systems: we think it is the future; From a business point of view, is there a plan to apply OS to embedded systems? I am sceptical about entrance into well-established software markets, embedded systems seem like a better opportunity.

North Denmark: We are facing a structural reform of the public administration, and there is a lot of talk about IT, but in general it is positive.

EC: Are we thinking of a framework of values to address the inclusion problem.

Elmar: We are thinking about a set of ground rules of engagement.

EC: What about strongly competitive SMEs accessing the same environment?

Trento: In our case we are thinking of involving complementary SMEs. We are also thinking of network effects.

What are the main obstacles to the adoption of something like the DBE?

Alexander Ruoff: “What’s in it for me?”

Marco Conte: Business case

Trento: I think security and trust are essential. Communicate to SW SMEs the opportunity of using DBE as a cooperation channel.

Angelo Corallo: The use of complex descriptions is useful for long-term relationships, not simply for marketplaces. Long-term relationships justify the greater involvement required by complex languages.

Trento: Network effect obtained by embedding the value chains in the DBE.