Headlines: **Ecquaria to enforce service mindset through technology**
Source: **Computerworld Vol.12 Issue No 9**
Date: **10 – 23 March 2006**

Cover Story

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Software infrastructure company Ecquaria is introducing the idea of using technology to enforce a service mindset within an organisation by providing end users and customers with the tools and mechanisms to track service agreements.

Ecquaria's president and chief executive officer Dr Foong Wai Keong (left) said while the service oriented architecture provided the technology to create an IT ecosystem, many organisations need to look beyond technology and integrated services to the concept of "service-orientedness". According to Foong, service-orientedness comprises service quality, service availability, service responsiveness and an overall service mindset which can be enforced by using technology to establish a Service Covenant Framework.

Monitoring and tracking are an integral part of the service mindset, he said, as are mechanisms to detect and pre-empt service violation.

Lee Sea Lin, director, Presales, Ecquaria, said the Service Covenant Framework guarantees service delivery by using the process itself as a basic building block for services, and is focused on the accurate mapping of those services to business goals.

A Service Integration Tool, shipped as part of Ecquaria's Service Oriented Platform 4.6 (SOP 4.6), provides a graphical interface for modeling complex business processes for the development of SOP processes. The visual representation of the process flow allows it to be changed easily. The tracking of service level agreements (SLAs) - process monitoring, process tracking and proactive alerts - are incorporated right from the start of the development process.

Data probes are added into the process to track the status and alerts are set to ensure that service delivery to customers meet the SLA.

Lee cites the example of the online business licensing service at business.gov.sg, which allows companies to apply for a licence via the Internet. A "check status" button allows a business to view the status of its application.

"You define the SLA before you fire up a service. For example, if the organisation is committed to respond by three days, you can specify a warning level, say, at two and a half days."

With the data probes in place, and using an executive dashboard, it is possible to find out when, and at which point, the process failed.

Lee likens it to "Fedexing" the organisation. The same mechanism can also be applied to detect and pre-empt service violations, and even playback the sequences leading to the service failure.

The idea is to build a KPI (key performance indicator) mentality for real-time pre-emptive action. Take the healthcare scenario for example. KPIs could include the total waiting time, total throughput time, and total waiting time as a percentage of total throughput time.

Previously, users would have to depend on IT people to view a log containing the information. With the dashboard, users can view and identify the bottlenecks in real time.

"It is not a reporting tool," says Foong. "It's not done as an after thought but as a real-time tracking mechanism."

According to Ecquaria, the provision of explicit SLAs and the tracking of customers' usage of services requires a corresponding shift of an organisation's service mindset and the restructuring of the organisation's internal systems to support it.

When delivering an integrated service involving different departments or agencies, the discrete SLAs of the different parties involved have to be congruent with each other in order to improve the overall level of customer service.

Ecquaria is at www.ecquaria.com.