

Interoperability

How Technology Managers Rate Microsoft and Its Technologies for Development

Businesses are adopting Web services as a means of cutting costs, where they must prioritize what product characteristics are most important for achieving their goals.

Key Questions

- What are the top priorities for IT decision makers when deploying in-house applications?
- What standards do IT decision makers see as best for fostering interoperability?
- Why does Microsoft receive top marks for interoperability?

Key Findings

With respect to in-house applications, 72 percent of technology managers give Microsoft high marks for interoperability. In part, Microsoft benefits from supporting Web services standards. Looking ahead, Jupiter Research believes Microsoft's next-generation development tools will meet the interoperability priorities of businesses deploying .NET.



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Lead Analyst

Joe Wilcox

Contributing Analysts

Peter Sargent
Zori Bayriamova
Corina Matiesanu

Research Director

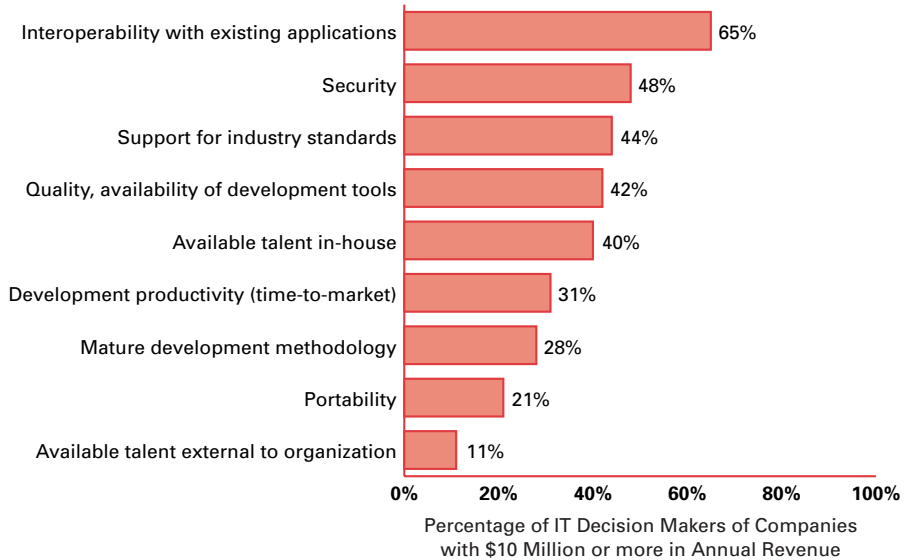
Michael Gartenberg

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Interoperability Is Top Priority for IT Managers

Fig. 1 Factors Influencing Software Development Platform Decisions

Question: When choosing a software development platform for your company's in-house application development, what factors are most important to you? (Select no more than three.)
 Source: Jupiter Research/ERI Executive Survey (12/03), n = 800 (companies with \$10 million+ in annual revenues, US only)
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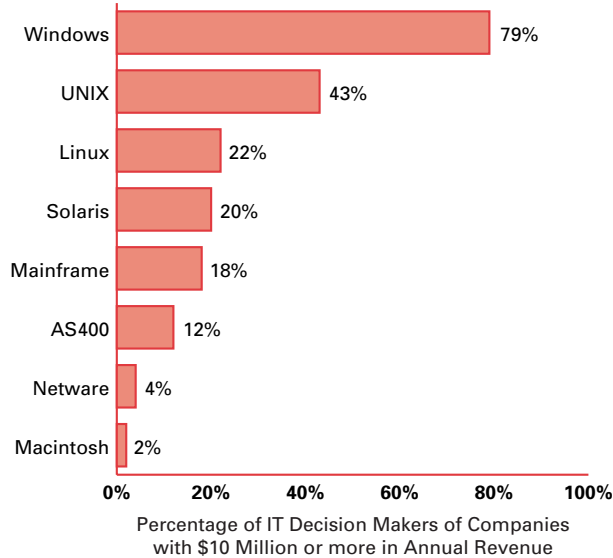
When choosing a development platform for in-house applications, 65 percent of IT decision makers said interoperability with existing applications was their top priority, ranking higher than security (48 percent) or support for industry standards (44 percent). Similarly, technology managers' top three frustrations relate to interoperability: Getting multiple applications to work together (45 percent); getting databases integrated with one another (38 percent); and achieving security, firewall, and antivirus protection for disparate environments (33 percent).

Web Services Play Key Interoperability Role

For 55 percent of IT decision makers, Web services standards, such as simple object access protocol (SOAP) or Web services description language (WSDL), are most helpful in meeting their interoperability needs. Industry-specific extensible markup language (XML) ranked second, at 37 percent. Even so, 21 percent of technology managers cited getting disparate Web services to work across multiple platforms to be one of their top frustrations. Apparently, IT decision makers are trying to overcome this situation. Java remote method invocation (RMI) and remote procedure call (RPC) XML ranked third and fourth—36 percent and 22 percent, respectively—as the standards technology managers said are most helpful in meeting their interoperability needs. Java RMI and RPC XML both ease interoperability among Web services across multiple platforms.

Standards Approach Pays Off for Microsoft

Fig. 2 Windows Interoperability Most Important for Application Development



Question: When introducing new technology into your corporate infrastructure, with which of the following operating systems (OS) is it most important for your new technology to interoperate? (Select no more than three.)
 Source: Jupiter Research/ERI Executive Survey (12/03), n = 800 (companies with \$10 million+ in annual revenues, US only)
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Conventional expectations set by the news media or some Microsoft competitors would suggest that Microsoft rates poorly when it comes to interoperability. IT decision makers expressed a different viewpoint. Seventy-two percent of technology managers ranked Microsoft tops in interoperability; Oracle closely followed (68 percent). At the same time, with respect to platforms, IT decision makers overwhelmingly ranked Windows (79 percent) as being most important platform with which new applications need to interoperate. Forty-two percent said Unix and 22 percent Linux.

While Microsoft’s dominance in desktop operating systems and applications accounts for some of the company’s interoperability ranking, Jupiter Research believes the company’s wide adoption of Web services standards solves a critical business need. Around the turn of the century, Microsoft started aggressively supporting Web services in its platforms, development tools and applications. Furthermore, Microsoft’s increased emphasis on vertical integration between desktop and server products, as seen with 2003 product releases, is primed to resolve businesses’ chief interoperability frustration—getting applications to work together. (See *Microsoft’s Integrated Innovation: Weighing up Customer Benefits, Risks*, Microsoft Monitor, October 6, 2003.)

.Net Shops Are Positioned for Strongest Benefits

About 51 percent of businesses deploying Web services said they use Microsoft's .NET platform. (See *Microsoft .NET: Assessing Its Prospects and Determining When to Invest*, Microsoft Monitor, June 16, 2003.)

Jupiter Research believes the new, upcoming Visual Studio .NET development tools, code-named "Whidbey," will deliver the next phase of Microsoft's gamble on adopting Web services standards and enhancing interoperability with other platforms. Whidbey will further build on .NET in preparation for the Longhorn wave of products and forthcoming WinFX programming model. (See *Longhorn: Implications of the Next Windows' Ship Date*, Microsoft Monitor, August 12, 2003.)

Jupiter Research believes that if Microsoft continues current plans, developers that have worked with .NET Framework—presumably in the more than half of businesses deploying .NET—will find they already possess the toolset knowledge necessary to quickly develop applications that are easily interoperable with Windows and applications developed on other Web services platforms, such as Java/J2EE. This ease of deployment resonates with three of the top four benefits IT decision makers seek from improved interoperability: Reducing total cost of ownership (TCO) by leveraging existing assets and IT investments (37 percent); reducing administration and development costs (36 percent); and reducing TCO by reducing systems complexity (29 percent).

Microsoft Must Stay Interoperability Course

Jupiter Research believes Microsoft must be careful to keep from co-opting Web services standards as the company seeks to build momentum for the Longhorn wave of products. While Microsoft's bet on Web services and increased interoperability is paying off, the company may be tempted to use non-interoperable hooks to ensure businesses quickly transition to Longhorn products. Already, Jupiter Research believes many businesses should boost 2006-2008 IT budgets by 40 percent because of the potentially large number of upgrades necessary after Longhorn ships.

Jupiter Research believes businesses interested in cutting developing time that already have deployed .NET should begin testing Whidbey as soon as Microsoft releases a public beta. Visual Studio .Net should meet their basic interoperability goals by improving integration, reducing development time, and cutting TCO. The product had been scheduled to ship in 2004. Jupiter Research sees the unexpected delay as an opportunity that makers of rival tools should seek to exploit.

Almost half of businesses have yet to jump onto .NET, making them prime targets for Microsoft Web services competitors. Jupiter Research believes harping on poor Microsoft interoperability is the wrong approach. These vendors would do better by solving Web services interoperability issues and messaging around TCO. Seventy-three percent of IT decision makers say they rely on internal staff to manage interoperability problems. Vendors that provide tools meeting this mandate, and businesses' larger interoperability goals, are best positioned to win customers to their tools or platforms.