

Resource Provisioning, Interoperability, and XML

Invitational Industry Discussion
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Interoperability Discussion

Opening Remarks

- Follow-up to Catalyst 2001 discussion on provisioning systems interoperability and need to converge current pre-standard XML work
- Next step in highly positive post-Catalyst dialogue in progress between XRPM and ADPr groups
- Additional provisioning vendors joining today's discussion
 - Business Layers, M-Tech, Novell, Tivoli, Waveset, and others
- Goals:
 - Review the nature and status of current work
 - Agree on next steps towards convergence and transitioning current efforts to a single OASIS group

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Market Considerations

- Fragmented efforts generate much duplication of effort on the part of vendors and customers building and deploying provisioning systems
- Two (or more) pseudo-standards are not better than one real standard
- Customer interoperability problems remain unresolved
- Customers may lose confidence in "packaged" solutions and revert back to an RYO strategy
- Market (and revenue) growth slows (in the absence of a standard that the industry strongly supports)
- Any early mover advantage is transient as support from other provisioning vendors is needed to achieve any useful degree of interoperability

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Today's opportunity

- Business perspective: "Co-opetition" model sacrifices short term competitive advantage for sustainable market growth
- Assembled a mix of key technical leaders and product managers that control the evolution of the leading provisioning products
- Recognize the importance of joint action now that could advance the industry drive to interoperability by years, help this market grow faster, and better serve all customers
- Potentially a major milestone in the growing maturity of the resource provisioning industry

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Goals for today

- Learn more about the problem
- Seek a common understanding of the issues
- Agree that a joint effort is needed
- Decide on timetable and process for transitioning work to a newly formed OASIS technical committee

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Customer can't afford to wait for the standards process to solve pressing problems

- Many are compelled to make tactical choices to solve pressing problems and keep up with the market
- But as early adopters mature in their understanding and usage, demand for interoperable security grows
- No one vendor can resolve the looming interoperability issues
- Customer organizations are driving industry to support security infrastructures that interoperate, but we're not there yet

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Some interoperability issues

- Sharing account and entitlement information between provisioning systems is new interoperability issue
 - Maintain consistent policies across security domains
 - Publish user/resource entitlement information within an enterprise or community
- Maintaining convenience of single sign-on as the user accesses services that are controlled by different security managers, often requiring system-specific accounts and credentials
- Communicating profile information, along with identity and role mapping between provisioning systems
- Many enterprises must manage multiple security domains, and may have deployed multiple provisioning systems
 - Legacy of business unit technology acquisitions
 - Result of multiple mergers and acquisitions

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Components to progress in security interoperability

- The emerging identity framework assumes "well-connected" identity stores and authentication services
- Achieving a standard encoding of identity schema
 - No well-defined schema that's supported in all identity stores
 - Trend to store and communicate identity and attributes as signed XML objects
- Agreement on a standard way to request an identity assertion, and to respond
 - Security Assertions Markup Language (SAML)
- A standard format for creating and maintaining initial identity and account mapping
 - Early XML work by Access360, Business Layers, and other participating companies in the XRPM and ADPr work groups
- Standard authorization interface for application servers

- Work on JSR 115 just getting starting

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Convergence within the identity infrastructure

- Overlapping functions:
 - Provisioning and meta-directories consolidate identity and attribute information from many sources
 - Identity management is provided by both provisioning and access management systems
 - SSO and provisioning propagate or synchronize passwords
- Each of these infrastructures requires agents/connectors that are customized for each endpoint application / platform
- Customers cannot afford either the cost or the complexity of duplicate infrastructures, and will drive integration and eventual consolidation
- Alternative of loosely coupled plug&play components that share a common family of connectors appears unlikely

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Summary

- Solid progress made over the past year on a new generation of XML-based standards that simplify complex interoperability problems
- However, this promising start could still be derailed if the industry fails to recognize that all vendors benefit from standards that unlock a stalled market, enabling growth
- Customer need is already there and growing
- Interoperability issues are not going to be resolved by independent vendor efforts
- Stage is set for a meaningful, collaborative effort by the industry that delivers results in 2002
- As a group of key influencers you have the opportunity today to make a real difference