

# eBabies and the Power of Now

*TIBCO Demonstrates Its EAI Message*

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May 27, 1999

## NETTING IT OUT

Although all of the major Enterprise Application Integration (EAI) vendors had important announcements this spring, TIBCO was notable for its efforts to show and prove its strategic perspective through a "vision" demo showing complete supply chain integration from suppliers to retailers. The demonstration was named "eBabies" and simulated a toy manufacturer working with suppliers and retailers. Demo machines were of course festooned with Beanie Babies.

The demonstration was designed to show:

- TIBCO's vision for networked business
- The importance of foundation technology (long a TIBCO selling point)
- Proof that the technology can be used to produce finished systems relevant to business

A point that TIBCO makes, and undoubtedly IBM and NEON would make also, is that EAI is in a way a misnomer. In the long run, the right issue is not "integrating applications" but building a larger information flow, a concept encompassing applications as sources, users, and transformers of information as it moves through the enterprise. The same creation, merging, interpreting, and reporting of information that in decades past would have been done by a series of batch programs operating on whole files, now (for EAI) must be done by a series of application components that operate on events and other "batches of one".

## BACKGROUND

The EAI market is hot—almost every major EAI player has made announcements this spring.

**Active Software** announced its release 3.1 plus an EAI methodology that is meant to help users conceptualize their integration problems in a useful way so that they can begin to solve them. This continues Active Software's proactive (pun intended) campaign to make the EAI space understandable to the user community both from a user-problem and a product-feature perspective. According to Active Software CEO Jim Green, too many customers don't seem to know where to begin, so they don't. This hesitation is not at all exclusive to Active Software customers.

**Forté Software** announced Fusion, its new software for linking its workflow system (Conductor) with diverse applications (Forté and non-Forté). Fusion uses XML to encode data traveling between the Fusion engine and any application (or an associated application adapter, if the application itself does not read XML). Forté is making the valid point (see New Era of Networks, below) that integration very often includes development work. New customer-facing applications are important today making this especially relevant.

**BEA Systems** announced major (\$100M) funding from HP to participate in developing and selling solution elements for the latter's e-services initiative. HP and BEA sales people will both be selling Tuxedo, WebLogic, and WebLogic Enterprise, with a sales incentive plan that eliminates channel conflict. The relationship adds substantial emphasis to the EAI focus that BEA had been developing.

**New Era of Networks (NEON)** has acted to increase its already rapid growth and power by ac-

quiring people, companies, and functionality—in the latter case, by signing a cross-selling and development partnership with Forté Software.

**Oberon Software** has convinced Neon and Active Software plus a respectable list of customers to adopt Oberon's Prospero EAI offering as part of their toolkit for integration. Prospero offers adapters to SAP R/3 and other ERP applications and provides a rapid and easy to use visual mapping tool to connect one application to another (or to any defined interface, such as a message).

**IBM** has announced a new version of MQSeries Integrator, commencing the process of accommodating one by one the requirements and wish lists brought to the company by its customers.

## THE VENDORS HAVE THE PROBLEM SURROUNDED

In general, the major EAI players have a reasonably common understanding of the integration problem. In rough terms, all vendors envision a "stack" of infrastructure with message-oriented middleware at its base, along with message routing and transformation in a layer above that, and a workflow layer on top for more complex business process integration logic. TIBCO adds a presentation layer to house its Event Console, and draws an important "Systems Monitoring and Management" brick aligned vertically beside the stack.

IBM, NEON, and TIBCO—again in general terms—see the integration problem as we believe it will inevitably become: the need to establish an information flow driven by information architecture. IBM has added upper layers to its MQSeries stack in the form of message brokering, workflow, and information flow; NEON has begun by focusing on the upper layers, with a rules-based router and formatter engine, and is expanding rapidly, seeking strategic strength. TIBCO is staying with its hunches, putting emphasis both on Active Enterprise (working its way up the stack from middleware up toward message brokering and workflow) while also continuing to emphasize lower level strengths, such as reliable multicast, that TIBCO sees as fundamental to large scale network computing.

Meanwhile Active Software, Vitria, Forté, and BEA Systems see the integration problem in terms

of users' closer-in need to develop practical solutions. Forté calls attention to the frequent need for new GUI development; BEA reminds us of the importance of application and transaction management; and Vitria focuses on developing business logic at a much higher level: at the level of business processes (treating applications as components). Active Software looks long and hard at the integration problem as an implementation task (and a difficult one it is) and continues to conceptualize and productize what had been done one project at a time by expensive systems integrators. Put this all together and clearly these vendors comprise a dream team doing impressive and exciting intellectual work.

Within this context, the eBabies demonstration is an attempt to balance TIBCO's emphasis on the long-range view and on fundamental technology, and with a new focus on providing tools for getting the integration job done. TIBCO services are still likely to be required as, indeed, with virtually any integration project, but now there are software product components involved. TIBCO has added products and partnerships over the last year to build its TIB®/Active Enterprise™ collection. The demonstration highlighted this collection of facilities, nesting them all into a single e-business context. (See the following illustration.)

The demo showed:

- The TIB (The Information Bus) underlying the entire demonstration. Both publish/subscribe and request-reply forms were used in the demo.
- Input of data from an SAP R/3 system, using the TIB/Adapter for SAP R/3.
- Database integration, triggering events on the information bus when changes occur in the database, using other TIB/Adapters.
- Alerting and reporting, including for example, the manufacturer alerting the distributor when a hot new toy was being introduced to the market. Reporting is accomplished using TIB's anonymous publish/subscribe as well as TIB/Event Console and TIB/MessageBroker.

- Corporate portals, including a TIBCO.net portal to deliver information directly to distributors, such as when a new toy is available.
- Customer orders over the Web.
- Business-to-business communications.
- Management and monitoring using TIB/Hawk.

## CONCLUSION

The demonstration was the best “middleware” demonstration in a long time, although it is important to realize that it was only a demo. Even Some of the TIBCO people manning the demonstration expressed some surprise that it came out as well as it did. In our opinion, the demonstration was successful because it was designed as a complete business scenario—sure to impose realistic requirements and thereby guide the design properly.

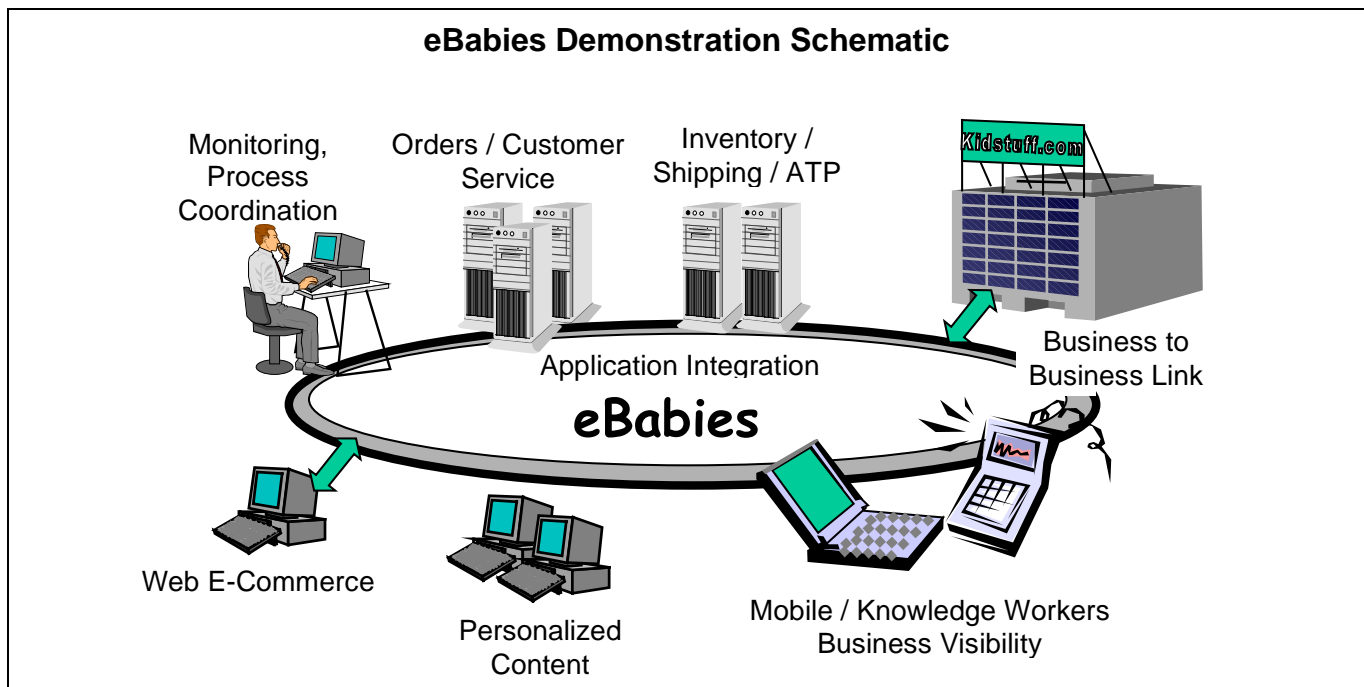
The demonstration also underscored what has long been a TIBCO crusade—that businesses should integrate around an “information bus” carrying in-

formation from place to place throughout the business. TIBCO’s publish/subscribe scheme supports anonymous and independent creation of new subscribers and new publishers, allowing applications and information flow to be evolved independently of each other and facilitating the organic growth of the information network. As TIBCO insists, this in itself has business value, especially in a time and an environment of rapid change.

TIBCO’s experience and success have been greatest in areas such as financial trading or semiconductor manufacturing where information—events presented to users and applications in real time—has been fundamental to the business. But we believe TIBCO is correct in claiming that this model applies to businesses in general. With eBabies, TIBCO has shown what it means in terms of a business scenario familiar to anyone.

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*Illustration. eBabies Demonstration encompasses major elements of a supply chain.*