

## **WS-I Rejects Sun, Fires First Shot in Web Standards War**

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The Web Services Interoperability Organization (WS-I) refused Sun's bid to become a founding member. This rejection threatens future cooperation on industry standards among major vendors.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

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### Event

On 18 April 2002, the WS-I, an industry working group that promotes Web service interoperability across platforms, applications and programming languages, announced a significant expansion in its membership but did not include Sun. Sun requested founding membership, but WS-I offered only standard working-group membership.

### Analysis

Key WS-I members IBM and Microsoft likely prompted the rejection of Sun's application to become a founding member. As an industry Web services leader, Sun wanted the additional influence and prestige of founding-member status, and its competitors equally wanted to limit Sun's influence in WS-I.

Sun's rejection threatens future cooperation in the development of industry standards. For example, the Liberty Alliance, of which Sun is a key driving force, will be less willing to address issues — e.g., protection of intellectual property — that would allow IBM and Microsoft to join. (Liberty has never rejected IBM or Microsoft for membership.) Liberty and WS-I do not compete directly with one another; however, the lack of cooperation between the influential vendors working with these organizations raises doubts about the future success of both.

This move by the WS-I will certainly deepen the fragmentation among the vendors driving industry Web service initiatives. Sun's rejection does not threaten core Web services standards — Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP), Web Services Description Language (WSDL), Extensible Markup Language (XML) and Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) — but will seriously impede any higher level of cooperation on the framework surrounding these simple standards.

Gartner recommends that enterprises view this continuing fragmentation as an indication that Web services will likely remain usable only at low levels — as infrastructure — and will likely not be used successfully outside IT groups or as a set of higher-level standards. WS-I and Liberty initiatives will likely not materialize as real solutions until one of the following occurs:

- The two groups begin to show greater responsibility and cooperation
- One of the groups demonstrates an ability to deliver value and execute as a leader

Gartner believes that, despite their continuing differences, Sun will join WS-I and that IBM and Microsoft will join Liberty by 2004 (0.6 probability). Gartner further believes that Web services will eventually succeed because of their value in integration and usefulness in simple projects.

**Analytical Sources:** Daryl Plummer, Yefim Natis, Massimo Pezzini and David Smith, Gartner Research

Written by Terry Allan Hicks, Gartner News

### Need to Know: Related Research and Recommended Reading

- “Liberty Alliance Seeks to Advance Open Identity Systems” (FT-14-5959). A look at this industry group's efforts to develop open standards for identity technology. **By David Smith and Daryl Plummer**

- "Uniform Web Services Standards Remain More Goal Than Reality" (FT-14-8458). An examination of some of the issues that vendors must resolve before true enterprise Web service standards emerge. **By Yefim Natis**

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