

James Donley, Vice President  
and CIO, Ciena

# A Perfect Connection

ORACLE HELPS CIENA LINK CRITICAL AGILE AND ORACLE E-BUSINESS SUITE SYSTEMS.

**C**iena is well into its second decade of providing networking equipment and services to customers with enormous networks: global telecommunications companies, stock exchanges, government agencies, and major research universities. These clients cannot operate without their networks; they rely on Linthicum, Maryland–based Ciena for the programmable hardware and carrier Ethernet that keeps

customers' business components working in sync and generating operational efficiencies.

So the status quo was not an option when Ciena's IT staff started seeing problems with a custom-built integration connecting Oracle's Agile product lifecycle management (PLM) applications to Oracle E-Business Suite. Oracle Application Integration Architecture—which provides solutions that help

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orchestrate the Agile-based business processes across the enterprise applications—offered a potential solution. When James Donley, vice president and CIO at Ciena, investigated this option, however, he found that Oracle didn't have a prebuilt connection for the design-to-release process that would connect the two applications. Fortunately, Oracle was looking to build one, and Ciena's unique integration issues made it the perfect candidate for a new program designed to bring enterprise IT challenges closer to Oracle's developers and integration partners. Although working with this “early adopter” program added time to the project, it saved Ciena money and gave the company extensive access to the Oracle development teams—and to the sort of prebuilt integration the network specialist required.

“We had the luxury of having something broken,” says Donley, a seemingly contrary motivation for Ciena to embrace the program. Yet today, the company can deliver better service to its customers and has lowered IT overhead by leveraging Agile Product Lifecycle Management Integration Pack for Oracle E-Business Suite for Design to Release, the process integration pack (PIP) developed with Ciena's input.

### HOLDING THE LINE

Getting enterprise software to work together and applications to communicate effectively over a network is often an enormous challenge. If components come from a variety of firms, IT systems can run the gamut from complicated to cryptic. Even if all components come from the same vendor, differences in versions, customizations, local preferences, and internally developed programs can all throw off operations.

As companies rely on data to make critical decisions, managers need to access information relevant to their job role, as quickly as possible and in a usable format. Simplified integration improves business processes to increase the visibility of accurate enterprise information. But it can also highlight additional integration issues that hinder visibility. If it is discovered that each application speaks a slightly different language, different groups in the organization may label their data differently, making it difficult to synthesize and use enterprise information. “In large organizations, especially those that grew over many years or through acquisitions, this is very painful,” says Joe

Barkai, practice director at IDC Manufacturing Insights in Framingham, Massachusetts.

Ciena's management found itself in exactly that situation. Ciena's growth is powered by acquisitions and the demands of large telecommunications customers. In fact, the IT group has been known to grow 30 percent quarter over quarter in busy times—but this growth is not predictable or steady. Ciena needed the ability to increase the flexibility of its business processes to improve integration. “When we do an acquisition, we're looking to get that data cleaned up and in the right place, out of the gate,” Donley says.

But due to Ciena's mix of products, much of Donley's effort was focused on keeping the applications running at peak performance. “When we took a look at how much our application development staff was actually supporting the interfaces, stitching these things together, it was easily 10 percent of our time either maintaining integrations or fixing problems from integrations,” says Mark Temple, applications manager at Ciena.

Fortunately, Ciena's heterogeneous IT environment began to coalesce around a single vendor: Oracle. “We didn't start out as a huge Oracle shop,” Donley says. “But over time and based on acquisitions done by Oracle, we now have a significant piece of our business running on Oracle tools. We are running [Oracle E-Business Suite] 11.5.10, but we also have [Oracle's] Agile, Hyperion, and Siebel applications.”

At Ciena, the Agile PLM system is where bill of material and product item information is stored and managed. More than half the company's employees are engineers or salespeople who rely on these applications every day to grow revenue. Also, Ciena outsources most of its manufacturing, so engineering data plays an essential role in the business. “We feed it over to our Oracle E-Business Suite, which drives our whole supply chain and customer relationship databases,” says Temple. “Having good data to drive the supply chain is critical.”

### PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Clearly, connecting data and applications together is a high priority for Ciena. Fortunately, the Oracle Application Integration Architecture offering was designed to help IT processes and data sync effectively. Components of the solu-



**>>SNAPSHOT**  
**Ciena**  
**www.ciena.com**  
**Revenue:** US\$902.4 million  
**Employees:** 2,203  
**Oracle products:** Oracle E-Business Suite 11.5.10; Oracle's Agile, Hyperion, and Siebel applications  
**Partner:** Sierra Atlantic

tion can be mixed and matched to make it easier for customers to build, extend, and maintain their systems. Oracle Application Integration Architecture enables IT to create sustainable, world-class integrations—across all Oracle, legacy, third-party, and partner solutions. Oracle Application Integration Architecture is made up of two primary components: the foundation packs and the prebuilt integrations or PIPs. The foundation packs provide the building blocks and methodologies needed to design a holistic approach to orchestrating agile, user-centric business processes between any applications, whether they are Oracle or non-Oracle applications. PIPs, on the other hand, provide prebuilt integrations across specific business processes—order-to-cash, for example—between Oracle and non-Oracle applications. Which component is the best fit depends on customer needs.

Ciena's situation was ripe for a PIP fix. The company's Agile installation had been in place for years, and the custom-built integration to Oracle E-Business Suite was returning an unacceptably high error rate. When Oracle acquired Agile in 2007, Ciena's staff hoped that this would lead to a better method for connecting the two systems. Wasim Khan, senior manager, information systems, at Ciena, says the problems

with the custom integration led to hundreds of change orders a week, a third of which had to be handled manually. "That requires a lot of onsite daily support," Khan says.

Donley made the case, both internally and to Oracle, that Ciena should be in the early adopter program for the Agile to Oracle E-Business Suite PIP. Ciena's partner in the project, Sierra Atlantic of Fremont, California, has two business lines. It offers outsourced product development for software companies large and small (see sidebar), and it handles system implementation and integration for users. Oracle and Sierra Atlantic are similar in that they both create code for enterprise customers. Sometimes, business units from the two companies overlap neatly. In this case, Sierra Atlantic, while implementing Agile Product Lifecycle Management Integration Pack for Oracle E-Business Suite for Design to Release at Ciena, also worked with Oracle to codevelop the PIP connecting Agile to SAP. "The business units are symbiotic and allow us to help both types of customers," says G.K. Murthy, senior vice president of enterprise solutions at Sierra Atlantic. "In the case of Ciena, we have been working with them for more than 10 years, and we understand their business processes."

## The Oracle Codevelopment Program

**A**lthough Oracle's in-house developer team is world-class, it can't develop every solution to address every customer need. When new customer priorities arise, Oracle often turns to partners with Oracle product knowledge and specific industry expertise to address customer requirements.

Joe Barkai of IDC Manufacturing Insights finds that while software companies often load products with extensive, general features and functionality, the breadth of a solution may prevent customers from addressing unique industry challenges. "What I find very important in creating relationships between customers and software vendors is deep industry understanding," Barkai says.

To that end, Oracle's Application Integration Architecture Codevelopment Partner Program accelerates Oracle's integration and industry applications' road map and supports partners delivering services for Oracle solutions. Partners, in turn, develop skills in Oracle Applications,

Oracle Fusion Middleware, and Oracle Application Integration Architecture; influence the product road map; and increase their sales opportunities.

Sierra Atlantic, the implementation partner for Ciena's Agile Product Lifecycle Management Integration Pack for Oracle E-Business Suite for Design to Release project, is also one of many partners working directly with Oracle as part of its codevelopment program.

Working with Oracle, Sierra Atlantic has developed and released the Agile Product Lifecycle Management Integration Pack for SAP for Design to Release. This product was released in January 2009. Sierra Atlantic is also working with Oracle to build an Agile Variant to Oracle E-Business Suite management integration pack, scheduled for release in 2009.

Sierra Atlantic's staffers draw on their experience as systems integrators to address differences between software packages and the specific needs of industry segments and customers. This knowledge helps Sierra Atlantic

technologists devise new programs for software customers—and is an example of why Oracle selected Sierra Atlantic to be part of the codevelopment program.

G.K. Murthy, senior vice president of enterprise solutions at Sierra Atlantic, says that a partner has to understand integration architecture if it is going to understand its customers' needs. But that's not the same as being interested in participating in technology development. "An engineering partner is one who understands the total journey," Murthy says, and he believes that Sierra Atlantic has perspective on both fronts as a systems integrator working with different customers.

Being able to bridge this gap between customer needs and the realities of the development process is what makes the codevelopment program so valuable. And Sierra Atlantic, as evidenced by the company's work with Ciena's project, is an example of the effort's success.

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## THE EARLY-ADOPTER EXPERIENCE

The Sierra Atlantic team has worked with Ciena over several years, which helped the consultants deeply understand how Ciena’s business processes worked. With an experienced partner involved, it made sense for Ciena to join with Oracle and Sierra Atlantic in the second half of 2008 and engage in other codevelopment opportunities. “The dedication, focus, and resource attention from the Oracle side has been very significant,” Donley says.

Most of the team coordination was handled by Sierra Atlantic to ensure that everyone was up-to-date on the progress and ready to take on their own supporting tasks. The Agile, Oracle E-Business Suite, Oracle Application Integration Architecture, and Oracle Fusion Middleware teams were all involved to ensure that the PIP being implemented worked in a range of scenarios. “Patience has to be involved,” Donley says. “At the same time, it’s exciting to both be working toward a win-win outcome. You’re on the front line; you’ll always be able to say you’re one of the first to develop the product, let alone adopt it.”

Every customer is different when it comes to business process integration, and prebuilt PIPs may not be right for every situation. They work best when the systems to be connected are fundamentally standardized. Sierra Atlantic’s engagement at Ciena included cleaning up the Agile and Oracle E-Business Suite installations to ensure that this was the case. “While the process integration pack is not necessarily going to include all the companies’ processes, the customer should be open to change if there is a value,” says Lawrence Pravin, leader of Oracle Application Integration Architecture solutions at Sierra Atlantic. “Even though we make money by building custom components for companies like Ciena, we don’t necessarily blindfold the customer on benefits and the risks associated with standardization.”

## BENEFITS FOR EARLY BIRDS

Donley and company were often pleased to have technical backup to argue for a more-standardized approach with the corporate users. “Having a tool that you can say supports the vanilla approach is more ammunition for us as an IT organization to try and keep our customer base aligned to an out-of-the-box solution,” Donley says.

The improved integration has benefits for the business beyond greater reliability. As Ciena’s Temple points out, a stronger integration through the PIP should give Ciena more capabilities for managing its data. “It’s actually going to open up some new possibilities for us of data elements being sent between the two systems,” he says.

Ciena’s work with Oracle also strengthens Oracle’s exper-

tise in industry business practices, helping Oracle to improve products and customer support.

Temple says Ciena will benefit over the long term because Oracle is learning so much about its industry. “The more business knowledge we give them about our particular industry or subindustry, the more we think it will help them take those requirements into account in future designs of the product,” he says. “We like making them more knowledgeable in our business domain.”

## THE THRILL OF THE NEW

Ciena’s Donley is happy with how the Agile Product Lifecycle Management Integration Pack for Oracle E-Business Suite for Design to Release implementation has progressed. He and his staff have learned more about how their enterprise resource planning (ERP) system works so they can provide better support to the salespeople, engineers, and financial managers at Ciena. By leveraging the Agile Product Lifecycle Management Integration Pack for Oracle E-Business Suite for Design to Release process, Ciena has also been gaining flexibility, increasing efficiencies through end-to-end integrations, and lowering its overall cost of ownership. And, PIPs are addressing needs that ERP users have had for decades.

“It’s exciting always getting into the newer areas when you are primarily the first company to build this kind of an innovative product,” says Sierra Atlantic’s Pravin. “The experience of working with some of the early adopters, getting their mind share, and exchanging our ideas and thoughts really excites us.”

Ciena’s team members were happy to have a long-term problem solved. And Donley, a longtime Oracle customer at Ciena and elsewhere, found Oracle executives at the highest levels of the company attending to his needs. “I literally showed up—one among many hundreds of CIOs—had a concern, and it was addressed.” <>

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