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## Laying the foundations for SOA

FEATURE ARTICLE by Phil Wainewright and David Longworth

**I**MPLEMENTING web services within a service-oriented architecture is supposed to reduce integration headaches. But with so many products and packages in the market that claim to offer the best foundation for SOA – all accompanied by dire warnings of what could go wrong if customers choose a different path – most IT buyers are rightly wary.

Picking the right starting point is vital, especially when there are vast areas of existing infrastructure that web services cannot yet reliably integrate with. But with no proven best practice yet established in the field, vendors are as much in the dark about what really works as their customers are. Solutions that claim to bridge the gaps, such as enterprise services bus (ESB), have their own drawbacks, while established players with an existing product set often bring along baggage of their own. "You're always worried you've got this huge iceberg coming along under the surface that you don't need," says Kevin Poulter, application technology

manager at British American Tobacco, an early adopter whose SOA went live last year and already has production services in operation.

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"What customers most of all want to know today is how to get started on this," says Mark Carges, CTO of BEA Systems

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The challenge that early adopters face is to make choices that maximize the benefits while minimizing the unforeseen burdens that new technologies always seem to bring along with them. The most significant pitfalls lie along two critical dimensions: getting the interface right between the new technology and the organization's existing infrastructure; and maintaining control of the new architecture as it evolves.

There are any number of choices for aligning an SOA with the existing infrastructure. For starters, every incumbent vendor is likely to offer their own flavor of SOA capability.

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**“You’ve got to be an integration developer not an application developer. It’s a different mindset people have to adopt to be successful at SOA!”**

— Steven Rdzak, Level 3 Communications, page 9

**“Why bother putting this thin veneer that does what you want to do on top of this infrastructure? Why not just put in the thin veneer and forget the rest?”**

— Kevin Poulter, British American Tobacco, page 11

**“If you build a list of all the things you want to build an SOA out of, web services is just a small part!”**

— Graham Glass, webMethods, page 12