

Collaborative Decision Support for the European economy

More and more enterprises and administrations have to collaborate in order to make appropriate business decisions or solve crises. The collapse of the 'new economy' has led to a renewed interest in software that can help companies recover their business revenue streams, streamline operations, and seek new opportunities earlier than their competitors. The European economy can benefit from decision-support facilities based on the technologies developed and tested in LASCOT.

Collaboration in the Cyber Enterprise

Many of today's enterprises are attempting to work together to form a collaborative business. But these 'extended or cyber enterprises' continue to encounter significant barriers in terms of efficiently sharing and collaborating over information. This is caused largely by the use of dissimilar systems, each with its own proprietary data formats and protocols. Hence, in the absence of standard interoperability mechanisms, each company in the extended enterprise is operating at best with only partial information, usually taken from internal business systems or from a small number of key partners. However, organisations are realising that key business decisions are rarely made in isolation; they often require the collaborative effort of multiple actors, both inside and outside the organisation. Vendors and users will need to overcome significant business, cultural, and – in some cases – security challenges.

The LASCOT project can contribute to a solution by defining, developing and demonstrating a set of concepts and technologies for collaborative decision support in networks of large organisations.

Types of decision support

The wide range of applications relevant for this type of decision-support systems is of great importance to large private enterprises (for risk management and change management), public institutions (for environmental crisis management), as well as ministerial organisations (for government crises). There is currently no solution available that covers the whole decision-support process. One of the main concerns today is that a huge number of sources of information can be accessed but that neither their relevance nor the way they are presented to the end user are adequate. Most often these sources cannot be exploited efficiently and rapidly. The LASCOT process, which starts with information retrieval, passing through structuring, qualification and treatment – with iterations – right up to visualisation, is not only pertinent but also quite innovative. Some components exist already (for example,

groupware tools), but others need to be developed (such as security architecture and a human interaction module). Prior to LASCOT no solution has been proposed that brings together all the necessary components.

Web service technologies

A set of concepts and technologies for collaborative decision support in a network of large organisations will be defined, developed and demonstrated. LASCOT will enable situation assessment and provide decision-support facilities as well as simulation and validation facilities to support business decisions. As IT developers strive to bring together information from multiple extranet applications into a collaborative solution, the real benefit for organisations is the ability to extend their reach by seamlessly connecting more companies throughout the value chain. Web services will be key; and supporting infrastructures will emerge through growing vendor support for maturing Web services specifications.

LASCOT will make a Prototype () available, but the adoption curve may be lengthy, due to the continued use of competing standards, as well as security and connectivity issues. The ultimate solution will be based on access to traditional information systems and Web data. The technical basis of the LASCOT project will rely on a trio of Web services technologies: XML as mark-up language for data in which software components can collaborate over corporate intra and extranets, using the Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP) and Universal Description, Discovery and Integration (UDDI) as a Web services directory.

Expected results

The LASCOT project will:

- Define and create “mediation tools” for presenting qualified information to end-users.
- Define and create an adequate platform concept for communicating an appropriate price/performance/security ratio.
- Enhance security tools to ensure that the project goals are achieved.
- Develop and demonstrate tools to support decision-making in crisis management after assessing the various technical approaches and understanding the path from an isolated enterprise to a cyber-enterprise management process.

Make use of visualisation technology for critical tasks such as decision-making, customer-centric analysis, knowledge and business performance management

< Project details >

Partners

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IT-OPTICS

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Countries involved

Belgium

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Project start

April 2003 for France and July 2003 for the Flemish partners January 2004 for the Walloon partners

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