

Open Source & Standards: The next big wave in Enterprise IT



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Munwar Shariff is the CTO of Cignex Datamatics. He has served as the Chief Architect and manager of engineering teams for 19 years in the areas of business application software, Internet applications, and mobile commerce applications for customers in the U.S., Japan, Germany, UK, Hong Kong, Malaysia and India. He is an expert in Content Management Systems (CMS). Since co-founding CIGNEX Datamatics in late 2000, he has successfully delivered more than 200 enterprise applications using various Open Source technologies. Shariff has written a number of articles on Open Source CMS, is an experienced trainer and a frequent speaker at conferences related to this topic. He earned his MS in Digital Electronics and Advanced Communications from REC Surathkal, India. He has authored four technical books on Open Source CMS, Alfresco3 WCM, Alfresco3 ECM, Implementing Alfresco and Plonelive.

Technology Trends Shaping the Industry

CIGNEX Datamatics has been a big proponent of Open Source and open standards and helped many Enterprise customers “Making Open Source Work” since its inception in year 2000. In the past two years we have seen many disruptive technology trends in this space which lead to a huge adoption of Open Source in large Enterprises.

From our business point of view I see three technology trends that are transforming the industry.

The user experience platform (UXP) is rapidly emerging as future of web and mobile applications. This is due to impact and power of customer centric websites like Facebook and the development of mobile interfaces. UXP is an integrated collection of technologies that provides

the ability to design and deliver user presentation capabilities for a wide variety of interaction channels such as portal, content management, collaboration, mobile, analytics, search and e-commerce.

Market demand for cloud-based content management solutions is growing as organizations look to reduce operational costs and streamline their business processes. Majority of the Enterprises will migrate to a cloud computing environment and storage for internal operations as well as for external client focused applications.

Big Data will be a new technology trend to address increased demands of data agility. The Open Source technologies such as Hadoop, HBase, MadReduce, Hive, MongoDB and their ability to run on commodity hardware is going to challenge the big players in the market such as IBM, EMC, Oracle and Microsoft for better innovation and lower costs.

Emerging trends a CTO should bet on

Majority of the Open Source vendors used to make their money through custom development; in fact, it was the single biggest source of revenue. However, in future SaaS will be the way to make money. As per recent survey conducted by OSBC (2011) value-add subscriptions and SaaS - will grow by about 25 percent over the next two years.

Leading analysts have predicted that by 2016, Open Source Software will be included in mission-critical software portfolios within 99 percent of Global 2000 enterprises, up from 75 percent in 2010. The trend is going to continue and grow exponentially.

We are noticing that control of IT budgets is moving away from the IT department, necessitating the IT team to work closely with the business teams. Distributed Agile Development will be the key to a successful and profitable IT adoption by business. The emerging team collaboration and real-time communication technologies will make it

possible to implement the processes in a most efficient manner.

Priorities as a CTO

My top priorities are to focus on enhancing value of our UXP offering - Integrated Business Ecosystem (IBE) – and roll-out the new practice infrastructure for Big Data and Smart Analytics, to identify alliance partners and to build Intellectual Property.

Another priority is contribution to the Open Source community. We have authored 10 books on Open Source Enterprise Content Management and Portals & Social Collaboration. We have also contributed many plug-ins and software modules to various Open Source projects and products.

IT Initiatives brought in at CIGNEX Datamatics

We, at CIGNEX Datamatics, adopt the same technology we propose to our clients. We have rolled out Liferay and Drupal based portals & social collaboration solutions for our internal and public facing portals and use Alfresco ECM to manage our global content across all departments. In addition, the focus on efficient usage of hardware using virtualization, SEI CMMi Level 3 certification for Quality and delivery processes, and improving the project quality by using industry standard tools are key initiatives at CIGNEX Datamatics.

Measuring IT effectiveness

The key parameter we focus on as an organisation – both internally and with our clients - is “Minimize Total Cost of IT Ownership – without compromising on functionality”. Enterprise Open Source solutions have been core to our achieving this.

Challenges of a CIO

CIOs today are concerned about the following:

- Reducing IT Total Cost of Ownership (TCO), and yet increasing scope of IT to support aggressive needs of the business

- IT Security – given the wide-spread adoption of tablets and smart phones along with increasing need to support “Bring Your Own Device” to work

- Managing Data – increased volume and speed of structured & unstructured data
- Finding skilled technical professionals
- Maintaining employee morale & productivity, while dealing with various technologies, products and clients – both internal and external

Driving Innovation

We are working on few initiatives within the organization to drive innovation. Some of those are:

Tech Turns – We have monthly technical talks where new ideas, tools, products and processes are presented by various employees from various offices globally. We also have recognition schemes to encourage the innovation during these technical meetings.

Symposium – We also conduct technology symposiums where new and upcoming technologies are introduced in the company and also opportunity for various individuals and teams within the organization to present their ideas.

CD Market Place – Internal market place open to employees and customers. This is an appstore for creating and distributing software.

Future Outlook

Open Source has become main stream and every enterprise is adopting it as a core part of their Enterprise IT Architecture. We are actively reaching out to larger enterprises with an option of co-existence of Open Source and their existing commercial applications to protect their technology investments while gaining from the benefits provided by Open Source.

UXP, Big Data, Mobile and Cloud are primarily Open Source driven, a big advantage for companies like CIGNEX Datamatics to dramatically increase our client footprint. 

(As told to Christo Jacob)