# zapthink
## zapnote

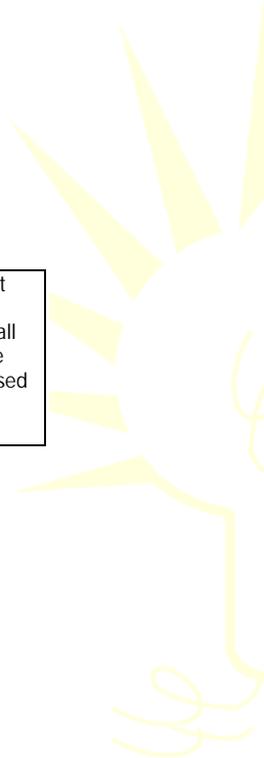# ZAPTHINK ZAPNOTE™

# VITRIA
## SEMANTIC APPROACH TO BUSINESS PROCESS MANAGEMENT

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*Analyst: Jason Bloomberg*

## Key to success: targeted value to customers

The Enterprise Application Integration (EAI) and Business to Business Integration (B2Bi) space is getting more competitive by the day, with industry juggernauts IBM and BEA pushing into the markets dominated by the four established EAI vendors: WebMethods, Tibco, SeeBeyond, and Vitria. On top of these increased competitive pressures comes the advent of Web Services. With their open standards-based, loosely coupled approach to integration, Web Services provide a clear, short term cost benefit to companies looking to integrate systems, both within their enterprises as well as across their value chains.

As one of the smaller players in the EAI/B2Bi space, Vitria must be careful to provide targeted value to its customers. Vitria cannot afford to aspire to being the all-inclusive EAI vendor. Instead, it must leverage its strengths as a company and remain nimble in order to survive.

ZapThink believes, however, that Vitria's value proposition is compelling enough to afford Vitria a strong position in the competitive EAI/B2Bi space moving forward. This value proposition centers on Vitria's approach to Business Process Management (BPM), which it breaks down into two facets: Business Process Automation (BPA), which seeks to optimize machine-to-machine communication, and Workflow Management, which improves all machine-to-human communication. In fact, Workflow Management has traditionally been Vitria's competitive advantage.

Vitria's BusinessWare product line provides Vitria's customers an "EAI onramp," allowing customers to implement extranet-enabled business processes without having to take the more complex and expensive step of implementing true machine-to-machine BPA. For example, BusinessWare provides a Web interface to both Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) and non-EDI business process objects, by wrapping both in XML-based Service interfaces. This "quick hit" approach to Workflow management saves Vitria's customers time and money over its competitors' more heavy handed approach to EAI.

## Loose coupling and semantic intermediation

Looking forward, Vitria's upcoming BusinessWare version 4 is fully Web Service-enabled, providing full open standards-based support for both synchronous and asynchronous communications, as well as tight and loose coupling. For example, a single business process may involve synchronous steps like requesting and providing a purchase order, as well as asynchronous steps like sending an email to a business partner, indicating that the partner can follow a URL to complete the business process. The current version of BusinessWare supports both types of communications, but by moving to a fully Web Service-enabled offering, Vitria allows its business processes to be dynamically discoverable and invokable by other systems participating in the relevant value chain.

Furthermore, the fact that BusinessWare 4 will support loose coupling provides necessary flexibility at

the semantic level of the business processes, which is where Vitria's products provide the most targeted value to its customers. One of the most intractable issues in the BPM world is the question of semantic ambiguity: how will multiple participants in a value chain agree to the meaning of each of the quantities in their common business processes? In traditional B2Bi (say, when two business partners agree to exchange EDI messages), they must expend significant resources resolving these semantic issues before the first message can be sent. Loose coupling helps to solve this problem (loose coupling means that one system's interface can be adjusted or changed without breaking the functionality of the systems that access it). When B2Bi is conducted in a loosely coupled manner, then it is feasible for an intermediary to provide the semantic translations necessary to resolve the difficult issues of meaning. Vitria provides this intermediary, thus affording its customers a common information model for conducting B2Bi communication.

## Abstracting the data layer

This common information model provides additional advantages. By wrapping various data sources in Web Services-based, loosely coupled interfaces that interact with Vitria's semantic intermediary, Vitria seeks to abstract the data layer entirely. The first step in abstracting the data layer in a heterogeneous environment is to provide seamless data synchronization, which Vitria's tools currently provide. The next step is to provide each data source a Web Services interface, which Vitria will complete in BusinessWare's next version. At that point, then, multiple data sources can appear to relevant business processes as a single, loosely coupled data Service.

Vitria has already completed significant work in providing semantic Service adapters for various systems, including SAP, Oracle, and JD Edwards, as part of its efforts in support of Siebel's Universal Applications Network (UAN) initiative. These semantic adapters provide the data abstraction necessary to enable truly useful business process collaboration tools for enterprise business partners participating in value chains.

So, will Vitria be able to execute on its vision? ZapThink believes that Vitria has many tough challenges ahead, being the underdog in the EAI/B2Bi space. However, by focusing on customer value--bang for the buck--and keeping its solution clearly focused on semantic business process solutions, then ZapThink believes that Vitria will be able to do well in the competitive environment ahead.


## Related Research

➢ *Web Services Technologies and Trends* Report (ZT-WEBSRV)
➢ *Service-Oriented Integration* Report (ZTR-WS101)


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## About ZapThink, LLC

ZapThink is an IT market intelligence firm that provides trusted advice and critical insight into XML, Web Services, and Service Orientation. We provide our target audience 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's role is to help companies understand these IT products and services in the context of SOAs and the vision of Service Orientation. ZapThink provides market intelligence to IT vendors who offer XML and Web Services-based products to help them understand their competitive landscape and how to communicate their value proposition to their customers within the context of Service Orientation, and lay out their product roadmaps for the coming wave of Service Orientation. ZapThink also provides implementation intelligence to IT users who are seeking guidance and clarity into how to assemble the available products and services into a coherent roadmap to Service Orientation. Finally, ZapThink provides demand intelligence to IT vendors and service providers who must understand the needs of IT users as they follow the roadmap to Service Orientation.

ZapThink's senior analysts are widely regarded as the "go to analysts" for XML, Web Services, and SOAs by vendors, end-users, and the press. 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, public sector organizations around the world, and many emerging businesses. ZapThink Analysts have years of experience in IT as well as research and analysis. Its analysts have previously been with such firms as IDC and ChannelWave, and have sat on the working group committees for standards bodies such as RosettaNet, UDDI, CPExchange, ebXML, EIDX, and CompTIA.

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

**ZAPTHINK CONTACT:**
ZapThink, LLC
11 Willow Street
Suite 200
Waltham, MA 02453
Phone: +1 (781) 207 0203
Fax: +1 (786) 524 3186
info@zapthink.com