



SOA Training ROI

Adopting SOA and a Service Oriented approach to business is a non-trivial task. Significant changes must be made within the business analysis discipline, solution design and architecture, as well as development, testing, and effective project management. Acquiring a solid grasp of methodology as well as developing new skillsets is crucial for the successful adoption of SOA. The fact is that few organizations invest in preparing for the shift that is required in terms of mindset as well as knowledge and skills.

There is a shortage of SOA skills available in the marketplace

Multiple experts have recognized the tremendous shortage of SOA skills within the industry:

There is a looming enterprise architect “drought” and a **significant demand** in the marketplace for experienced SOA talent.

- Ron Smeltzer, ZapThink Principal, Jan 2007

Both SOA and Web services application development pose unique challenges to the skills of the department.

- Aberdeen Group, July 2007

There is a shortage of SOA skills in a typical company and demand for SOA skills far outstrips the supply.

- Ian Finley, AMR Research Director, Jan 2008

Best practices enable successful SOA adoption

The Aberdeen report ***SOA Middleware Takes the Lead: Picking Up Where Web Services Leaves Off***, is based on a survey of more than 400 organizations over the past 18 months. In the study, "best-in-class" companies were found to be twice as likely to have deployed SOA middleware as those that use only web services. One of the key traits of best-in class companies was their focus on training as an overall part of their SOA initiative.

The Aberdeen report states that IT organizations that made the investment in SOA infrastructure such as ESB's (Enterprise Service Bus), repositories, and registries, are significantly outperforming companies that develop only web services. This savvy investment is resulting in lower application lifecycle costs, better throughput for projects, and higher levels of user satisfaction. Earlier this year, SOA was ready to move from the testing phase into production.

More information from the Aberdeen report:

1. Best-in-Class (top 20% of aggregate performance scorers) - Characterized by organizations that prioritize ***investments in education/training***, architecture, SOA middleware and infrastructure, and processes aimed at measuring and tweaking performance
2. Average (middle 50% of aggregate performance scorers) - Characterized by organizations that have made minor investments in SOA middleware and infrastructure, very little in education/training, and have virtually ignored organizational performance measurement metrics for refining the enterprise

Best Practice #1 – Deploying comprehensive SOA middleware rather than Just a Bunch of Web Services (JBOWS)

This is the first best practice.

An impressive 71 percent are using SOA to simplify or standardize their development infrastructure, while 76 percent have already deployed one or more ESBs.

Aberdeen feels that organizations should concentrate on investing in infrastructure, as web services will carry an organization only so far.

Best Practice #2 – Prioritizing training and re-skilling

This is the second best practice.

It advises organizations to retrain its development team. "Don't expect IT to just 'get it' when it comes to SOA.

61% of Best in Class SOA organizations have already completed training of Key Contributors in SOA technologies versus less than 30% of Industry Average and Laggards

Training, while often the poor step child of technology, or simply an after thought, instead is underpinning the success for Best-In-Class IT organizations

Steps to success: "Organizations should couple training with either upgraded or new development environments that take advantage of SOA technology. The Best-in-Class have already completed this cycle and are seeing significantly lower application development costs."

The report also states: "***Don't skimp on training.*** Even though SOA applications are similar to earlier distributed architectures that you may have experience with, the difference are significant and require new approaches to design and develop."

Web Age Solutions is a leader in custom SOA education

Web Age has trained thousands of people across numerous industries, organizations, and corporations throughout North America and across the Globe. Our client base includes over 40 of the Fortune 100. We have shared our expertise with these individuals and in turn we have learned from their SOA experiences as we explore our workshop-based training. We transfer this real-world knowledge in every engagement.

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Complete SOA Education

To gain a competitive advantage from SOA, a company needs to master the structural foundation of SOA which comprises SOA methodology, governance and technical skills. A company should be wary of proceeding with any SOA plans without proper mastery of all three of these components. It is not enough to go out and select some SOA tools and then begin developing code. And while contractors have been historically invaluable for standard IT development projects, for SOA, companies need to look within themselves as knowledge of internal business process is imperative for those tasked in implementing a SOA. Due to this need for internal corporate business knowledge, knowledge of SOA best practices, methodologies and new SOA tools, training and mentoring are often a requirement for developing SOA expertise.

Foundation #1 – Methodology

At minimum there is a need to establish a common vocabulary around SOA. There are numerous interpretations of SOA and the methodology associated with its implementation. If nothing else, training will establish a consistent approach across the organization. We train in these best practices regarding SOA methodology to insure a well planned and well structured SOA.

Foundation #2 – Governance

SOA Governance is often discussed but frequently neglected until the later stages of SOA planning. SOA adds new challenges and hence IT governance processes need to be extended. We have designed a Governance curriculum that allows students to get started with instituting a governance practice from scratch. Successful SOA adoption requires a thoughtfully conceived Governance framework.

Foundation #3 – Technical Skills

With so many facets to SOA, and the break-neck pace of the industry, it is no wonder that organizations are in need of upgrading the technical skills of their staff. Business analysts, architects, developers, legacy support personnel and even quality assurance and testing staff members have new techniques, tools, standards, and protocols to become proficient in. Our thorough curriculum can set them on the right path.

Do you have a complete SOA education strategy or were you just hoping that your employees could "pick it up" as they go?