

Election 2008 Proves the Information Age has Arrived

Perspective from the Top



The presidential election campaign is in full swing and we are being inundated with information at every turn! Turn on the television for no more than 10 minutes and you will likely see Barack Obama and John McCain.

Surf the Web and there they are again – hosting town hall meetings online, asking for donations, and appearing in speeches on You Tube. Barack Obama announced his pick for vice president in a text message to supporters, smashing to smithereens the idea that texting is just for teens.

According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project released in June, which looks at the impact of the Internet on children, families, communities, the work place, schools, health care and civic/political life, almost half of all Americans have used the Internet to get political news or share their thoughts about the campaign. This same study indicates that about 39 percent of Internet users have gone online to get “unfiltered” information about a candidate, whether it is a speech transcript, video of a debate or other source. Clearly the

digital age has arrived and voters



are harnessing technology more than ever before to keep themselves informed and get involved.

Regardless of which candidate you support, technology is making it easier than ever to inform yourself of their views. YouTube has a special page www.youtube.com/youchoose, which serves as a clearinghouse for video of both candidates.

CNET, a Web site owned by CBS and devoted entirely to technology news, asked the candidates to speak on several different issues related to technology. While the use of technology to share election information has been an important development in 2008, technology issues have taken a bit of a backseat in the campaign to the economy, energy and the war in Iraq. However, each of the candidates has a detailed position on technology issues and policies they would enact if elected, and you may find them at www.johnmccain.com and www.barackobama.com.

One policy that has received some attention by congress over the past few years is the idea of net neutrality, or the law that would prevent Internet service providers from blocking or degrading certain kinds of traffic on their networks. McCain opposes net neutrality legislation, emphasizing the need for an unregulated Internet and Obama supports it, saying that without legislation, free speech on the Internet could be compromised.

“We should place the federal government in the role of stimulator, rather than regulator, of broadband services, remove state and local barriers to broadband deployment, and facilitate deployment of broadband services to rural and unserved communities,” McCain told CNET back in February.

In the same article Obama said: “The Internet is the most open network in history. We have to keep it that way. I will prevent network providers from discriminating in ways that limit the freedom of expression on the Internet.”

Both parties seem to be in favor of expanding the country’s leadership in technology through research and development as well as further education in math and sciences. I encourage each of you to review the candidates’ platforms carefully. And, whomever you support, please exercise your right to vote on Nov. 4th.

Mobile Devices

It wasn’t that long ago when the only source of news was your daily newspaper and evening news programs. However, today’s news operates 24 hours a day. And, the Internet has made it easier for you to get news wherever you are through your hand-held mobile device. You can also customize the type of news you want to receive as well as rate it and forward interesting articles on to friends. With the introduction of Web aggregators, which gather news stories together from famous or not-so-famous sources to provide easy, quick and compatible access to any desired information, news is moving even faster.

Here is a small sample of some of the aggregators you could use:

Daylife (www.daylife.com) allows news publishers to aggregate news on their own sites, giving readers a quick update with a screen that is pretty simple to navigate.

Newser (www.newser.com), a flashier, more illustrated Web page started by Vanity Fair media columnist Michael Wolf culls stories written by famous sources like BBC and *The New York Times*.

Topix (www.topix.com), owned by Gannet, McClatchy and Tribune, presents news stories based on ZIP code for a more local approach. It also includes blogs and blogger profiles, which allows for a truly social media feel.

NewsCred (www.newscred.com) and **Digg** (www.digg.com) are similar in the fact that they allow readers to rate each story. However, NewsCred is rated based on credibility and Digg is rated by popularity.

So take your pick and enjoy the daily aggregated updates of entertainment, world news, local news, sports, fashion and whatever else you may desire.

Content

Could the Answer be SOA?	pg 2
Diversity = Success	pg 2
Industry Insight	pg 3
iSpots	pg 4
Project iSpot	pg 4
Milestones	pg 4

Could the Answer be SOA?

As the economy continues to challenge companies, many organizations are taking a step back and looking at all aspects of operations to reduce costs.

In recent years, we have experienced a dramatic increase in the buzz about Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA). SOA provides an alternative to meet sticker budgets, while enabling companies to better meet their customers' needs.

SOA is an architectural approach for constructing complex software-intensive systems from a set of interconnected and interdependent services.

In short, SOA is the practice of appropriating a company's core business functions into independent silos. It separates functions into distinct services, which then become available over a network in order to be combined and reused in the production of business applications. These distinct services share data and coordinate activity between both each other and other services.

To clarify, SOA is not comprised of a particular technology; rather, it is a design philosophy that de-couples well-to-do business functions from volatile processes and presentations. Having the different pieces separated allows companies to easily test, develop, modify and run them on several different servers.

From a general business perspective, SOA provides numerous benefits, most notably the ability to quickly meet customer demands through an easily accessible, organized system. Other benefits include lowering costs associated with the acquisition and maintenance of technology, managing of business functionality closer to the business units, leveraging existing investments in technology and finally, reducing reliance on expensive custom development.

Arguably, the most beneficial function of SOA is interoperability. Essentially, interoperability results in:

Flexibility – Ease of change isolation

Reuse – Improved quality, lower costs

Openness – Ease of extensibility

Comprehensibility – Ease of business alignment

In terms of flexibility, SOA allows for isolated change impact. In essence, it authorizes large system changes to solely affect one service within the general system, rather than having all services affected.

Another benefit to SOA is that multiple services can change, modify, and reuse a similar service independently in different systems. This reusability provides services with already acceptable processes to build on rather than starting from scratch, which, essentially, saves both time and money. Instead of reinventing the wheel, systems can learn from others' experiences.

Take T-Mobile's recent activities as an example. T-Mobile is currently employing SOA for both internal integration and reuse, as well as the external, partner- and revenue-generating elements. This approach

enables T-Mobile to work effectively with third-party content providers such as Time Warner and the Bertelsmann Group to deliver services to customers.

Moreover, the openness created by SOA provides the ability to add new features to an existing program without disturbing any existing code. In other words, an open interface at one system makes integration easy for another service developer. This is made possible through de-coupling, which allows open interfaces to be integrated without disturbing the system as a whole due to their distinct separation.

Finally, comprehensibility allows for clear, easy organization through SOA, resulting in consistent communication through planning, design, delivery and change.

With the time and money saved through these four aspects of SOA, other resources can be allocated toward two major activities: re-investment in new IT capabilities, and direct business impact from SOA enablement to generate new revenue or enable new business capabilities. Certainly, successful SOA implementation can lead to new product development as a result of increased time dedicated to research and development.

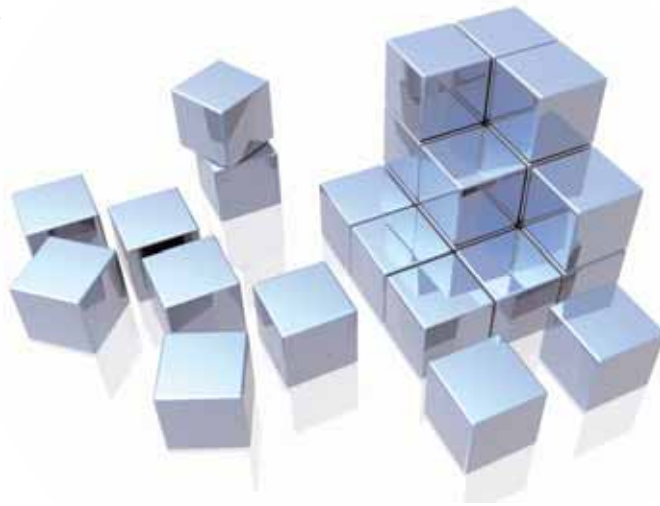
One case of a company taking advantage of SOA is the recent efforts of Verizon Communications. The company claims it averages about 2.5 million to 3 million Web services transactions a day through SOA. The system went operational in 2004 and Verizon says it has slashed its IT budget by 50 percent by eliminating redundant systems inherited from the merger of Bell Atlantic and GTE. The SOA also helped integrate the operations of some 7,000 developers.

Although there are many benefits to utilizing SOA, it may not be the answer for everyone. There are several challenges and up-front costs a company will face implementing SOA.

One common challenge is managing services metadata. SOA environments usually contain many services, which exchange messages to perform tasks. Managing and providing information on how services interact can be complicated, especially when these services are delivered by different organizations within the company or even different companies such as partners or suppliers. This difficult task creates trust issues, which often results in SOA governance.

Setting realistic expectations tends to be another complicated issue when implementing an SOA plan. Significant vendor hype often leads to unattainable goals and expectations among those implementing SOA, including guaranteed reduction of IT costs, improved systems agility and faster time to market. A successful SOA implementation may achieve all of these goals, but does not necessarily guarantee all of these expectations will be met.

Despite the setbacks, SOA is continuing to develop into a useful tool aligned with Web 2.0 initiatives. Costs and unrealistic expectations are often highlighted as drawbacks to SOA, but experts have looked past these issues and diagnosed the approach as a money and time-saving tool that will have a lasting, positive impact on the IT industry.



Diversity = Success

We want to congratulate and salute Jerry Sheppard as he received the Corp! Magazine's Diversity award for his involvement in civic and community activities promoting diversity at the magazines annual Michigan's Salute to Diversity breakfast on Oct. 14.

Jerry was nominated based on his influence as a role model in the business community, as well as his leadership skills inside and outside of Epitec, which help to create an inclusive workplace. His embodiment of a vision that develops and supports diversity strategies and his encouragement of employees to be involved and volunteer in support of diversity also qualified him for the award.

When asked what he is most proud of in the last year in terms of diversity, Jerry stated how ensuring that diversity be embedded in the culture of Epitec allows fresh ideas, new innovations, and better services and products to be generated.

"Diversity is our proven formula for success as we continue to grow our Michigan customer base," he said.

Michigan's Salute to Diversity is designed to highlight different ways diversity is demonstrated within a company. Business and community organizations throughout Michigan were invited to submit nominations for people or companies demonstrating diverse qualities.



Epitec Family Picnic – The Detroit Zoo

Saturday Sept. 6, dozens of Epitec employees enjoyed good food, good company and beautiful weather for a visit to the zoo. Take a look for yourself.



Please send any questions or comments to support@epitecgroup.com. Your input may become a topic in future issues of *Epitalk*.

Industry Insight

Ian Bund, Plymouth Venture Partners

Ian Bund is chairman of Ann Arbor-based Plymouth Venture Partners, a venture capital firm partnering with Oakland University to start a technology growth fund. Bund has been involved with building more than 350 companies and has served on the board of more than 20 companies. Bund formed the first institutional venture capital firm in Michigan and has led more than 10 funds. He has an economics degree from the University of Sydney and an MBA from Harvard University.

Plymouth Venture Partners typically makes investments of \$700,000 to \$2 million in Great Lakes Region growth companies, with a concentration on Michigan. Companies in its portfolio include PODS, or Portable On Demand Storage, Zebra Mobile, a company that has developed a platform that allows mobile users to access online newspapers, and Vio, which has developed helmet camera technology. The preferred industries Plymouth Ventures invests in are: manufacturing, technology, aerospace, defense, capital equipment, medical devices, applied technology manufacturing, integration and services.

Last year, Michigan received 0.4 percent of all venture capital investment and was ranked 25 out of 50 states, according to the Michigan Venture Capital Association. However, the number of venture capital firms in Michigan has more than doubled since 2001, growing from seven to 15. Further, the amount of venture capital under management in Michigan has increased by almost 75 percent during the same timeframe.

Below, Bund discusses the growth fund and the financial climate for small business, particularly technology companies, in Michigan.

Q: Could you describe Oakland University's Technology Growth Fund and how it will operate?

A: The leadership of Oakland County, particularly Brooks Patterson, has for years wanted a professionally managed venture capital fund in Oakland County. This vision has been shared by people at Oakland University and by the executive director of the incubator, David Spencer. They decided that in order to do what you want, you have to have experienced people and in the beginning of this year, we were invited to organize and manage that fund. We will contract with Oakland University's incubator, so they can provide us with services and deal flow, and we will provide capital . . . we believe there are growth companies in Oakland County that can benefit from our growth capital. Our primary interest is in growth stage companies that are applying or using technology.

Q: How important is venture capital in creating a "tech culture"?

A: The fostering of a technology culture is very important for future industries in Michigan, but we don't really think in the next three to five years, the growth will come from that sector. However, there are plenty of service and manufacturing companies capable of growing immediately with a higher degree of technology. We see one of the great opportunities as applying technology to existing businesses in a future-looking way. We think there are a lot of capable engineering people with many credentials who understand how to do that.

Q: Is much growth capital being invested in Michigan companies?

A: The amount is relatively small. It is growing, but it is still pretty small.

Q: What are the benefits/downsides to companies receiving venture capital funds?

A: I think the benefits are understood in an environment where you have banks that are backing off their financing role and are requiring more junior capital if they do any financing at all. Giving up equity as a price of taking venture capital is not appealing to many companies. And it's possible that getting someone on their board of directors from a firm such as ours is going to lead to changes and cause the cycle of activity to speed up. When we invest our money and our time, we expect results.

Q: How can business and government support technology companies in Michigan?

A: Business and government can become a more open and early adopter of small companies' products and services. Ohio does that so well. In Ohio, the biggest companies and state government have been interested in taking on products and services of smaller companies. But here in Michigan, we've been very slow to do that. We've been very conservative to use small companies' products and that's an area where Oakland County can take some leadership. There are 42,000 businesses in Oakland County and lots of opportunity to be more supportive of small businesses. If there's ever a place that needs innovation capital, it's Michigan.



Consultant



Karen May

STATS

Title: Capacity Delivery Management

Hire Date: August 2007

Responsibilities: I manage Ford Data Center projects through the coordination of application infrastructure, support services, hardware procurement and engineering architecture reviews, acting as a single point of contact for project teams within Ford.

Education: Bachelor of Science in Organizational Management from Tusculum College; Master of Business Administration in Technology Management from University of Phoenix.

iSpot Exclusive: I love to travel internationally with my husband Brian and daughter Brianna (who just turned 13). I am also 'mom' to two Labrador mixes. In my spare time, I love to read as well as write books – maybe some day you will see my name on the newsstand!

Corporate Employee



Ed Speck

STATS

Title: IT Recruiter

Hire Date: August 2006

Responsibilities: Identifying needs and placing qualified IT professionals within our customers, including Ford, Chrysler and the city of Detroit.

Successes: Ed's greatest success is when he led the team in number of placements for 2008, and he attributes this success to his great mentors at Epitec, especially Tony Hollamon, Rebecca Csartari and his fellow teammates.

Education: Bachelor of Science in Communication from Western Michigan University.

iSpot Exclusive: He chose this field due to his highly competitive nature. And, this job gives him the opportunity to interact with people in a competitive aspect every day.



(L-R) Back Row - Brenda Johnson, Reduced Fares Eligibility Rep; Michele Keys, Quality Assurance Rep; Lovevett Williams, Director; LaTrinda S. Pery, Mobility Project Manager. Front Row - Jennifer Shaw, Quality Assurance Rep; Jackie Paynes, Paratransit Eligibility Rep; Keisha R. Pierce, Special Services Project Manager; Yolanda Jones, Reduced Fares Supervisor

Epitec is working with the city of Detroit's Special Services Department to develop and implement The Detroit Department of Transportation's new Mobility Management Service, which will provide an enhanced transportation service to the city of Detroit's elderly, disabled and lower-income riders. It will feature a centralized, fully coordinated transit center that will serve as the primary source of transportation for residents.

Tony Hollamon, ring master at Epitec is working closely with Keisha R. Pierce, special services project manager with the city of Detroit to ensure the department needs are met and assist in securing more than 30 staff members, the anticipated need within the group.

The project is currently in the development phase and the city's goal is to launch the full-featured Mobility Management Service within the next six to 12 months.

The initial milestone within the next three months is the implementation of our Mobility Management Pilot Program, which will serve as a "transitional phase," laying the foundation for the daily operations of the Mobility Management Service. Implementation and monitoring of the initial Pilot Program, will allow us to work through any potential problems, assess necessary changes, and address areas of concern to ensure the future success.

Milestones

July

Sumalatha Kasukela (3 years)
Anuradha Thatavarthi (3 years)
Vidhi Gupta (3 years)
Cynthia Cottage (4 years)
Ashfaq Mohammed (4 years)
Venkataphanindranath Inampudi (4 years)
Prasanna Jannu (4 years)
James Hollins Sr. (4 years)
Satyaprakash Tirumalasetti (4 years)
Patrick Lademan (8 years)

August

Michael Smith (3 years)
Carolyn Suydam (3 years)
Lizabeth Hohm (3 years)
Chris Klee (3 years)
Dhirein Patel (3 years)
Hanumathrama Venkata (4 years)
Toria Spencer (4 years)
Angela Chubb (6 years)
Anthony Hollamon (18 years)

September

Caroline Deacon (3 years)
Olivera Milic (3 years)
Harshet Patel (4 years)
Marre Tallerico (5 years)
Mubashar Ahmad (8 years)
Gregory Brown (10 years)
Gary Mercatante (15 years)
Dennis Montrose (16 years)



From Start To Finish, We're There For You.

24700 Northwestern Hwy.
Suite 250
Southfield, MI 48075