AppBus: helping systems integrators transform enterprise anchor applications

MARCH 18 2019

By Katy Ring

With a platform such as AXP from AppBus, it is possible for systems integrators to renovate client applications, creating new, more efficient processes for digital services without touching the back-office source code.

451 Research®

Summary

AppBus eXperience Platform (AXP) is an integrated development and deployment platform that can refactor legacy applications, mount APIs and deploy in secure containers. In other words, it can assist systems integrators and business process service providers that are looking to surface business logic without modifying a client's anchor applications, creating more versatile services for the client's end users.

451 TAKE

Global systems integrators and business process service providers are building, buying and running platforms to enable more effective delivery of digital services, especially around client customer experience, where there is high demand for transformation across sectors. AppBus AXP brings together digital automation, RPA, hybrid integration and PaaS in a single platform that can form a significant part of a service provider's own digital delivery platform. AXP enables service providers to renovate a client's application assets to provide pragmatic control as these assets are integrated with more innovative processes.

Context

Philadelphia-based AppBus was formed in 2014 with the idea of making it easier for enterprises to transform to digital business. Among the challenges it sought to overcome was how to craft new, and modernize existing, applications to enable efficient process automation across in-place infrastructure that exploits the benefits of modern containers, microservices and edge computing architectures. Its flagship AXP offering was first launched as a beta in 2015. AppBus employs a force of more than 40, and has raised a total of $9m through seed and series A funding rounds from Forte Ventures and Osage Venture Partners.

Partners

AppBus already has a couple of partnerships in place with some well-known global consultancies that have recognized the value of AXP in speeding up time to value for projects. When working with systems integrator partners, AppBus stands the system up and provides a five-day training course. Some service providers then set up an internal center of excellence with staff that understand how to instrument legacy apps, such as those written for 3270 terminals, into AXP so that, for example, with process context, schema identifiers can be put into the AXP bus to support lookups by customer name across existing systems of record. This means that whenever an inquiry comes in from an end customer, via any channel, AXP can be used to identify the person to create a more frictionless experience for that customer. It also means that operational metrics can be gathered around, for example, the length of calls and time to handle.

The core engineering team at AppBus is drawn from financial services companies such as UBS, Deutsche Bank, Merrill Lynch and JPMC, as well as software vendors like Microsoft, Netscape, SevOne, Tanium, Smarts, RSA, EMC and BlackBerry. They have built a zero-trust architecture into AXP so that applications can run securely anywhere – in motion and at rest. Everything passing through AXP is encrypted, even keyboard strokes. Partners have the option to take AXP and license for revenue, and clients can subscribe to the platform directly.

Using AXP

Using AXP, systems integrators can securely synthesize applications developed by different teams or companies into process flows to deliver integrated services for end users. For business process services, where providers are often restricted (with regard to how they deliver services) by the client application estate that they take over, AXP provides an efficient way to onboard applications so that providers can accurately measure and improve service levels. AXP enables service providers to rapidly understand exactly how applications are used, how often and by whom, and to leverage the activity log to drive future best practices.

Many systems integrators have a BPO practice and are contracted to take over arbitrary applications and make them work together. With AXP, the steps in a business process sequence can be easily passed from one application to the next, without modifying any of the source code, in order to quickly create a more streamlined process. In this way, service provider partners are in a stronger position to provide process improvement without changing the existing application estate. This enables service providers to help clients create new, flexible business models to support new direct transactions with their end customers, without changing their anchor applications.

Most systems integrators have their own advanced analytics and intelligent process automation platforms in place, and would use AXP to expedite the development of better process flows to generate more accurate data from existing applications. This would mean that the insight created by AXP, in combination with a service provider's platform, is of higher quality when working between, for example, the client's contact centers and back-office applications.

In this way, AXP helps service providers build trust with clients, since they can demonstrate expertise in organizing and streamlining processes by adding a new API layer to applications without changing them. It also helps partners collect better data from client applications to generate more useful results for the application of ML and AI technologies. This is because all the data entered in any application that is plugged into AXP is time-stamped and can be tracked. This means that context can then be created to pick out relevant data held in the application. The AXP platform is a single place for all that data linked by context.

Competition

When systems integrators are choosing technology partners to help with the integration of clients' core systems with new digital services, they often look to companies such as Pega or OpenText for BPM, and add RPA technology from vendors such as Automation Anywhere, Blue Prism and UiPath. However, none of these vendors yet offers the combination of technologies available in AXP.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS
AppBus has created a platform with capabilities that are rapidly becoming must-haves among business process service providers that need to create reusable assets from existing application estates while looking to provide more effective digital services.

WEAKNESSES
The main weakness is whether AppBus is financially robust enough to have long-term independent viability as a partner for global systems integrators. However, that has not prevented some major global brands from already deciding to adopt AXP.

OPPORTUNITIES
We believe that consultancies and SIs that are developing an intelligent platform-based approach for service delivery will be able to pivot themselves and their customers toward digital service capability much faster, and will thus grow more quickly into new revenue streams. This is a huge opportunity for AppBus.

THREATS
The challenge with a platform such as AXP is that its promise can appear magical rather than technically feasible because it runs ahead of broad market understanding. As both SIs and large enterprises become more familiar with cloud-native development and levels of system abstraction, less market education will be needed, but more competitors will emerge.