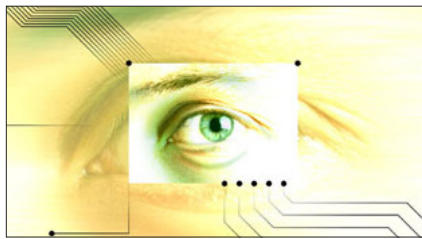


IT-DIRECTOR.COM

Visually orchestrate your business process with Active Endpoints

Published: 13th March 2009

Visual orchestration—now there is an interesting by-line. This is the claim of Active Endpoints a relative newcomer in the BPMS market.



The company was founded in 2004 by a set of experienced SOA personnel. The company is based in Waltham, Massachusetts, USA with their research and development centre in Shelton, Connecticut. The company initially started supplying a BPEL engine to the OEM market, however 2008 saw them change tack and begin to sell to the B2B market using a free 30-day trial as the opening gambit, followed by telesales follow-up with a very attractive price tag of between \$30 to 50K. When you look at their customer list after 1 year's operation, Bloor were struck by the number of household names such as Toyota, the FBI, France Telecom, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and CERN.

So just what is ActiveVOS, Active Endpoints' product? Well the first key thing to note is the amount of support for open standards in the product for development including not only BPEL v2 and BPMN but also supports both BPEL4People and WS-Human Task specifications. The graphical designer allows business users to model in BPMN and then for that model to be seamlessly transferred to BPEL for IT developers to design the implementation requirements. Services can be defined using WSDL or through XML schemas

or XML fragments. The Developer also has the ability to incorporate non-web services through bindings to JMS and REST and to invoke EJB and Java classes (POJOs).

One other feature that I liked was the ability to specify what data is needed for each activity in the process.

One of the keys to BPMS is its ability to support collaboration between the business community and the IT community. There are facilities to import existing business models from a number of different sources including UML2, Rational Rose, XPD and Microsoft Visio. The use of BPEL means that information about a business model can be easily exported or imported. In addition, ActiveVOS allows documentation to be created in Microsoft Office and Adobe PDF formats. One of the other key collaboration features is the ability to view the process model as is in the format used by a particular user.

The next point of interest is that the runtime engine provides support for complex event processing as well as the normal BPMS execution. Developers can add CEP capabilities to running processes without changing them as CEP is a deployment-time specification in ActiveVOS. This is a very important capability as the processes that need automation become more real time and complex in nature.

The BAM requirements are provided through some neat dashboards with a good set of standard reports. The products ships with a BI tool that is available from Eclipse. The BAM capability supports the Process Intelligence innovation that I talked about in the Bloor Market Update for BPMS in December 2008, with support for the BAM data to be combined with BI data.

When I talked to Alex Neihaus, VP for Marketing and Michael Rowley, Director of Strategy and Technology, I asked the question about how successful the free download strategy was. They replied that people who engage with Active Endpoints always bought into the solution. They therefore have a very few losses.

March 10th 2009 saw the release of version 6.1 of ActiveVOS. This includes a new feature called "process rewind". A process rewind gives organizations the ability to rewind a process to a specific activity and redo the work without having to invoke any of the built-in compensation logic. Production ActiveVOS customers occasionally face a situation that while the invocation of a service may have apparently been successful, the reality may be entirely different. This "computer versus reality"

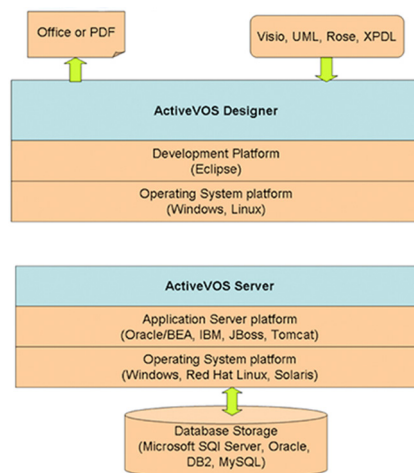
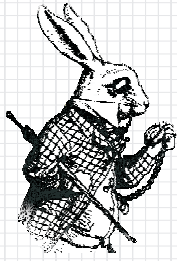


Figure 1: ActiveVOS Architecture



IT-DIRECTOR.COM

Visually orchestrate your business process with Active Endpoints

Published: 13th March 2009

mismatch could leave processes in a state that does not actually reflect the true status of the business. Another common situation is when a failure in a back-end system means that certain steps of the process need to be “redone” without impacting work already performed. Simply put, at design time no BPM application can anticipate all of the operational issues and error handling that will be required. This process rewind feature provides a means of solving this issue.

There is also a new development tool, called the participants view. This eliminates the need for developers to manually code complex programming constructs like BPEL partner links and BPEL partner link types that are needed to define how services are to be used in a BPM application. There are two other development environment improvements. Firstly, developers can visually specify what data is needed in each activity and are guided through XPath and XQuery statement generation

with point-and-click ease, thus getting around some of the initial complexities of using BPEL. Secondly, ActiveVOS 6.1 understands the difference between “private” and “public” web services definition files and automatically creates the required WSDLs, in a 100%-standards compliant mode and in a human-understandable format.

If you are looking at BPMS to help get control of your business process, than Bloor would definitely recommend that you take a closer look at Active Endpoints and their ActiveVOS visual orchestration product.

*Simon Holloway,
Practice Leader - Process Management
& RFID, Bloor Research*



© Bloor Research 2009