



E-Business Links To Back-Office Systems

Enterprise application integration vendors use XML to extend capabilities to the Internet

By Jeff Sweat

Enterprise application integration vendors are trying to set themselves apart from rivals in the crowded EAI market by introducing products that make it easier to integrate E-business and back-office operations.

Oberon Software Inc. this week will beef up its integration suite with tools that make it simpler to connect to partner and customer applications across the Internet. Oberon's Business Integrator will handle business-to-business integration mainly through the use of the Extensible Markup Language, letting partners connect applications even if Oberon software isn't used on each end. Oberon Commerce does the same for business-to-consumer interchanges and includes Bluestone Software Inc.'s Sapphire/Web E-commerce server product.

Analysts say Bluestone's software is a powerful tool that supports E-commerce functions such as order processing, payment, and catalogs. And Oberon's data transformation and routing strengths can make E-commerce more dynamic. "Your back-office systems need to know who the customer is, what the order is, and which systems need the order," says Beth Gold-Bernstein, an analyst at Hurwitz Group. The Oberon suite starts at about \$200,000.

BEA Systems Inc. is also adding E-commerce capabilities with an XML adapter. BEA's eLink integration product contains adapters for many enterprise application platforms, including Clarify, Oracle, PeopleSoft, SAP, Vantive, and IBM's MQSeries. The adapters aim to make it simpler to connect front-office and back-office data, and connect to third-party apps. ELink pricing starts at \$50,000 to \$70,000.

Scribe Software Corp., a longtime integration player, this week will unveil updates to its flagship products: Scribe Integrate, which builds permanent connections between applications, and Scribe Migrate, which handles one-time transfers of data from one platform to another. The new versions boast performance improvements and an event scheduler to manage integration.

Levy Restaurants, in Chicago, has been using Scribe Integrate for about a year to link accounts payable and sales information from its various operations to a central financial system. Craig Dooley, Levy's manager of enterprise systems, says Scribe is simpler, cheaper, and more flexible than other products. Scribe Integrate starts at \$30,000. "It's not a one-trick pony," Dooley says. "We can focus on one tool for multiple integration needs."