The death of SOA has been greatly exaggerated

Lori MacVittie, 2008-21-11

Amidst the hype of cloud computing and virtualization have been the publication of several research notes regarding SOA. Adoption, they say, is slowing.

Oh noes! Break out the generators, stock up on water and canned food!

An article from JavaWorld quotes research firm Gartner as saying:

> The number of organizations planning to adopt SOA for the first time decreased to 25 percent; it had been 53 percent in last year's survey. Also, the number of organizations with no plans to adopt SOA doubled from 7 percent in 2007 to 16 percent in 2008. This dramatic falloff has been happening since the beginning of 2008, Gartner said.

Some have reacted with much drama to the news, as if the reports indicate that SOA has lost its shine and is disappearing into the realm of legacy technology along with COBOL and fat-clients and CORBA.

Not true at all.

The reports indicate a drop in *adoption* of SOA, not the *use* of SOA. That should be unsurprising. At some point the number of organizations who have implemented SOA should reach critical mass, and the number of new organizations adopting the technology will slow down simply because there are fewer of them than there are folks who have already adopted SOA.

As Don pointed out when this discussion came up, the economy is factoring in heavily for IT and technology, and the percentages cited by Gartner are not nearly as bad as they look when applied to real numbers. For example, if you ask 100 organizations about their plans for SOA and 16 say "we're not doing anything with it next year" that doesn't sound nearly as impressive as 16%, especially considering that means that 84% *are* going to be doing something with SOA next year.

As with most surveys and polls, it's all about how the numbers are presented. Statistics are the devil's playground.

It is also true that most organizations don't consider that by adopting or piloting cloud computing in the next year that they will likely be taking advantage of SOA. Whether it's because their public cloud computing provider requires the use of Web Services (SOA) to deploy and manage applications in the cloud or they are building a private cloud environment and will utilize service-enabled APIs and SOA to integrate virtualization technology with application delivery solutions, SOA remains an integral part of the IT equation.

SOA simply isn't the paradigm shift it was five years ago. Organizations who've implemented SOA are still using it, it's still growing in their organizations as they continue to build new functionality and features for their applications, as they integrate new partners and distributors and applications from inside and outside the data center. As organizations continue to get comfortable with SOA and their implementations, they will inevitably look to governance and management and delivery solutions with which to better manage the architecture.

SOA is not dead yet; it's merely reached the beginning of its productive life and if the benefits of SOA are real (and they are) then organizations are likely to start truly realizing the return on their investments.

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