

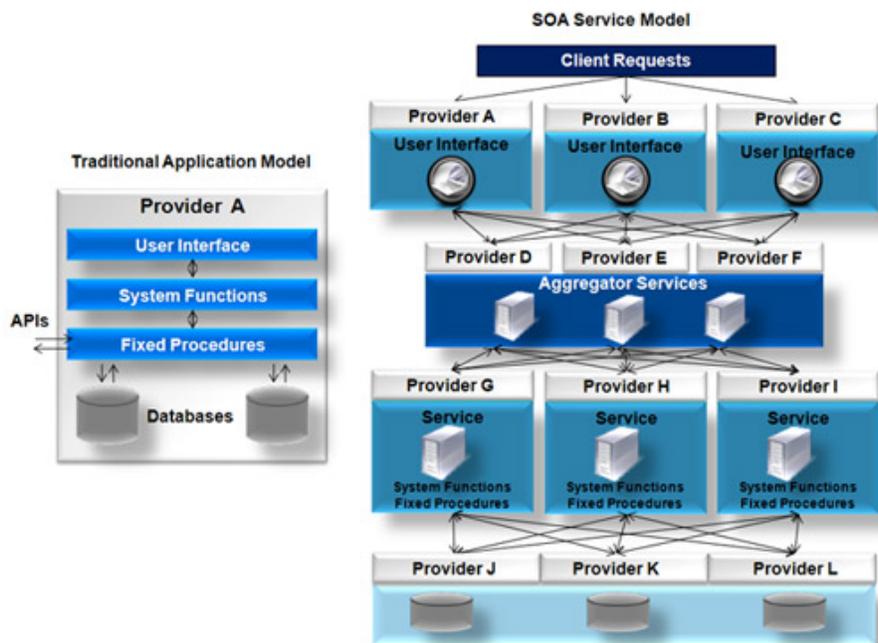
How Will SOA Change the Government Marketplace?

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Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA) has been a hot topic in both industry and government over the past couple of years. And although it is still an emerging market, I'm hoping that federal contractors are keeping an eye on SOA's development in government, because it could fundamentally change how government buys technology.

In the latest GovWin Industry Insights report, "[Service-Oriented Architecture: Implications for Government and Industry](#)," I analyzed the potential impact on industry if SOA takes off in the federal government. The good news is that technology doesn't typically "take off" in the government – it eases in – so there is time to develop strategies. The bad news is that it could force some contractors – particularly software developers and systems integrators – to rethink their business models to adjust to the flexibility and reusability factors that SOA introduces. Over time, agencies could begin looking for volume and user fees to replace seat licenses, and the large system integration projects that are common in government could be replaced with smaller, incremental projects. The image below offers a visual representation of the difference between the traditional and SOA models.



Source: GovWin

So let's think about the impact. In the traditional model, all of the functions of an application were self-contained. In the SOA Service Model, those self-contained functions are broken out into discrete services, which could all be provided by a multitude of different vendors. What does that mean for competition? Not only does it mean that one vendor's solution could easily be plucked out and replaced without having to rebuild the entire setup, it also means that many of the proprietary elements that vendors often rely on for differentiation won't play here – standardization is the word of the day.

Although SOA could pack a punch to those contractors unaware of its impact, the providers that start talking to their customers about it and evaluating their business strategies now will be better prepared.