Ebusiness technologies: foundations and practice
Redefining the Profession

v/o
Whilst web services may appear anywhere within a layered architecture, or deployed across multiple servers for scaleability, it is essential that the solution is designed with services in mind.

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A lot of the middle tier code that we had for a part of Tesco Direct was architected a long the lines of services with a view that compartmentalising the features of those particular areas, we could optimise them in isolation, maybe even deploy them in isolation to different sets of servers. They were admittedly used more in a sort of presentation air to middle tier layer kind of scenario but the separation that the web services give is potentially useful for scaling out in different ways.

Most recently we've been using a dot.net web services in a mixture of scenarios. We've used web services sometimes to bring enterprise systems together, maybe other parts of the enterprise have some data for example, product data, we've used web services there to provide that information to the rest of the enterprise. And other times we've used it as a means for the presentation layer of multi-tiered system to communicate with the middle tier.

As a developer what I need to understand from the business is things like how the services would be used, why are we providing that, what types of inputs are we expecting, what types of processing is expected to happen and therefore what the output is? All that would go into building an appropriate service. We could technically build a very good service but if it doesn't meet the business needs then there's no point.

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Whilst Tesco Direct is regarded as a successful development, the IT sector has generally gained something of an unenviable reputation for late delivery, cost over-runs or outright failure opening up the whole debate about social, professional, ethical and legal issues.

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If you look at the surveys that are published regularly by people like Gardiner, then the evidence is that about 75% of all projects, particularly large-scale projects, are to a greater or lesser extent failures. The estimate for the amount of wastage on failed IT projects in western Europe is $140 billion dollars a year. Now all of that assumes that the original starting point, that is the requirement, actually captured the whole of the potential of IT. My guess is it doesn't by a long shot and that's the real issue about redefining the IT profession because we have to redefine it in the context of a much greater professionalism, right across the piece, from the original idea, the strategy within an organisation, through the management of that strategy, definition of requirements and then the delivery of change, both on the social and organisational side and the technology side.

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Within the new climate business and developers will to address a much broader range of issues and their solutions and business practices.

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You need to have a real focus on processes to help organise, you know, the way you do business. So that could be from the sort of things that you create and engineer as products,

the services that you want to offer the marketplace, the way you manage your internal, you know, HR processes and your communication roots, whatever it happens to be. Process and adherence to process and how you're given that, again is a critical part of being ethical, internally at least, and also in the way that you expose professionalism hopefully to your clients and your partners.

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Some observers suggest that a key factor is the lack of a professional infrastructure within a youthful industry.

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We're still developing and learning as we go. We're looking at the best ways of applying professional standards and indeed I think it is very important that the industry steps up to and is transparent in developing those standards.

Here in the UK the institutions and the academy are working very closely together to make sure that there are standards which are formally accredited by independent parties, that the public can have trust and confidence in.

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What we see is an emerging debate between business organisations, IT services providers and the professional institutions. On the technical front we can expect to see better tools for application, development and governance. From the institutions will come the skills set and competencies that define the new IT professional. The beneficiaries will be those business organisations ready to grasp the challenges of the web services paradigm.