

## A Case for ALM Interoperability

### Q&A with MedAvant Healthcare Solutions Chief Architect, Stephen Beaver

Stephen Beaver, Chief Architect, MedAvant Healthcare Solutions, shares his thoughts on why selecting a best-of-breed Application Lifecycle Management (ALM) vendor focused on innovative third-party interoperability was more valuable to his organization than selecting a single-vendor selling a suite of ALM tools.

#### Q: How do you compare the best-of-breed approach to application lifecycle management (ALM) versus the single-vendor suite of tools approach to ALM?

**A:** I suppose I view software in the same way that people consider (or used to consider) home entertainment equipment. Should I buy a boom-box or should I buy components?

If I buy a boom-box, I can be sure that everything will work out of the box. There will be no question of interoperability or compatibility. Since all the component parts of a boom-box share the same enclosure and power supply, the device will usually cost less than the sum of individual components. On the other hand, the chances are that the boom-box approach may not offer the best possible performance in every area. It may have a great tuner and CD player, but perhaps the speakers leave something to be desired. Another model may have better speakers, and a good CD player but the tuner may be a little weak.

Then there is the upgrade problem. What if next month new technology becomes available that renders some part of the boom-box obsolescent? Some new audio disk format, perhaps. If I want to avail myself of that technology, I have to buy a whole new boom-box. The perfectly usable speakers, tuner, amplifiers etc get thrown out with the CD drive.

If I take the component approach, many of these objections no longer apply. I can get the best possible performing individual components, and I can replace any single component (or add a new one) at any time. This approach to home entertainment has disadvantages though: It will probably cost more, the components may not visually or physically match each other, there may be technical incompatibilities between the components and my living room may end up looking like an explosion in a spaghetti factory.

Happily, in the world of software, a middle ground is emerging between the all-in-one and the component models. There is a move towards open standards, and the concept of plug-in helper software is now common.

#### Q: How do you equate this analogy or concept to selecting software at MedAvant?

**A:** MedAvant Healthcare Solutions actively promotes these concepts in both the choice of software we purchase, and in the design of software we develop. Our development environment of choice, for example, is Eclipse. Eclipse has both very open standards and hundreds, if not thousands of plug-ins that allow functional modules to be easily added or removed. The open standards that



#### Customer Profile

Over the past 17 years, MedAvant Healthcare Solutions has been working with physicians, payers, labs, pharmacies, and other healthcare providers to reduce costs and improve the healthcare experience for everyone. Today, we operate the best technology in the industry to bring our clients closer together and remove inefficiencies from the exchange of clinical and administrative transactions.

Our customers rely on our vast networks to reach their partners in healthcare transaction processing. MedAvant runs one of the largest independent Preferred Provider Organizations - the National Preferred Provider Network (NPPN). We also operate the oldest and most established network of pharmacies for e-prescribe solutions. Today, MedAvant connects to more than 450,000 providers, 30,000 pharmacies, 500 laboratories, and over 1,500 payer organizations.

By offering accurate, relevant information through secure, open-access technology, we provide the necessary tools to maximize margins, gain clinical value from transaction information, and ultimately improve healthcare for all of us.

Eclipse exemplifies encourages others, both in the open source community and commercially, to develop and provide significant compatible functionality.

#### Q: What was the ultimate driving force for selecting AccuRev for best-of-breed ALM?

**A:** We particularly favor the AccuRev software configuration management (SCM) package for a couple of reasons. Not only does this software help us to control our source code and, more importantly, our business processes relating to software development, but it too embraces the concept of interoperability with other packages through its bridging technology, AccuBridge. AccuRev bridges to issue tracking, project management, IDEs, and testing systems allowing us to obtain the best possible performing products while maintaining a common interface and business process.

So unlike the world of home entertainment, MedAvant is able to both procure and develop software which provides the best possible functionality, can be upgraded in a modular fashion and is of modest cost while preserving a common and pleasing user interface. - We are very pleased with this particular industry trend.