Onsite training from IBM WebSphere Education leads to Sears Canada's SOA implementation success story

Overview

- **The Challenge**

  Multichannel operation desired a major SOA implementation requiring executive buy-in and support from IT staff to succeed

- **The Solution**

  Client enlisted IBM WebSphere Education to provide targeted SOA education to audiences ranging from overviews for executives to technology specific, in-depth seminars for IT staff

- **The Benefit**

  Once executives and IT staff understood the benefits of SOA, Sears Canada decided to implement an SOA solution and quickly realized that their Web services development projects would take 15 percent less effort

Educating stakeholders and staff on the benefits of SOA implementation

When Sears Canada was planning a major SOA (Service Oriented Architecture) implementation, Miki Uhlyarik, the company's IT Architect for Integration and Middleware, knew that the key to success would depend on his ability to build support for the project from management and IT staff.

The reasons behind the SOA plan were clear: Sears Canada operated a multichannel operation, comprising retail stores, a nationwide home maintenance, repair and installation network, and a catalog order service. The combination of legacy IT infrastructure and multiple applications running across several operating platforms caused unnecessary complexity, duplicated applications development and stymied the company's flexibility.

To inform management and upgrade IT staff skills, Uhlyarik turned to IBM WebSphere Education for a multi-tiered training solution. "With IBM's help, we provided a combination of executive overview seminars for senior management to give them an overview without getting too technical," says Uhlyarik. "We also had concept-type presentations for people like managers and directors who just needed to be familiar with the general idea and the benefits. Then of course, we had the actual technology-specific, in-depth deliveries…the fact that I could convince everybody in IT to accept and embrace the SOA concept was made easier by the fact that we had several different types of deliveries that focused on the actual needs of each target audience."

"It worked out well because everybody who needed to be aware of the SOA concept at various detail levels found the source of knowledge that they needed at the right level."

More education planned as functional needs increase

Altogether, about 20 to 30 Sears Canada staff took part in the SOA education effort, with about six participating in the onsite *WebSphere Enterprise Service Bus: Implementing an Enterprise Service Bus* class. "That group was made up of developers and administrators, which in the

end worked out really well because when we looked at the roles and responsibilities portion of the class, we figured we had just the right mix," says Uhlyarik. The training provided by IBM equipped Sears Canada's developers with a deep understanding of the WebSphere Enterprise Service Bus (ESB) software's capabilities.

"The feedback from our participants was excellent," says Uhlyarik. "We found that the instructor had expert level knowledge on the technical side and had a good delivery manner and superior communication skills. We also could see that he had practical implementation experience in the area of the tool itself."

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Uhlyarik notes that the SOA implementation is still in its early stages and that more training will be needed as the ESB functionality increases. "As far as our long-term plan to put SOA infrastructure in place in 2008, we've already planned to deploy a WebSphere Registry and Repository (WSRR). So we definitely anticipate both training and consulting requirements specifically related to WSRR and the integration of WSRR and ESB."

"We definitely see IBM playing a major role in our technology training. We are looking at a full curriculum that goes from initial overview to deeply technical subjects, and quite often IBM has designed a path with requisites, which is very useful for us. They also offer a wide range of formats, from self-paced learning to hands-on activities, and we don't think we can find this anywhere else. Altogether we've been very happy with our experience."

About Sears Canada
Sears Canada is a multi-channel retailer with a network of 196 corporate stores, 182 dealer stores, 57 home improvement showrooms, over 1,800 catalogue merchandized pick-up locations, 106 Sears Travel offices and a nationwide maintenance, repair and installation network.

About IBM WebSphere Education
IBM WebSphere Education provides over 250 courses across the WebSphere product portfolio and SOA. Courses cover skills needs from introductory to advanced and are offered in several formats, including classroom, Web-based and instructor-led online.

For more information
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