

INTERVIEW WITH SAP'S

ORI INBAR

BY ALAN JOCH



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Ori Inbar, vice president of product marketing for SAP NetWeaver (www.sap.com/solutions/netweaver), came to SAP as an executive with TopTier, a leader in portal technology that was acquired by SAP. For the last year and a half, Mr. Inbar has been driving the education and adoption strategies of NetWeaver, SAP's comprehensive technology integration and application platform that drives business change, which was officially launched in January of 2003. SAP NetWeaver represents one of the biggest projects, in terms of development

resources and market strategy, that SAP has ever undertaken. "We found that to achieve the level of enterprise-scale quality, performance, reliability, security, and globalization that SAP is known for, we couldn't rely on anyone else to build a platform like SAP NetWeaver," Mr. Inbar explains. "We needed to make sure it was fully optimized and fully supported all the needs of our applications." Business and technology writer Alan Joch spoke with Ori Inbar to discuss what SAP NetWeaver means to SAP and its customers, and how iWay adapters are helping SAP NetWeaver users launch new B2B applications.

IB MAGAZINE - SAP is best known as an applications vendor, but with SAP NetWeaver, you seem to be entering the integration market. Is this a sea change for SAP?

INBAR - Is this a sea change? Let me answer this a couple of ways. First, SAP has always been in the business of developing platforms. R/3, the famous solution from SAP that came about in the early '90s, was based on a platform developed by SAP. But we became aware very quickly that the real value for customers came from the business applications that are built on the platform. We didn't spend lot of time marketing the platform and selling it as a standalone technology. So we've been in the platform market a long time, but now we're marketing it. That's really the big difference today.

Second, if you want to have a market-leading platform, you have to have an open platform, which is a core difference between what we're doing today with SAP NetWeaver and what we did with R/3 in the

early '90s. This time around we made sure the platform is fully interoperable with anything the customer might have, and we integrated with IBM WebSphere and Microsoft .NET. That's what has given us our nickname as 'the Switzerland of IT.'

IB MAGAZINE - What types of companies represent the target market for SAP NetWeaver?

INBAR - Many companies come up with brilliant strategies to become leaders in their market. But then they go to the IT department to support these strategies and they're told it will take a year or two or three and be very costly in development and maintenance over time. Any company that needs to change its business strategies and business processes to remain competitive and wants to do it at a sustainable cost can make great use of SAP NetWeaver.

IB MAGAZINE - Would this primarily mean large, Fortune 500 companies?

INBAR - If you look at the 20,000 customers SAP has, you'll see we've had a lot of success with very large companies, as well as with medium-sized companies. Both of these groups would benefit from SAP NetWeaver. However, we have discovered recently that SAP NetWeaver is also a very compelling technology for small companies, which in many cases want to look and behave like a big company. Their advantage is that they can easily replace the technologies they already have with something new, like SAP NetWeaver. That's something that large companies with expensive legacy systems cannot afford to do. So SAP NetWeaver is deployed by large- and medium-sized companies in an evolutionary way, but it's also very attractive for small innovative companies.

IB MAGAZINE - With SAP NetWeaver, you're using new technologies, like Java and Web services, in addition to your traditional choice, ABAP. Why did you decide to do this?

INBAR - SAP NetWeaver is designed to be standards-based, but we're by no means discontinuing ABAP. If you look at our architecture, you'll see we have Java and ABAP side by side. We're continuing with ABAP because companies have millions of dollars invested in ABAP and they want to continue to leverage that investment. But we introduced Java to be standards-based and because it's the hottest programming language out there.

As far as Web services are concerned, you'll find support for them

involved in standards being developed for portals, so that portals can share or consume Web services. We're also supporting Web services on the data warehouse level to connect to sources and extract data directly from the data warehouse. And obviously on the integration broker level, if you want to integrate sources that offer Web services that also support business process management, we're actively involved with standards bodies for that.

IB MAGAZINE - **Why should companies choose SAP NetWeaver over all the other integration and application platform choices out there?**

things like portals, business intelligence solutions, and knowledge management, collaboration, and business process management technologies. We are doing all of this within SAP NetWeaver and offering it as an integrated platform.

Beyond that, we're also integrating the SAP NetWeaver platform with our applications. It's a two way street. On one hand, the applications put a lot of requirements on the platform, and make the platform better and more suited to support enterprise applications. On the other hand, once we know we can rely on this platform, we know the applications can be better at leveraging the capabilities of the platform. You can actually build applications that are the next generation business solutions or what some people call a services-oriented architecture or SOA.

IB MAGAZINE - **How has the market responded to SAP NetWeaver?**

INBAR - We officially launched SAP NetWeaver in January of 2003, although many of the components, including SAP Enterprise Portal and SAP Business Intelligence, had been previously developed and adopted by our customer base. In support of the launch, SAP NetWeaver received some rave reviews from analysts, who understood it very well and ranked us as leaders in vision. Moving forward, we are dedicated to better educating our customers and partners on the business benefits of SAP NetWeaver.

IB MAGAZINE - **How are you taking this interest and moving customers to the next level? What programs do you have in place to educate them?**

INBAR - We get questions like, 'How does SAP NetWeaver apply to my own company?' The only way to answer that is to engage customers in a one-on-one discussion. We've developed a set of scenarios so that whenever a SAP person talks to a customer, he or she can discuss two or three scenarios that are most rel-

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VP of Product Marketing
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across the entire SAP NetWeaver stack. SAP NetWeaver has three key layers of integration—people, information, and process integration. Each of these three layers of integration is built on top of the client application platform, which is essentially an advanced Web application server. That's where you have the ABAP and the Java kernels built side by side.

Web services are in the DNA of every piece I just mentioned. If you want to build Web services or consume Web services, we have full support for that. Also, we're actively

INBAR - The real story is total cost of ownership (TCO) and the ability to have a flexible IT infrastructure that supports the constantly changing needs of companies. There are three aspects to cost. You need to integrate your applications, you need to integrate your technologies, and you need to integrate the applications and the technologies. The real TCO consists of these three elements. We found that to help customers reduce the complexity and IT infrastructure costs across the board, we needed to provide all these things pre-integrated together,

evant to a particular customer. Generally, we tell customers you can start very small with SAP NetWeaver by implementing a portion of it to address an immediate need, and then gradually adopt more and more SAP NetWeaver components over time.

IB MAGAZINE - You have partnered with iWay Software for adapters to support B2B applications. What led to this relationship?

INBAR - One of the reasons we partnered with iWay was to cover some of the gaps we had in B2B applications. Many, many companies are interested in integrating with their partners or customers. As a platform company we don't see any reason to develop these connectors ourselves. We'd rather go to a market leader like iWay, which has a big pool of those connectors and who is viewed as a neutral source of those connectors. iWay can provide us with connectors and give us the ability to provide an end-to-end solution for all of our customers' needs.

IB MAGAZINE - Can you give us an example where SAP customers are particularly benefiting from this partnership?

INBAR - UCCnet is probably the best one. SAP selected iWay's certified UCCnet adapter to provide UCCnet integration with SAP NetWeaver. SAP customers in manufacturing, retail and wholesale can securely exchange important information with UCCnet, which provides data synchronization and other services for electronic commerce. iWay provides these JCA-based SAP NetWeaver adapters nicely fitting into the adapter framework of SAP NetWeaver, which in turn drives lower TCO for our customers.

IB MAGAZINE - You've talked about how SAP NetWeaver makes SAP applications integrate more easily with other applications. Will all of your future integration efforts within SAP revolve around SAP NetWeaver, or will you also make

SAP more accessible through Web services and other technologies?

INBAR - SAP NetWeaver is one of the most strategic initiatives for SAP to focus on now. The strategy is to have all of SAP solutions built on the SAP NetWeaver platform to provide you with everything you need for running applications or for integrating an application with other applications. The use of Web services is going to happen through the fact that applications are built on SAP NetWeaver. For us, this also reduces the costs of development and makes our technologies more consistent across the board. This interaction between the platform developers and the application developers is making both better and stronger. ●

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