

## **SAP NetWeaver Offers a New Option for Software Infrastructure**

**Derek Prior, Yvonne Genovese, Gene Phifer, Massimo Pezzini**

SAP NetWeaver aims to provide a software infrastructure as a neutral alternative to IBM and Microsoft. NetWeaver integrates with IBM's and Microsoft's architectures, but it runs only on SAP's proprietary platform.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

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### Event

On 16 January 2003, SAP announced the immediate availability of SAP NetWeaver, its next-generation technology strategy for delivering SAP applications. NetWeaver includes the complete SAP technology stack, with four tiers:

- People integration (Enterprise Portal product)
- Information integration (Business Warehouse, Knowledge Management, Master Data Management products)
- Process integration (Exchange Integration product)
- Application platform (Web Application Server product)

### Analysis

In spite of its stated neutrality, SAP remains a competitor to software infrastructure leaders such as BEA Systems, IBM, Microsoft and Oracle. SAP also seeks to gain the technology "high ground" from application providers such as Oracle, PeopleSoft and Siebel Systems.

NetWeaver is a broad software suite for assembling cross-functional information from enterprise applications by using composite applications. NetWeaver rationalizes SAP's commitment to Java 2 Enterprise Edition (J2EE), XML and Web services in an architecture that can integrate SAP and non-SAP applications. NetWeaver's integrated development environment targets corporate developers and power users, not Java programmers. Its integration services enable SAP and partners to deliver the new xApps cross-functional applications.

As its strategy, SAP wants to establish NetWeaver as the neutral third force in software infrastructure, an alternative to IBM and Microsoft. SAP's support for IBM and Microsoft reassures customers that they will not be forced to move either to IBM's WebSphere (using J2EE) or to Microsoft's .NET. SAP has invested to integrate NetWeaver with WebSphere and .NET at various levels, including development tools, integration platforms, office suites, content management and portals. However, SAP's NetWeaver developers remain J2EE-centric. It will run only on SAP's own J2EE-based Web Application Server, not on WebSphere Application Server or .NET.

NetWeaver will interest mainly SAP's large installed base. Enterprises should ignore the "moving terminology" of SAP's technology strategy and instead should closely evaluate NetWeaver products for extending their SAP applications. Though the constituent products will evolve at different rates, NetWeaver provides a real fabric for integrating applications within enterprise architectures. However, developing the all-encompassing NetWeaver represents a daunting and risky task even for SAP's deep pockets.

**Analytical Sources:** Derek Prior, Yvonne Genovese, Gene Phifer and Massimo Pezzini, Gartner Research

### Recommended Reading and Related Research

- "The Application Platform Suite Magic Quadrant" — In October 2002, no application platform suite vendors were in the "Leaders" quadrant; through 2005, enterprises will have to choose between best-of-breed assembly and one-stop shopping. **By Yefim Natis and others**

- "Composite Applications Built on Portals and Web Services" — Enterprises should establish a new category of composite applications — connected and configurable applications, constructed quickly by using existing code. **By Ray Valdes, Massimo Pezzini and Gene Phifer**

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