



Foundation Technology Services cuts time and risk with IBM Patterns.

Application Integrated IT solutions for customers and a training course for consultants based on IBM Patterns for e-business

Business Benefits For Foundation's customers: 40% faster project assessments; 20% faster implementations
For Foundation: \$20,000 increase in monthly revenues; \$6,000 saving per new consultant; 30% increase in revenues expected next year from new integration projects

Software IBM WebSphere® Application Server
IBM WebSphere Commerce Suite
IBM DB2® Universal Database™
IBM MQSeries®
IBM Patterns for e-business

Today's leading companies are those that were the first in their markets to recognize and implement important new technologies. But in the rush to rapid implementation, IT infrastructures have traditionally been developed piece-by-piece by specialists without the benefit of an enterprisewide plan. In many cases, the various components of the infrastructure don't communicate with each other, and they require costly round-the-clock administration and maintenance.

"The IBM Patterns for e-business are prebuilt, reusable and tested solutions that dramatically decrease both time and risk for our customers."

— David Shefter, Director of Integration Services, Foundation Technology Services



Using the IBM Patterns for e-business, Foundation Technology Services is decreasing the time, risk and costs of implementing integrated, enterprisewide information technology solutions.

e-business — accelerating the pace of business and the pace of change



Foundation's Patterns-based training program is producing consultants with a higher level of e-business understanding.

“The Patterns allow us to show our customers a pre-existing, tangible solution that has been consistently proven to work. This is invaluable to companies that are under so much pressure to get their systems up quickly and under budget.”

–David Shefter

These challenges have given rise to a new wave of consulting firms that specialize in integrating such disparate components, creating seamless systems that provide a single view of an enterprise's information. These systems are also increasingly extended beyond the enterprise to the entire value chain, reaching sales and distribution channels, as well as partners, suppliers and even customers.

Leading the way in this field of services is IBM Business Partner Foundation Technology Services (Foundation). Since its inception in 1991, Foundation has been a leading developer of custom applications for human resources, enterprise resource planning (ERP), customer relationship management (CRM) and e-business transactions. Foundation helps companies integrate these systems to become competitive, collaborative e-businesses.

But some things never change. Rapid implementation is still a competitive prerequisite. Foundation's customers can't afford multiple cycles of trial and error in the development process. This puts the responsibility on Foundation to produce the best solution the first time — and to do so quickly. Providing these all-encompassing solutions requires a team of consultants that not only specialize in specific areas, but also have knowledge of the complete e-business infrastructure to be deployed. Foundation had to consider how it could develop a team of such well-rounded and cross-trained consultants despite shortages in the labor market.

Patterns provide insight into business advantage

It wasn't long before David Shefter, Foundation's director of integration services, found the answer to the dilemma in a familiar place — the IBM Web site. While exploring the Web site to research new e-business tools, Shefter came across the IBM Patterns for e-business (Patterns). The Patterns are sets of reusable, proven guidelines formed from the experience IBM has gained from more than 20,000 e-business engagements. The Patterns are the best-practice implementations of the IBM Application Framework for e-business. Shefter realized that the Patterns could allow Foundation to dramatically decrease both the time and risk associated with large IT projects. In addition, Foundation could also leverage the Patterns as a training vehicle for its growing team of consultants.

Graduates of Shefter's new Patterns-based training program are considered junior architects. The designation of architect is evidence of the consultant's ability to understand the overall structure of an e-business engagement from beginning to end—not just the specific components. Assigning these junior architects to new engagements has led to a 40 percent reduction in the time required for initial assessments. After the assessment, the architects can leverage the prebuilt Patterns to decrease implementation time by 20 percent.

The Patterns-based training program is also saving Foundation \$6,000 in training costs per consultant by eliminating the need for additional e-business classes. These savings are likely to be substantial, as Foundation's Web consultant team is expected to grow to 120 employees by the end of next year. Moreover, the four weeks each consultant saves in training time can now be spent generating billable work for Foundation—boosting the company's revenues by at least \$20,000 a month.

Word of Foundation's success is spreading among existing and potential clients, and the company is expecting new integration projects to drive up revenue by 30 percent next year. Shefter attributes much of this success to the Patterns. "The IBM Patterns for e-business are prebuilt, reusable and tested solutions that dramatically decrease both time and risk for our customers by helping them avoid developing systems from scratch. They allow our consultants to reduce the entire development cycle for our clients—from assessment to implementation."

Reducing time to market

Currently, Foundation is implementing Patterns-based solutions primarily for state and local governments, educational institutions and mid-size financial institutions. The sales cycle for these projects is a maximum of three to six weeks.

When engaging Foundation, customers typically express the need to reduce complexity and streamline their overall infrastructures. Foundation demonstrates how the Patterns can provide a software layer that connects the customer's existing systems—such as back-end IBM CICS® applications, as well as ERP and CRM data streams—with newer Web-based applications, such as online storefronts.

"Being able to fortify our experience and knowledge with that of a company like IBM has proved to be extremely valuable to us."

—David Shefter



The support and knowledge that Foundation receives from IBM is an important component of the company's overall success.

“The Patterns allow us to show our customers a pre-existing, tangible solution that has been consistently proven to work,” Shefter says. “This is invaluable to companies that are under so much pressure to get their systems up quickly and under budget.”

After the initial assessment of the client’s architecture and application requirements, Foundation consultants can easily extend or customize existing Patterns to meet the customer’s needs. For example, if Foundation is engaged to integrate a company’s back-end ERP and CRM systems with a front-end e-commerce Web site, the consultant can refer to the business-to-business (B2B) Pattern and integrate the system with both suppliers and shipping companies. “This adds tremendous value in every engagement,” Shefter says. “There is a standard layer to each of these Patterns, but beyond this layer, you can always make customer-specific modifications or add on additional Patterns quickly and easily.”

Foundation partners with third-party software vendors to extend the integrated solution to the rest of the company’s value chain. The Patterns allow Foundation to quickly gauge which partners will provide the best value based on the customer’s specific requirements.

Optimizing infrastructures with IBM solutions

The Patterns were developed with open guidelines that can accommodate most standards-based e-business products. But Shefter prefers to use IBM solutions in Foundation’s engagements. “What you need today is a very strong software-based communications layer between all of these systems,” he explains. “We believe in solutions like the WebSphere family of products, DB2 Universal Database and MQSeries to build consistent, integrated e-business infrastructures across an entire corporation.”

While many companies claim to offer integrated solutions, Foundation is pressing ahead of competitors by leveraging not only its experience in applications development and its growing team of highly-skilled, cross-trained integration consultants, but also its strategic partnership with IBM.

“Without the benefit of extensive integration experience, many of our competitors are duplicating efforts and taking unnecessary risks when implementing large systems,” says Shefter. “Being able to fortify our experience and knowledge with that of a company like IBM has proved to be extremely valuable to us.”

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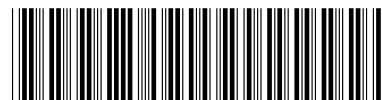
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