

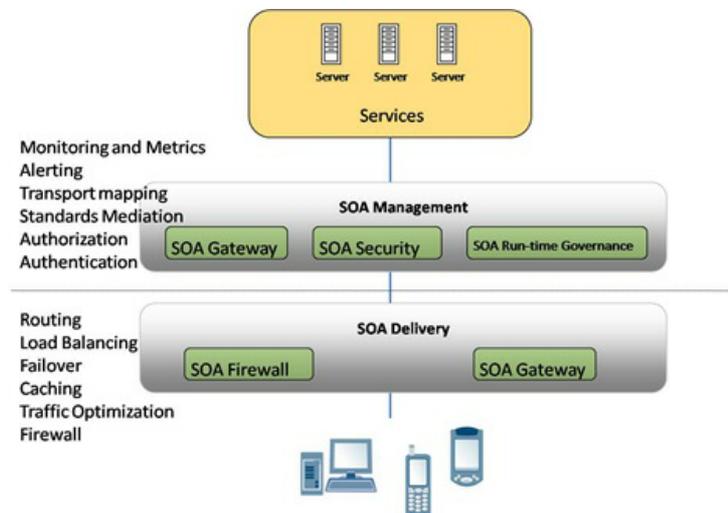
SOA What?



Lori MacVittie, 2008-25-08

David Bressler of [Progress Software](#), who acquired SOA vendor [Actional](#) in [January 2006](#) wrote a very thought provoking [post on marketing](#) that really ended up being a post about SOA and where Progress fits into the "SOA continuum". He raises some questions, and problems, with SOA and product categories that ties in nicely with an [excellent blog post on the subject](#) [Todd Biske](#) wrote a while back containing some concepts that he presented at [Burton's Catalyst 2006](#).

One of the [confusing things about any market](#) is the wide variety of names used to describe the products and solutions that fit into the wider technology landscape. There are a distinct set of SOA product categories, or SOA *What* as David calls them. The problem is that there is a lot of overlap in responsibilities between those categories. For example, SOA gateways and SOA management both provide a similar set of proxy-focused capabilities: content based routing, transformation, even service-enablement, but SOA gateways rarely include the robust monitoring and alerting side of management, choosing instead to integrate with existing network management systems (NMS) like [HP OpenView](#) or [IBM's Tivoli](#) instead.



That makes it difficult to know what you're getting out of a SOA Management product, because it could mean a completely different set of responsibilities when coming from vendor X as it does from vendor Y.

So after thinking about for a while, I think that by combining the David's SOA *What* categories with Todd's list of intermediary responsibilities we can come up with two distinct categories that makes the picture of the market a bit clearer and simpler.

It comes down to products falling into two primary focus areas with regards to SOA services: managing them and delivering them. Delivery

requires a different focus than management, and vice-versa. Delivery is concerned with protocols, security, and functionality traditionally associated with the network, while management is primarily service-focused, concerned with access, integration, and monitoring and, in the case of design-time governance, managing the service life-cycle.

So maybe one of the ways of clearing up the muddy landscape in SOA-land is for vendors to give a clearer picture of their SOA "focus". For example, F5 is, in this model, clearly focused on SOA delivery and not management, and I'd argue that Progress' portfolio is primarily focused on management, not delivery, with some design-time governance and testing thrown in for good measure (now where does *that* fit??)

I'm not sure if there's really a good solution to the issues raised by David but I think one way to start would be to delineate responsibility of intermediaries across the infrastructure. It certainly makes the picture a lot clearer and by associating responsibilities (and not features) with a particular category it's easier for someone to understand what a particular vendors' solution offers.

Part of the problem is certainly getting on the same page and using the same language. What's funny about that is that one of the premises of SOA was to get business and IT folks using the same language to better align IT with the business. We need to apply that to the vendor and product landscape, as well, so as vendors we can better align our products with customer needs. If you want high-availability and load-balancing of services, you should be able to easily find a vendor focusing on SOA delivery and not wonder whether those delivery features available in a product that focuses on management or governance is going to be "good enough" or not. And vice-versa.

F5 Networks, Inc. | 401 Elliot Avenue West, Seattle, WA 98119 | 888-882-4447 | f5.com

F5 Networks, Inc.
Corporate Headquarters
info@f5.com

F5 Networks
Asia-Pacific
apacinfo@f5.com

F5 Networks Ltd.
Europe/Middle-East/Africa
emeainfo@f5.com

F5 Networks
Japan K.K.
f5j-info@f5.com

©2016 F5 Networks, Inc. All rights reserved. F5, F5 Networks, and the F5 logo are trademarks of F5 Networks, Inc. in the U.S. and in certain other countries. Other F5 trademarks are identified at f5.com. Any other products, services, or company names referenced herein may be trademarks of their respective owners with no endorsement or affiliation, express or implied, claimed by F5. CS04-00015 0113