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SMAC
REDEFINING
ENTERPRISE APPLICATIONS

Social, mobile and cloud redefining enterprise apps

Key players in the enterprise app arena highlight how traditional enterprise apps are evolving in today's highly competitive business landscape by leveraging the emerging trends of social, mobile, cloud and analytics to derive tangible business benefits

BY AMRITA PREMRAJAN

Traditionally, organizations have been relying on several enterprise applications like ERP, CRM, BPM etc., to ensure smooth operation of business. However, with the evolving demand of business and increasing need for providing instant access to business information, enterprises are increasingly integrating mobile, social media and cloud elements with the existing apps.

In an effort to understand how the traditional apps are experiencing a makeover with the rising trend of SMAC (social, cloud, mobility and analytics), and get insights into emerging trends, *InformationWeek* spoke to industry experts. Here are their views on how enterprises can reap numerous benefits ranging from increasing field force productivity to enhancing customer engagement by adding a layer of social, mobile and cloud to the traditional enterprise apps.

Enterprise application trends C-suite should take note of

BUSINESS applications continue to undergo a lot of change, but there are a few trends that are going to revolutionize the way companies communicate, hire, market and work. Below are just a few examples that the C-Suite should take note of for the latter half of 2014.

CLOUD IS STILL A BUZZWORD

You hear it everywhere, but the cloud is one of the biggest trends in the enterprise application game right now. Customers no longer want to be tied to excessive costs and risks associated with the more traditional software deployments. Cloud deployment offers a lower total cost of ownership and a simpler way to keep systems up-to-date while redirecting IT resources to more productive areas. As mergers and acquisitions continue to grow, cloud-based solutions provide common ground between the adjoining companies, eliminating the need to restructure different hardware platforms, data centers, and train IT staff.

BUSINESS APPLICATIONS ARE GETTING MAKEOVERS

In past years, the look and feel of an enterprise application was never a deciding factor to a client. In today's corporate environment, users want to be able to work the way they live and because of this, they have so many options in the marketplace. This in turn creates more pressure on organizations to develop clean and beautiful looking interfaces that can be used at a desktop or on a mobile device. Applications now should be intuitive, fluid, and natural to use. When software can anticipate what you need and do the heavy lifting, it makes everything easier, and ultimately frees you to focus on the bigger picture.

ATUL SAREEN
Managing Director
Infor India

BI to eventually mutate, integrate with analytics

THE INDUSTRY is being propelled into transformation with the confluence of cloud, analytics, mobile and social that has enabled people to interact more dynamically, fluidly and rapidly. With these interactions, enormous amount of data is being generated and captured. There is a widespread realization that this data needs to be analyzed and mined for insights. The enormous volume of data which is essentially Big Data, needs a system of insight to generate value from the data. In view of this, the following are key trends that are emerging:

Cloud BI: Cloud is becoming increasingly the home for all the systems for insights. The active use of cloud BI deployment is over 90 percent and mobile BI development has increased to over 26 percent. The organizations would want to have the available talent spend time accessing and exploring data, testing innovative ideas, and bringing in more data, rather than maintaining infrastructure and upgrading software. This concept will further propel the use of cloud BI.

Visualization: Visualization is the science of making pictures out of data so that they inform the viewer and allow them to understand the data and take action. It creates new methods of interacting with the data to help people find patterns and unusual features.

Visual data discovery took center stage in 2013. The initial visual data discovery releases from the mega vendors tended to have limited capabilities, but the gap is slowly closing. The specialty vendors and the heavyweights are trying to find the right balance between agile analysis and trusted data. It has to be a user-driven experience but with IT control over the data — it is not an easy line to straddle.

The BI tools market was founded on the concept of self-service business intelligence. The difference is in how much IT is involved upfront and to what degree users are able and willing to do things on their own. Visual data discovery tools have brought a greater degree of ease than conventional BI modules.

Interactive Element: The interactive element of BI in terms of drill down and self-creation capabilities is important. The reporting is to large proportions, operation and financial, with significant portions of it required for compliance. Hence, the focus is on accelerator-driven approach with ready templates for reporting.

The BI capability will eventually mutate to integrate with analytics, move to self reporting and be rendered on devices. Apart from this, data mining and predictive analytics are most commonly followed by simulation and optimization while most Hadoop and NoSQL are focused on data capture and storage.

AKILA VASUDEVAN
Director – Business Analytics & Optimization,
Service Line Leader, IBM GBS GD India

Hybrid ERP: The next hot enterprise app trend

ALONG with CIOs and CEOs, market watchers have also been sensing that the way to use and stretch legacy ERP has undergone many changes and will continue to evolve further. For example, Gartner recently predicted that by 2016, heavily customized ERP implementations will be routinely referred to as "legacy ERP", as alternatives to monolithic, on-premise ERP and enterprise applications continue to mature.

That could mean highly customized ERP implementations moving to an impasse, creating a subset of legacy ERP installations. At the same time we can see businesses looking to improve administration through advantage of lower costs, better functional fit and process flexibility offered by blending cloud applications with on-premise applications in what we now refer to as new-age ERP. Single ERP suite instances are increasingly making way for a hybrid ERP approach.

Imagine the various pieces of IT that you have invested in so far and how they stack up against each other and against the brutal forces of time and change. Some of them, like a legacy ERP could be already sitting in a cash cow mode, where you have to maintain them in order to squeeze out the returns possible.

In such cases, having a right solution will take care of your co-existence needs across cloud-on-the-move pockets, as well as keep you grounded with your big-ticket ERP back home. Choose something well-rounded and well-referred that will help you balance every developing puzzle piece together — whether it is IT application maintenance across the network, your current IT investments, TCO / licensing per dealer or ecosystem partner's investment wallets. A relevant and well-oiled solution allows you to tie both the ends of ERP rainbows together and provides adequate standardization across the network.

While it will be at least 10 years or more before the majority of organiza-

RAMESH BABU K M
Chief Delivery Officer & Business Head – ERP on Cloud, Ramco
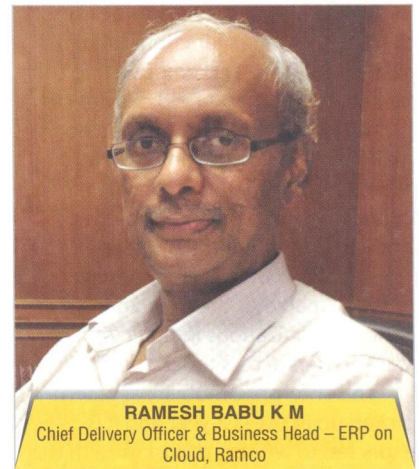
tions decide to flip ERP to the cloud, Gartner has already predicted there are industry segments like service-centric industries, such as professional services, business services and digital media, which could soon spin majority of their ERP functionality to the cloud within the next five years.

Social media analytics to be leveraged for devising customer-centric strategies

IN TODAY'S time, social media has become an extended channel for customers to put up their viewpoints, opinions and expectations from any brand. This online chatter becomes a powerful social environment, which can be effectively tapped by brands and public entities for initiating and building consumer engagement.

To achieve this, social media analytics is being increasingly looked at by brands and organizations as a key enabler that lets them analyze customer sentiments, address their queries, leverage analytics to draw meaningful insights for decision support.

Organizations can use this tool as a means for devising customer-centric strategies in a dynamic manner. These strategies may vary from competitive analysis, brand management, customer feedback, awareness or even CSR activities.

The key aspect of the social media content is that it is unstructured and does not have a fixed dimension. Most of the content is in the form of text, pages, videos and images. It requires natural language processing, local language capabilities, and clustering of topics and various other techniques to bring meaning and then present them in intuitive analytics for business relevance.

Some of the key viewpoints businesses are looking at for leveraging social media for business, revolve around branding / marketing, customer engagement, social risk and competitive analysis. These dimensions are assessed in the form of statistics, scores and demographic representations, derived after processing the unstructured data.

Some of the customer opinions and moods are represented via sentiments, emotions and intentions. Businesses are also looking at tools with domain-specific vocabulary,

VISWANATHAN N
Head, Big Data, Cloud & Legacy Transformation, L&T Infotech

which can provide insights into domain-specific dimensions and topics culled out from unstructured social media data. Feeds from these analytics are being looked at for corelating with internal transaction systems for more situational awareness and contextual predictions.

Enterprise apps getting a makeover with mobility

TODAY, enterprises are embracing mobility in various functional spheres such as enabling and empowering their field force with hand-held devices or improving productivity and decision-making by having anytime, anywhere access to information or for staying connected with customers, partners and other business stakeholders. The key driver of Indian enterprise mobility market is the paradigm shift in how organizations interact with its stakeholders across touchpoints.

The enterprise mobility segment picked up in the last year and it is expected to witness robust growth this year too. Some of the early adopters from the industry in this space are from BFSI, manufacturing and retail etc. Popular mobile applications, which are being implemented are mobile device management, sales force automation, lead management, CRM, data collection etc. Globally, various governments have started taking mobility to the next level by mobilizing various public and government-to-citizen services. With the refuelling of the Indian economy

and the new government set to make new policies, we are expecting some big-ticket investments in the mobility space too.

Currently, most of the enterprises that have adopted and implemented mobility have taken a short-term view by deploying one or two mobile applications and expecting an immediate ROI from it. Enterprises need to think holistically and define a long-term roadmap for mobility applications and solutions. There is a need of detailed roadmap — which devices /platforms/ technologies need to be adopted, identifying the key business applications which need to be mobilized, etc. This will be critical if enterprises aspire to successfully adopt mobility and get the required ROI.

Presently, IT service providers are more focused on mobile application development and deployment. Going forward, IT service providers will need to focus more on providing "end-to-end mobility service partnership for enterprises", constituting mobile consulting, development and deployment

ROTHIN BHATTACHARYA
Chief Strategy Officer,
HCL Infosystems

and managed service. They need to adopt a consultative approach to help enterprises understand the scope, value and benefits (cost saving, productivity, customer satisfaction, etc.) of mobility and design their own mobility roadmap to enable and reach their business goals. An end-to-end service provider can help an organization realize its full potential by ensuring smooth transition to a mobile workspace.

SMAC empowering BPM

THE MOBILE, cloud, analytical and social age in which we live is creating new worlds of opportunity to transform business operations and engage with customers. By aligning these technologies with process improvement efforts, enterprises and organizations are attaining new levels of speed, responsiveness, quality and agility.

A traditional BPM scenario brings together a complete set of integrated composition technologies for managing the interactions among all the resources — people, software systems, information, business rules and policies — that contribute to operational process outcomes. By incorporating functionalities to support real-time business analytics, deep complex-event processing (CEP), social-media-to-support behaviour. collaboration and expanded technologies to support growing requirements for mobility, BPM

can be extended to the next level of adding more intelligence to processing capabilities.

SOCIAL MEDIA & BPM SYNERGIES
The huge strides made on the process optimization front by synergies of BPM and social media have created a trend known as Social BPM. It uses web 2.0, components such as wikis and social networking and more traditional components in initiatives. The use of social BPM allows direct and volume user interaction, which helps in leveraging the mindshare of resources outside the company and encouraging a more collaborative and transparent approach to process optimization.

The re-definition has created a new problem-solving paradigm called 'crowdsourcing'. To gear up for the social BPM trend, the market has effectively integrated most of the

SAJEEV NAIR
General Manager & Practice Head for BPM & EAI, Mindtree

popularly used social media channels as part of their BPM suites. This will enable business analysts and process architects to effectively utilize data from social channels as input for key processing scenarios. These act as a trigger for

an alternate workflow or as exception process flow, or even as an initiator for critical process flows. Real-time event correlation and predictive analysis scenarios using CEP can also effectively leverage this 'crowd-sourced' data.

BPM technologies are already established as 'change agents' for an enterprise transformational journey. Social media adds another effective channel for adoption and navigation of core enterprise business processes.

MOBILE BPM

Enterprises have started aggressively enabling mobile devices to handle more business processes. Improvements in device architectures and software are beginning to blur the lines between BPM use for tablets and laptops, although mobile BPM remains a few steps behind other enterprise applications like CRM and Business Intelligence (BI).

While challenges remain with regard to form factor limitations and security for mobile BPM, a few key vendors are making waves as they extend processes to more remote workers.

ANALYTICS & BPM SYNERGIES

For analytics to be actionable, analysis must work in conjunction with process which in turn yields intelligent business process management. By having more real-time intelligence and analytics directly feeding automated processes via SMAC mechanisms, an organization can see trends, issue actions and measure results through reports delivered by enterprise social media.

The application of SMAC to business processes essentially creates visibility on what peak customer experience looks like to anyone in the organization, across hierarchy and outlines what someone should do when actually interacting with the customer.

When it comes to improving processes, visibility is one of the most important attributes of a platform. Most of the commercial BPM products now provide complete process visibility with real-time analytics. The built-in dashboards make it easier to recognize performance issues in real-time and take corrective actions when needed.

In order to operationalize insights from Big Data, or apply contextual information from mobile engagements, business processes must be redesigned to apply those insights.

BPM IN CLOUD

BPM is also being enabled, measured and monitored for the cloud. Business process management projects increasingly rely on integrated approaches to Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA). Cloud computing and SOAs incorporate modular reusable business services that have clearly defined and standardized interfaces. As a result, these architectures maximize reuse and business agility, enabling rapid business change.

Issues to consider when moving BPM to the cloud include the types of process involved, their complexity, the number of interfaces involved, and the state of the databases. Moving to the cloud may be an opportunity to consolidate apps and go across multiple platforms, but this is an area where planning and caution should be employed.

With more and more product vendors integrating SMAC enablement capabilities in their offerings, enterprises can leverage the finer aspects of social and mobile BPM with analytics support and less upfront cost of ownership via cloud-based deployment models. Choice will lie with enterprise business process custodians, whether to jump onto the SMAC bandwagon or stick with traditional capabilities. The decision will be purely based on the extent of 'intelligent business process requirements' within their enterprise context.

Using social networking in CRM processes to increase customer engagement

OVER THE last 10 years, the rise of mass social media has completely transformed marketing. That impact has extended across all industries and has been especially prevalent in retail, where it has completely transformed the brandcustomer relationship into a more customer-centric interaction. By adding a layer of social to traditional CRMs, retailers can take customer engagement to a whole new level. Social CRMs allow retailers to expand their social media presence by interacting with customers in a single dashboard. In the process, they gain larger insights into what campaigns work and what tactics to employ to gain a larger customer base. CRMs make the information easy to understand and process, which gives retailers a data-driven basis to design social media strategies. Many retailers are seeing the benefits of upgrading from traditional CRMs to social CRMs to engage consumers and improve their experience.

Social CRMs can determine how social media influence can affect the consumer lifecycle and helps retailers turn inactive consumers into active ones once more. One example of a company using CRMs to drive loyalty is Burberry. Burberry is executing strategies based on data from CRMs to launch its new fragrance Burberry Body through its custom Facebook app, and encouraging its millions of Facebook fans to order a sample. The company is also taking
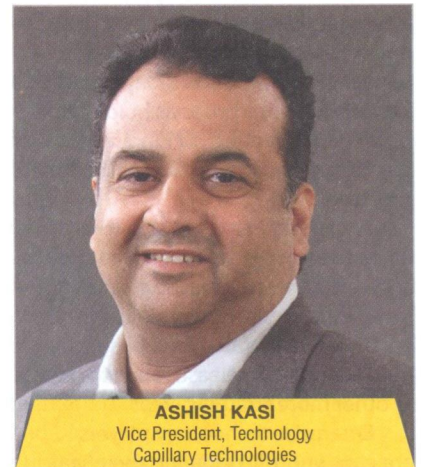
ASHISH KASI
Vice President, Technology
Capillary Technologies

Twitter by storm and implementing a similar tactic to entice Twitter users.

Cover Story

Mobile-enabling enterprise apps to increase field force efficiency and productivity

FIELD SALES executives are an organization's first point of contact with the customer and often make or break the deal through their conduct. Still, for many organizations field service operations are the last frontier where enterprise information systems, workforce monitoring solutions and productivity tools stop having an effect.

Mobile technology can result in significant time savings and improved productivity for the field force. It facilitates seamless interactions between the field sales staff, their offices, and their clients. With improved accuracy in information capture, it brings down the operational expenses and creates process efficiency. Organizations can use mobility across all stages of the sales lifecycle — from lead management to customer onboarding and customer servicing.

Lead Management: Mobility enables dynamic lead management capabilities for the field force. Some of the key functionalities enabled through mobile technology include viewing assigned leads, search leads, schedule tasks, followups, and viewing pending items, alerts and notifications.
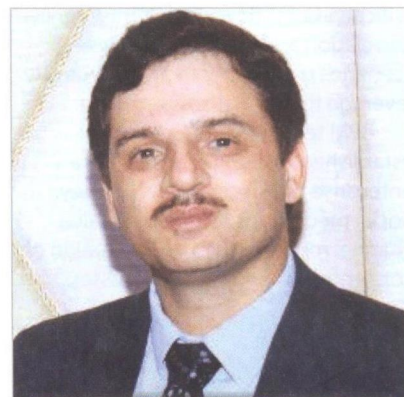
Customer Need Analysis: Depending on demographics, lifestyle, spend patterns and future needs, mobile-enabled applications can help field sales force suggest the right products for the customer.

Application login and tracking: Real-time application processing can significantly increase the conversion percentage for field agents by creating minimum time lag in customer decision making process. Through mobile technology, application forms can directly be filled on a mobile/tablet, and sent online to the processing centre for quality check and further processing with close tracking of application status.

Sales toolkit: Often, field agents are required to provide detailed product-related information to prospects. Mobile devices give them access to latest product brochures, videos and other marketing material to help close the deal.

Customer servicing and retention: After-sales services are an important aspect for building sustainable customer relationships and creating several cross/up selling opportunities. The mobile platform renders real-time alerts, pop-up reminders, customer query updates, grievance handling, reminders for key events like birthdays and wedding anniversaries etc. for the field executives

Monitoring and Reporting: Field agents can use their mobile devices to send real-time MIS reports to their supervisors. Using these reports, the team leads can easily gauge the occupancy rates of various agents and enable dynamic work allocation.

Thus, mobility creates an ideal platform that can automate majority of the non-productive work items and induce sales efficiency.

VIRENDER JEET
Senior Vice President
Technology, Newgen Software

Social functionality in SaaS business applications: An emerging trend

CONSIDERING that almost 80 percent of IT spend is used in keeping the lights on, innovation projects often get sidelined within enterprise environments. The Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) model is today being seen by the enterprises as holding the potential to bridge this "innovation gap" that frequently afflicts corporate IT organizations.

While users can continue to enjoy the latest, fully functional and secure business applications; the lower infrastructure and maintenance costs stemming from SaaS business applications can release funds to invest in other more strategic areas.

Enterprise technology players are continuously updating their SaaS business applications. Improving functionality is not the only reason for these upgrades; fixing existing patches and bugs, improving security mechanisms and developing better usability is at the heart of these amendments. Software is updated in the background; transparent to the users. The user team can start using the new features right away, making better informed business decisions.

Social functionality in SaaS business applications is also seeing tremendous demand. While some SaaS vendors add what they call social functionality afterwards, adding little business value; innovative companies have begun to embed social capabilities where it makes most sense, delivering maximum benefits to business teams and their customers.

By delivering modern SaaS business applications with fantastic new features, technology players provide SaaS business users with horizontal and vertical visibility into their business. They also gain access to integrated business processes that can help find solutions for various business problems. IW

YATIN KANTAK
Vice President–Applications
& Geo Expansion, Oracle India