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Facing up to SOA management

by Keith Rodgers & Phil Wainewright

EVERYONE appreciates that hindsight is a wonderful thing, but when you talk with Mike Reagin, director of research and development at Providence Health System, you recognize that foresight probably has a lot going for it, too.

One of the earliest adopters of a management infrastructure for web services, the Seattle-based healthcare service provider quotes six-figure potential savings from its initiatives to improve data sharing among patients, physicians and other professionals. Partly because the services management infrastructure was installed from day one, Reagin argues that operational effectiveness has improved and development costs have been slashed. After all, if your Service Level Agreement commits to delivering mission-critical medical information within a matter of seconds, it helps if you have the infrastructure in place to manage and monitor it (see box, page 13).

Providence, a customer of web services management specialist Infravio, is one of a small but fast-

growing band of companies that have adopted management technology for web services and the service-oriented architecture (SOA) that provides a framework for organizing them.

Laying the management framework involves decisions that will stick for years to come

Small is the operative word: SOA management is an emerging subset of an emerging market, where even well-established specialists like Actional or Amberpoint can only boast of around ten or so significant customer production sites. But the market looks set to grow: as organizations unleash more and more web services internally, so they run into a need for systems to measure, manage and secure them.

The big issue facing users today, however, is working out which of the different approaches to SOA management will best meet their needs — in both the short-term and long-term.

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“[Web services] really simplified a lot of the complexities of our healthcare environment”

— Mike Reagin, Providence Health System, *page 13*

“ [API design] needs to be easy-to-understand, and it needs to work across divergent models”

— Adam Gross, salesforce.com, *page 2*

“You can't integrate without identity, and that's been fundamentally mishandled by application developers for years”

— Christopher Crowhurst, Thomson Prometric, *page 9*