

DFI Industry Workshop on Interoperability, Konstanz 2009

Workshop Report

A workshop titled 'Improving productivity in the marketing and product development process via interoperability' was held on 2009-04-02 at Konstanz, Germany, organised jointly by CoPS (Community of practice for Strategic Management Architectures) at the University for Applied Research Konstanz and by the DFI (Deutsches Forum fuer Interoperabilitaet), the German Pole of the European Virtual Laboratory for Enterprise Interoperability (I-VLab) . Sponsored by some of the participating IT vendor companies and by the regional trade associations, the workshop was actually attended by 78 people coming from the following three areas: 1) SME end users many from the plant equipment construction industry, 2) IT integration application developers and business consultants, and 3) universities active in interoperability research. Workshop language was German

The goal of the workshop was to bridge the gap between research and industry in the area of interoperability by demonstrating the need for improving the efficiency in enterprise interoperation – especially between marketing and product development. The workshop participants had the opportunity to exchange and discuss different views on interoperability – from research visions and system integration developments to industrial implementations of interoperability solutions in fast changing complex business environments and thereby to obtain a common understanding of the complexity of interoperation, future trends and the benefits of innovative solutions providing interoperation.

The workshop addressed collaboration concepts in enterprise networks, cross organisational business processes, product design configuration and all embracing ICT systems. Three trends were predominant: 1) product configurators that ease the creation of variants in the design of complex products, 2) networked marketing processes and systems for collaborating SMEs and 3) innovative products and services using the semantic Web,

The workshop started with plenum presentations on interoperability research and industry trends. It was followed by of parallel sessions One stream focussed on customer driven product innovation, interoperability assessments and industrial examples of system integration. The second stream emphasised on interoperability solutions for SMEs, service oriented architectures and new Web services.

Three requirements for further work on interoperability and its implementation have been recognised during this workshop:

1. Overall guidance for interoperation. The current frameworks for interoperability, for instance the one proposed by I-VLab and a work item in ISO standardisation are rather generic and need adaptation to industry sectors for operational deployment. This can be best achieved with the specific knowledge and experience of industrial practitioners. Further, categories of interoperability, user readiness and taxonomy need further investigation
2. Awareness and acceptance of the needs for interoperation. Collaboration and interoperation in the organisation of networked enterprises can lead to innovative solutions and improvements of operations efficiency. Preconditions are a professional training and support from the management.
3. Recognition of new interoperability solutions. New software service products are appearing in the context of the semantic Web and should be piloted, customised and implemented with high priority. The need for interoperability standards was expressed in many of the sessions.

The participants rated the workshop very successful in showing new trends and providing an understanding of interoperability and implementation opportunities – technical, organisational and strategic - between the three main stakeholders end users, IT vendors and research.

For further information visit www.dfi-ev.de or contact Prof. G. Baltes, gbaltes@htwg-konstanz.de