

# One Size Does Not Fit All



Lori MacVittie, 2008-28-07

Outside of the technology world a lot of products are billed as "one size fits all". Anyone who's purchased such a product generally knows, no, no they don't. They're close, but never a truly good fit.

Inside the technology world we know better. Software and solutions are never a "one size fits all" proposition, that's why so many business software solutions are "customizable": ERP (enterprise resource planning), CRM (customer relationship management), workflow, automation, and portals. Just about every software solution you can purchase these days takes a customizable approach to actually meeting the needs of the business.

The goal of [SOA](#) (service oriented architecture) is to align IT more closely with the business. What that really means is enabling, or empowering, the business to meet *its* goals in a dynamic, fast-paced environment. Agility, or flexibility, is one of the three primary goals of business and it's one of the most often touted benefits of a well designed SOA. A well designed SOA brings to IT and the business the same benefits as a customizable, packaged software solution: flexibility.

In March, [Forrester Research](#) released a study on SOA adoption indicating fairly significant adoption rates for SOA across enterprises. One of the interesting data points in this study is around the drivers for SOA adoption. Cost savings, primarily achieved through reuse in a SOA, has fallen behind flexibility (agility) as a driver for adoption.

## Enterprises using or planning to use SOA

2005	2006	2007
53%	62%	66%

SOURCE: [SOA Adoption: Many Firms Got Started In 2007](#), Forrester Research, Inc. March 2008

Flexibility, or agility, is the ability to rapidly and easily address changing business and technical conditions without a lot of disruption. Changing a single service should, in a properly architected SOA, propagate across all applications making use of that service.

But as [we learned from a more recent piece of Forrester research](#), you can't just look at a single piece of an application, you must design and build it holistically. While that particular research was focused on performance, it remains true for architecting a flexible solution as well. If the application is flexible but the application delivery infrastructure through which it is delivered is not, then you lose some of the benefits of that flexibility, such as rapid deployment and ability to dynamically adjust to changing market conditions.



To truly enable a business to be flexible requires that not only your application infrastructure but the delivery infrastructure as well be flexible - or at least support the notion of flexibility. That means providing a mechanism through which application messages and data can be inspected, transformed, directed, and secured dynamically and transparently, without requiring modifications to the applications which produce and consume those messages and data. It requires intelligence to understand the application messages and act upon them whether the criteria is [business](#), [security](#), or [technically](#) focused.

[Application delivery platforms](#) which offer a [flexible technology that enables IT to support the flexible nature of a SOA](#) are imperative in ensuring that the benefits of SOA can be realized. Such platforms allow IT to [align not only the application architecture but its underlying delivery infrastructure with the goals of the business](#).

Deploying a flexible application infrastructure atop a brittle, inflexible application delivery infrastructure can nullify the benefits SOA is meant to provide. One size does not fit all, and that's true of application delivery solutions as well as software solutions.

Your application delivery infrastructure should align with business goals, too, and that means providing a flexible, agile solution with the means to customize the infrastructure to better meet the goals of IT and the business.



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