

An Integrated Infrastructure for Content Services

*The Sun ONE Content Services Platform
& Vignette's Content Suite*

*Sebastian Holst
March 30, 2003*

Abstract

This paper presents the case for proactively developing a broad content strategy and architecture built upon a “content-capable” infrastructure. Optimizing operational efficiency, leveraging existing technology investments and investing in emerging business opportunities are among the many, often competing, demands on today's businesses. The teaming of the Sun ONE Content Services Platform with Vignette's Content Management and Portal Solutions presents an example that illustrates the benefits of an integrated architecture and advanced content management services.

Why an Infrastructure Approach?

Content Volume, Diversity, and Complexity

Today's businesses are faced with an exponential growth in business content. Many companies have deployed enterprise content management systems to control, leverage, and reduce the cost of managing and delivering business critical content. The problem of managing enterprise content however, is too cumbersome for point-application solutions to solve alone. Businesses need to develop a comprehensive content strategy and architecture that is built upon a content-capable infrastructure.

The increase in the volume of content is only part of the problem. Content has become increasingly richer and more complex.

- Content is comprised of multiple data types sourced from disparate repositories and databases.
- The use of rich media content is growing, which adds new requirements in management functionality, bandwidth and storage.
- Businesses are learning the benefits (and difficulties) of more sophisticated use of metadata, which compounds the complexity of content.

Content in the enterprise includes a wide variety of formats, including structured database records, and unstructured text, graphics, audio, video and streaming media. There are a growing number of content application services, including web content management, document management, digital asset management, knowledge management, enterprise search and categorization, collaboration, and syndication that focus on managing either specific content types, or specific aspects of the enterprise content management problem. Many medium to large sized companies now have many of these content services in place, but while these provide important benefits, in most cases their real value is only realized when the content is integrated with larger enterprise data systems, and when a business has implemented disciplined, yet flexible, business process management.

The good news is that more business content is being managed; the bad news is the growing complexity of integrating and managing all of the systems that manage the content.

Content Accessibility & Integration

Most enterprise content is tightly integrated with one or more business applications (although that is not to say it is integrated with all appropriate business applications). Content plays a critical role in business processes ranging from customer relationship management (CRM), supply chain management (SCM), enterprise resource planning (ERP), business intelligence (BI), and other enterprise applications. In order for these processes to provide value, they must be able to incorporate the right data, in the right process, at the right time. Content often comes from diverse repositories across the enterprise and even between enterprises that have business-to-business relationships. Data exists in structured databases or may exist as unstructured data in numerous content repositories – from the desktop to back-up tapes. Furthermore, many companies already have one or more enterprise systems, and most companies need a strategy for extending the value of, and not replacing, those systems. Yet,

An Integrated Infrastructure for Content Services

there also needs to be a strategy that allows for a smooth migration to new systems when there is a need for technology change.

Not only is content complexity on the rise, but the integration required to make a content solution provide value for the enterprise has become a daunting challenge. Companies need a strategy that simplifies content accessibility and helps to manage this content complexity throughout the content lifecycle

Content Services Infrastructure

The rise in content complexity means that businesses need to follow an infrastructure approach that enables content services throughout the enterprise. It means that IT managers need to deploy an architecture that ties content and content-based applications together in powerful yet flexible ways. The need to share and integrate content is broad based, and not limited to particular vertical or departmental applications. Therefore it doesn't make sense to solve the problem only through individual integration efforts – a strategy that is based an infrastructure approach is the only way to meet this challenge head on.

Today, this means deploying a stack built on a network-computing infrastructure foundation. It also means an architecture that can support legacy applications, but is designed to optimize the use of web services for both content and application integration.

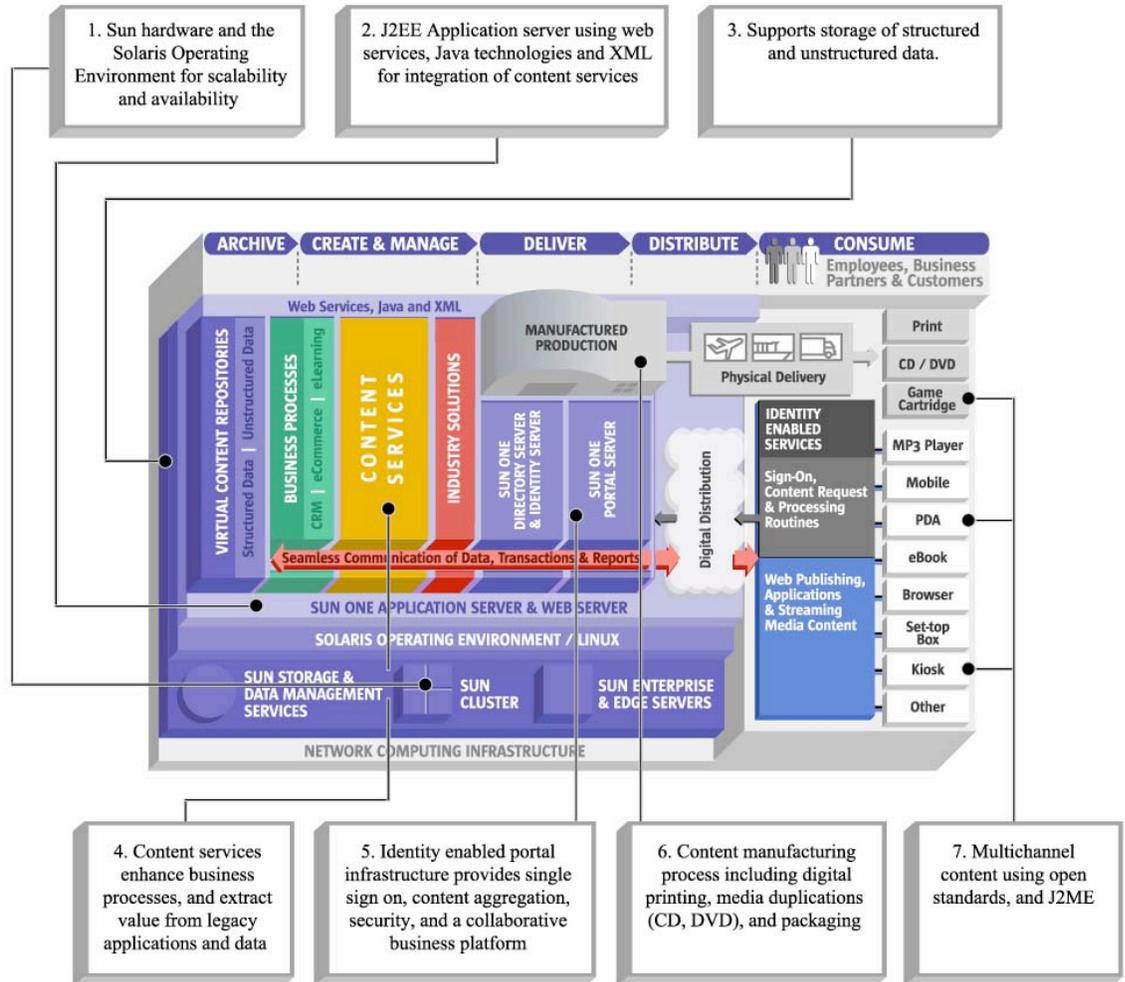
Sun ONE Content Services Platform

The Sun Open Net Environment (Sun ONE) Content Services platform in Figure 1¹ is an example of what we mean by an integrated infrastructure for content services. The figure illustrates the way business content and processes fit into infrastructure stacks both vertically and horizontally. This requirement for an integrated content services approach cuts across various industries such as financial, manufacturing, retail, healthcare, government, media and entertainment, and others.

Figure 1 is designed to show the range of solutions that Sun provides, from servers, storage and operating system, to application server, identity management, and portal technologies. On top of this network computing infrastructure Sun partner technology can be integrated into this modular architecture. This illustration also suggests how one could incorporate other component technologies into an integrated infrastructure. Note that if you think of an infrastructure in this way, light is shed on the relationship and scope of the components, which is very useful given the extensive functional overlap between many of the functional categories. It is important to understand the functions and features of the various components, so as to better able to make your own choices to match your business requirements, and to be able to substitute components with minimal effort, and cost.

¹ Diagram courtesy of Sun Microsystems, Inc.

An Integrated Infrastructure for Content Services



One Architecture, Multiple Choices

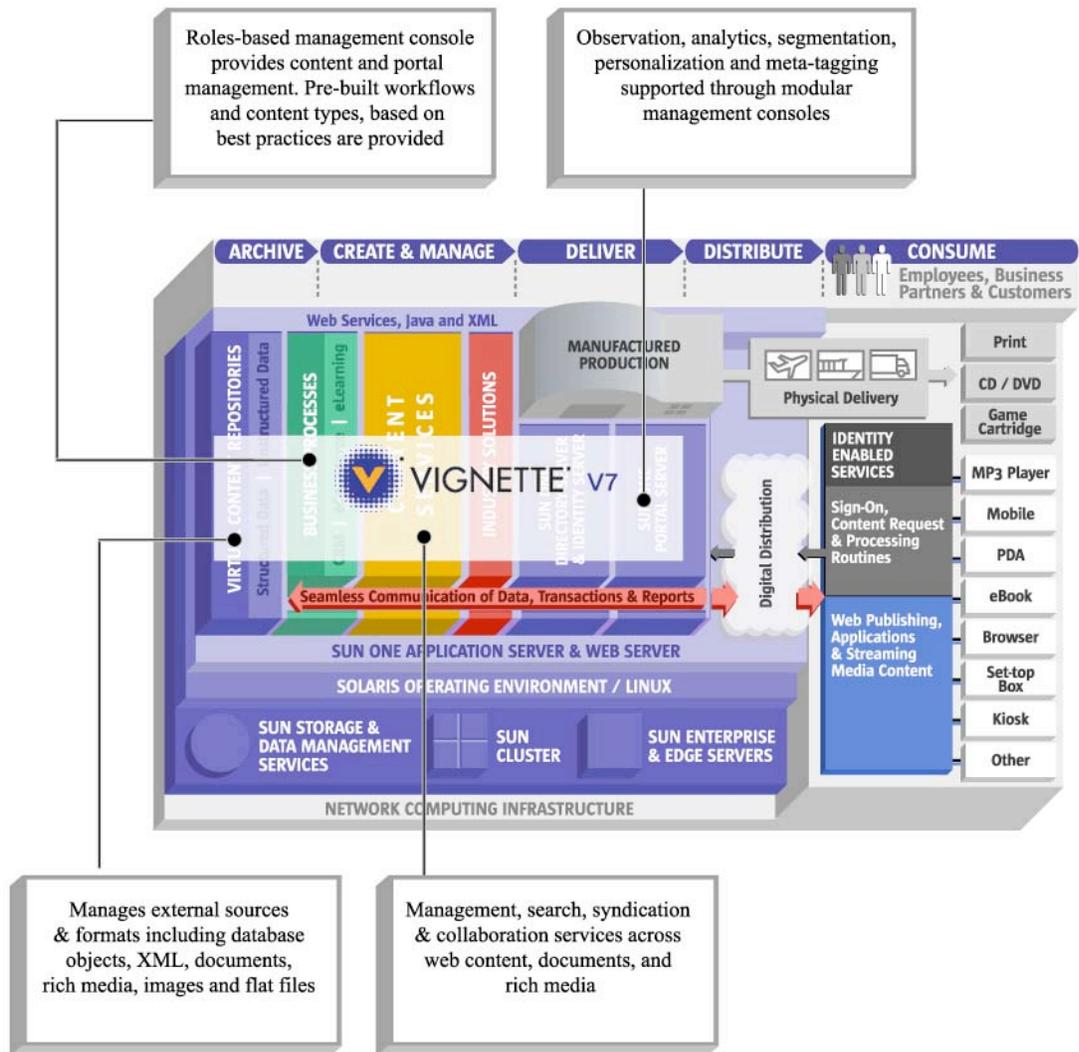
Paradoxically, the one-to-many relationship between an architecture and the suppliers that populate that architecture is both the root of the value proposition, and often the cause of anxiety for businesses that must assimilate and build out that architecture. This anxiety often results in avoidance strategies that rely unnecessarily upon service-laden “one-stop” solutions at the high-end or simpler, more proprietary solutions at the low-end.

A compelling characteristic of the Sun ONE Content Services Platform is that it provides an infrastructure that frees content technology providers to focus valuable resources on their areas of expertise by providing easy and reliable access to critical portal, networking and storage services. The following section illustrates the value of this approach by taking a closer look at the synergistic characteristics of the combined Sun ONE Content Services Platform and Vignette’s suite of content management and portal products.

The Vignette Content Suite

Full Function Content Management and Portal Solutions Deliver Business Process and Content Across the Enterprise

Vignette focuses its resources and talent on the management of content throughout their customers' organizations, and to ensure that web-based interactions are personalized, meaningful, and add to an organization's understanding of its business and the communities it serves.



An Integrated Infrastructure for Content Services

The Vignette V7 architecture provides a services delivery foundation for its content management and portal offerings. The Vignette V7 architecture ensures that each of Vignette's components work well together. However, a critical value of Vignette's architecture is that its support for open standards including J2EE, XML and Web services allows that their suite of components to leverage components of a standards-based infrastructure such as the Sun ONE Content Services Platform.

A Case in Point: The Georgia Technology Authority (GTA)

Established by the Georgia legislature in July 2000, the GTA helps connect citizens to state government through information technology and ensures the effective use of IT resources. The GTA charter includes the development of a statewide technology plan and to oversee the purchase of technology resources. In the development of the state's web site, www.georgia.gov, the GTA had a number of objectives including:

- The presentation of easy to understand, intention-based state information and services to Georgians, regardless of physical abilities, cultural backgrounds or language
- The availability of all public records, state information and Web-enabled services via the state government's enterprise portal
- The ability to share information and processes between state entities

Sun Microsystem's Sun ONE Content Services Platform and Sun ONE Portal Server 6 coupled with Vignette's Content Management provided a content management backbone with a 24X7 portal that helped GTA to achieve their goals. Notable features and benefits included:

- Personalization improving service to Georgians
- Cost reduction achieved through simplified facilities management
- Greater agency independence from IT staff through simplified content contribution and review and a
- Consistent user interface across agencies reducing training requirements and improving navigation.

These changes resulted in a ranking in the top ten best of the web for eGovernment by Government Technology Magazine, the Center for Digital Government, Public Technology, Inc., and State Technologies in 2000. The fact that the respective product lines and architectures from Sun Microsystems and Vignette can be developed independently and deployed concurrently show that that large, complex and mission critical deployments can be built upon a modular technology stack. For more information on Sun ONE and Vignette in their own words, visit www.sun.com/vignette.

Further, the GTA case study shows how a solid, scalable content-driven infrastructure can effectively integrate key business processes, content services, and government agency industry solutions all into one system.

Sponsoring Company:



For more information, please visit <http://www.sun.com> or contact:

Sun Microsystems, Inc.
4150 Network Circle
Santa Clara, CA 95054
USA

US 1-800-555-9SUN
International 1-650-960-13001



For more information, please visit <http://www.vignette.com> or contact:

Vignette Corporation
1601 South MoPac Expressway
Austin, TX 78746-5776

1.888.608.9900