

ZAPTHINK ZAPNOTE™

STRIKEIRON ENABLING THE SERVICE ECONOMY

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Abstract

Companies are starting to discover the benefits of loosely coupled, composable, reusable Services –the ability to dramatically reduce the cost of integration, increase agility, and enable the governance of distributed systems. However, as they seek to build reusable Services, they face the challenge of quickly locating, understanding, and utilizing existing Services. Furthermore, third-party firms have already developed many of the Services that businesses need for their day-to-day operations, and those Services may be accessible on a pay-as-you-go basis.

This increasing desire to build and exchange Services for mutual business benefit inspired Strikelron to build a Service marketplace where Service providers can expose Services for consumption by third-parties and consumers can search, pay for, and reliably transact with those Services – in essence, an economy for reusable Services.

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Providing a Means for Third-Party Service Reuse

Reusability has long been a holy grail for those in the computing industry. Developers have long sought a way to make their code available to other developers in the corporate organization or for use by third-parties. Businesses still desire mechanisms for extending their capabilities and benefits to their customers and partners without requiring continuous technology investment. Where past technologies have failed in this regard, the movement to Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA) promises to dramatically change the landscape for application and Service reuse.

In order to facilitate the reuse and consumption of Services, companies first need to discover valuable Services and consume them in a way that provides mutual business benefit to both the provider and consumer of a given Service. In addition to the challenge of Service discovery is the need to reliably consume and pay for third-party Services. In essence, companies require a marketplace where consumers of Services can locate providers among a wide range of available capabilities, and then purchase and consume them in a way that delivers immediate business benefit – in other words, a Service economy.

Strikelron Web Services Business Network

Rising to meet this challenge is Strikelron. The company has one mission: to create a network that enables companies to take advantage of the wealth of global information and functionality made accessible by reusable, third-party Services. Based on a software-as-a-service model, the Strikelron *Web Services Business Network*, or *WSBizNet*, is a hosted, subscription-based online service that provides tools for enabling the discovery and reliable consumption Web Services by business users and developers.

WSBizNet provides a Web-based graphical user interface (GUI) that provides the following capabilities:

- Search and discovery within a directory of hundreds of available and reusable Web Services in the Strikelron *Web Services Business Directory*. The Strikelron Web Services Business Directory is a meta-directory containing over 1000 Web services entries including Strikelron's directories, public UDDIs and brokerage services available for the Web services market.
- standard and premium-level Services that provide for trusted, secured, reliable, and paid-for offerings
- The Strikelron *Knowledge Base* that provides an expanding database of information explaining the inputs, outputs and behavior of how a Web service works, thus reducing the complexity involved in figuring out how to interact with a Web service.
- Commercial services for managing subscription-based fees and tracking utilization.
- Monitoring services for measuring availability of Services.
- The Strikelron *Web Services Analyzer Online Edition* for the runtime analysis of Services. The Analyzer executes the Web service dynamically and automatically parses Web Services Description Language (WSDL) files to determine the data requirements, data structure, and expected behavior of the Web service. It then provides the results in a tree-based graphical browser for viewing the input and output data structures of the Web Service both before and after execution. The Analyzer then links the results to the Knowledge Base for future Service consumers, and also provides additional detail on the Service to the consumer.

One of the remarkable features of WSBizNet is the availability of a number of business Services that can be consumed on a pay-per-user basis. For example, WSBizNet users can access Services from Dun and Bradstreet for customer and business credit information, address and zip-code verification services, EDGAR filings, stock and financial Services, Zacks investment research, do-not-call verification, Medicare supplier information, USDA data, and tax information. These capabilities are all available as premium third-party Services to all WSBizNet customers.

In addition to the above capabilities, Strikelron also produces a Premium Edition of the Web Services Analyzer that provides the ability schedule batch mode analyses, integrate directly with applications like Microsoft Excel, print Web services trees, support multiple security protocols, and other capabilities. Strikelron has also worked with other Service providers, such as Amazon.com, to customize a version of the Strikelron Web Services Analyzer solely for their Web Services.

Enabling all these capabilities is Strikelron's *Web Services Dynamic Object Technology* (WSDOT), which allows business users and developers to dynamically view, extract, and format data from any existing Web Service without any additional software requirements. It is possible to integrate WSDOT with Microsoft Office, SAP, and PeopleSoft tools to enable non-developers to access Service capabilities.

In addition to the WSBizNet, Strikelron also offers *OnDemand Web Services for Microsoft Excel*, a tool that enables drag-and-drop integration of Web Services directly into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, without requiring any additional technology on the client side. Meant for non-developer users, OnDemand Web Services for Excel removes the technical issues of finding, accessing, understanding and integrating Web services into Excel by taking advantage of WSBizNet and the WSDOT approach to eliminate the need for compiling, programming, or additional software.

The tool works by enabling users to drag and drop Web services operations directly into cells in a spreadsheet. Users can access UDDI registries and the WSBizNet for thall available Services as well as the Strikelron Knowledge Base for additional field information to assist in a better understanding of each Web Service. The product also enables users to save WSDL files locally. Users can control data refresh so that they can retrieve information individually, all at once, at timed intervals, or in a specific order. Users can then leverage Excel's internal calculation and function features to further refine or manipulate Web Services output. Finally, the system provides an API that enables users to leverage Visual Basic for additional flexibility.

Thank you for reading ZapThink research! ZapThink is an IT advisory and analysis firm that provides trusted advice and critical insight into the architectural and organizational changes brought about by the movement to XML, Web Services, and Service Orientation. We provide our three target audiences of IT vendors, service providers and end-users a clear roadmap for standards-based, loosely coupled distributed computing – a vision of IT meeting the needs of the agile business.

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Strikelron Products

Strikelron**Availability: Now****Overview:**

Strikelron offers products and subscription-based online services that simplify the use and improve the productivity of Web Services. The company's Web Services Business Network (WSBizNet) allows anyone to locate, understand, and utilize existing Web services for easier and faster access to information, integration with existing applications and assembly of new applications.

Product Details:

The company's product suite includes the following offerings:

- *Strikelron Web Services Business Network* – a portal for discovering and analyzing Web Services, advanced tools and services for developing, hosting and integrating Web Services that provide data directly to applications.
- *Strikelron Premium Services* – Subscription-based Web Services that deliver live data and functionality over the Internet via XML.
- *Strikelron Premium Web Services Analyzer* – Point and click analysis and consumption information for Web Services.
- *Strikelron OnDemand Services for Excel* – Drag-and-drop integration of Web services directly into Microsoft Excel

Key Differentiators:

- *Online network for Service consumption*
- *Availability of compelling, third-party, pay-as-you-go Services*
- *Plug-in for consumption of Services within Microsoft Excel*

The ZapThink Take

As companies shift their attention from the production of Services to their consumption, they will necessarily become more concerned about not only the discoverability, but also the usability (and reusability) of those Services. Furthermore, companies will increasingly desire to make their Services available to third-parties through a trusted network that can provide reliable and metered access to those Services. What makes Strikelron unique is their dedication to making Services *useful*. It's not sufficient to simply make Services available. Companies want reusable services that are useful, and as such, the WSBizNetwork and other capabilities offered by Strikelron go a long way to making SOA valuable for businesses.

While still operating in the early growth stages of Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA), Strikelron's business model and approach is very compelling, and with continued development may potentially become very successful. There are few credible competitors to Strikelron's business, and Strikelron continues to add value to their platform daily. Strikelron remains a company to watch closely as SOA matures.

Strikelron Profile

| Profile: Strikelron | April 2005 |
|---------------------|---|
| Funding: | Aurora Funds |
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Related Research

- *Service Orientation Market Trends Report (ZTR-WS110)*
- *Grand Central ZapNote (ZTZN-1135)*



About ZapThink, LLC

ZapThink is an IT advisory and analysis firm that provides trusted advice and critical insight into the architectural and organizational changes brought about by the movement to XML, Web Services, and Service Orientation. We provide our three target audiences of IT vendors, service providers and end-users a clear roadmap for standards-based, loosely coupled distributed computing – a vision of IT meeting the needs of the agile business.

ZapThink helps its customers in three ways: by helping companies understand IT products and services in the context of Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA) and the vision of Service Orientation, by providing guidance into emerging best practices for Web Services and SOA adoption, and by bringing together all our audiences into a network that provides business value and expertise to each member of the network.

ZapThink provides market intelligence to IT vendors and professional services firms that offer XML and Web Services-based products and services in order to help them understand their competitive landscape, plan their product roadmaps, and communicate their value proposition to their customers within the context of Service Orientation.

ZapThink provides guidance and expertise to professional services firms to help them grow and innovate their services as well as promote their capabilities to end-users and vendors looking to grow their businesses.

ZapThink also provides implementation intelligence to IT users who are seeking guidance and clarity into the best practices for planning and implementing SOA, including how to assemble the available products and services into a coherent plan.

ZapThink's senior analysts are widely regarded as the "go to analysts" for XML, Web Services, and SOA by vendors, end-users, and the press. Respected for their candid, insightful opinions, they are in great demand as speakers, and have presented at conferences and industry events around the world. They are among the most quoted industry analysts in the IT industry.

ZapThink was founded in October 2000 and is headquartered in Waltham, Massachusetts. Its customers include Global 1000 firms and government organizations, as well as many emerging businesses. Its analysts have worked at such firms as IDC, marchFIRST, and ChannelWave, and have sat on the working group committees for standards bodies such as RosettaNet, UDDI, and ebXML.

Call, email, or visit the ZapThink Web site to learn more about how ZapThink can help you to better understand how SOA will impact your business or organization.

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