Progress acquires IONA: Should it dump Sonic?

Lori MacVittie, 2008-25-06

Back in the "winter review from hell" I installed, configured, integrated, orchestrated, tested, and evaluated eight separate ESB (enterprise service bus) products for Network Computing Magazine. Yes, I was a busy gal. I've tested some difficult products in the past, but nothing - not even CRM suites - compared to this review.

One of those products was Progress Software's Sonic ESB. One of them was not IONA's Artix. That was because IONA's Artix was just preparing to make its entry into the ESB market, while the Sonic ESB was already well-established, like its competitors.

Throughout the many (painful) months of testing, Sonic stood out not because it was a great ESB but because it wasn't. Sonic was a great messaging middleware product, but you could *feel* that the service enablement and orchestration pieces had been bolted on, and not well. Its own integration of SOA technology was painful, which made integrating the product with other SOA products even more painful.

So hearing the news that Progress just picked up IONA for a cool $162 million, or $106 million net of cash and marketable securities, I'm hoping that the two will indeed "complement" each other, as Progress Software said in a statement. IONA's implementation was certainly better technology in terms of its ESB, which means Sonic can return to its roots as a strong middleware solution that integrates with its newly acquired IONA cousin, Artix. I can't agree more with Jason Bloomberg of ZapThink on the acquisition when he said, "Progress gets some of the better technology on the market at what is arguably a fire-sale price."

Should Progress dump Sonic? Only in promoting it as its ESB solution. Progress should return Sonic to its strengths in middleware and messaging while Artix picks up the ESB role within Progress' ever-growing portfolio of SOA infrastructure products.

Imbibing: Mountain Dew