

Supporting OpenSAF Application Developers

By John Fryer, GoAhead Software/OpenSAF Foundation

With Version 4.0, OpenSAF has achieved its founders' initial vision. This release implements nearly all the SA Forum Application Interface Specification (AIS) services. It is sufficient by itself to form a high availability platform for a wide range of systems and applications.

The next task is to make the implementation easy to use and educate system architects and application developers to create highly available systems using it. After all, that is the purpose of all the efforts.

Fortunately, the OpenSAF community has recognized the need to educate designers. One key goal is to establish a set of "best practices" with code examples and documentation to back it up. New applications written to use OpenSAF are becoming quite well understood. Although documentation in this area from OpenSAF is limited, commercial vendors offer training courses, and several companies offer professional services as well.

The OpenSAF Foundation website (www.opensaf.org) has a section for members to list their related products and services. Additionally, many companies involved with OpenSAF have developed demonstrations and sample applications. This is often done in conjunction with specific hardware platforms, so hardware failures can be registered through the hardware platform interface (HPI) and appropriate actions taken.

For existing applications, the most common approach is to leverage other open source projects to demonstrate how they can be adapted to utilize OpenSAF. Areas such as SNMP management, SIP stacks, and related protocol areas are natural targets. This approach enables many people and companies to get involved and over time determine best practices. It also directly benefits application developers and users, as it mimics typical problems encountered when adopting OpenSAF. Initially, wrappers will be written to enable these applications to run on OpenSAF; later, sample code modifications will illustrate how to revise the applications themselves.

There is also work outside the OpenSAF community. The SA Forum has an ambitious project to make its specification more accessible and more relevant. Because developers often want to use the API documentation as reference material, all SA specifications will be made available via a website that enables easy searching and retrieval of specific information. The rollout of this project is expected within a year.

One significant area of interest involves the use of Java. The Java community itself has Java Specification Requests (JSRs) that enable SA Forum implementations such as OpenSAF to provide a high availability framework for applications. JSR 319, for example, enables the Availability Management Framework to supervise and control Java runtime units.

The OpenSAF project has achieved a significant milestone with release 4.0, but it is really just the beginning. As educational efforts targeted towards developers accelerate, we expect that the OpenSAF community will drive forward best practices around application development. Such efforts will both support and accelerate the adoption of OpenSAF technology.

John Fryer is a member of the Board of Directors of the OpenSAF Foundation and VP Business Development at GoAhead Software. You can reach him via Ruth Cassidy at admin@list.opensaf.org

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