12 eServices for Integrating eMarkets

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12.1 Business Networking and ERP Integration ........................................ 230
12.2 eMarkets and eServices in Business Networking .............................. 231
  12.2.1 Evolution and Market Potential ........................................ 231
  12.2.2 Benefits of eMarkets ....................................................... 231
  12.2.3 Benefits of Process Integration .......................................... 232
  12.2.4 Integration Requirements ............................................... 232
12.3 eServices for Integration - Case of Triaton .................................... 234
  12.3.1 newtron and Triaton – eMarket and System Supplier ................. 234
  12.3.2 Considerations on eMarket Integration Potential .................... 235
  12.3.3 Triaton eService ‘A2A e-Link for eMarkets’ ............................ 236
  12.3.4 Cooperation newtron and Triaton ..................................... 237
  12.3.5 Business Process Support and Benefits ............................... 239
12.4 Implementation and Architecture of A2A e-Link for eMarkets .............. 240
12.5 Digression: Solution Enhancement Potentials with IBM tpaML .............. 243
12.6 Conclusions and Outlook ......................................................... 246
12.1 Business Networking and ERP Integration

Integration is a key element for Business Networking applications. First, many companies have introduced initiatives to restructure internal processes and integrate information systems by merging individual subprocesses into integrated information systems, such as desktop purchasing systems (cf. Chaps. 10 and 14.2). Second, the rapid evolution of new eMarkets, such as Covisint in the automotive sector or ChemConnect in the chemical industry, as well as external eServices providers, such as inet-logistics in logistics or Deutsche Merchant in factoring. As partners of the businesses are concerned, these new business models take over subprocesses or replace business processes with new high-quality IT-supported processes which ideally should represent a seamless extension of company processes. This means integrating the ERP systems of companies and the infrastructures of eMarkets and eServices.

As a result of the speed at which the Business Networking (or eBusiness) sector has developed, ERP system suppliers have not yet succeeded in fully integrating outwardly reaching eBusiness activities, such as electronic markets or eProcurement with internal processes, even if they have already launched their own initiatives and developed new infrastructures within an extremely short space of time (e.g. mySAP.com from SAP). Integration with these new partners via electronic media has only just begun and is being boosted by initiatives such as eServices and e-speak from Hewlett-Packard or tpaML from IBM. eServices are therefore seen as the next revolution [Plummer/Smith 2000]. The integration of eServices into an existing organization brings new challenges as process, data, protocol and interface standards for dynamic eService access are still at the development or introduction stage. This is partly because in eBusiness the vast majority of IT infrastructures are proprietary developments. The Gartner Group forecasts that the market for these integration services will hit USD 100 billion by 2004, with an annual growth rate of more than 50% [GartnerGroup 2000].

Since the knowledge and competencies required to solve this problem are currently rare, the attractiveness of outsourcing these activities to third parties is growing. This trend is being accentuated by a desire to avoid past experience where the relationship-specific interfaces and applications used for EDI or CAD systems led to technically limited and expensive one-to-one solutions between business partners. The case of Triaton shows how an eService business model of an outsourcing provider offering the integration of eMarkets into ERP systems is developed and technically realized.