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DIRECTORY

We will be publishing an updated SOA management directory as a separate document later this month. Monthly digest subscribers will have access to the directory at no extra charge as soon as it is ready.

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Risking it all on a start-up supplier

FEATURE ARTICLE by Keith Rodgers

THE INSTANT Christopher Crowhurst, vice president and principal architect for Thomson Prometric, signed the ink on a contract with web services management vendor Actional, the nature of his relationship shifted.

Having spent 14 months in an exhaustive vendor selection and vetting process, Thomson's fortunes – and the success of a \$5 million implementation at the heart of the Prometric business unit – had become inextricably tied to the vendor's viability. The success of the project wasn't just down to functionality, implementation skills, technical prowess and the other factors involved in making any IT system operational – it was also down to Actional's ability to sell the same system elsewhere and so stay in business. Although Actional has since notched up multiple live customers, at the time he began his selection process there were no referenceable customers in production.

As one of the earliest adopters of management software in a market that's still in its relative infancy today,

Crowhurst's informed gamble on Actional was an extreme but telling example of the factors that come into play when customers purchase from smaller, relatively young vendors. In any market where much of the pioneering work is being carried out by venture capital-backed specialists, organizations that require bleeding edge technology have to take two tightly-connected risks. Firstly, they need to be sure that the technology is stable and does what it's supposed to do – and secondly, they need to know the vendor will be around for long enough to keep on developing it.

"The whole game is who's going to stay in the lead," says Motorola's Toby Redshaw

As markets develop, larger vendors tend to seize on this kind of issue, flaunting their size and longevity as a key selling point once they've made their way into a fledgling market. IBM, after all, built a business around spreading Fear, Uncertainty and Doubt about its competitors.

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“We have a lot of customers whose timescales are more aggressive than QuickSilver will support”

— Jim Rivera, BEA, *page 3*

“Implementing an SOA is not hard ... [it's] facing up to the realization that once you have a service out there, people are going to start using it.”

— Sam Higgins, Queensland Transport, *page 8*

“[Trust is] being told, not having to discover – if there's something in the closet, I'm going to find it”

— Christopher Crowhurst, Thomson Prometric, *page 10*