Open Group White Paper on Service Level Agreements

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Meeting Topics

- Project Goals (5 minutes).

- Project Phases and Methods (5 minutes).

- Step One, The Questionnaire (5 minutes).

- Discussion/input (20 minutes).

Project Goals

- Describe common set of business level requirements and goals for service level agreements - particular focus on needs of the inter and intra enterprise requirements and issues between service providers and customers.

- Describe some common general services of interest in a technology independent way.

- Describe commons ways for marking the content of the above services.

- Describe types of measurements needed for the services identified to ensure successful ongoing service delivery.
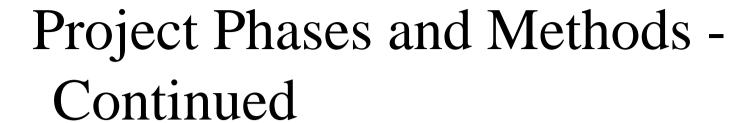
Goals Continued

- Complete a technology assessment of available solutions and describe where they meet or do not meet requirements.

- Based on technology assessment:

  - Co-ordinate with other standards bodies to use what works and present requirements not yet met by standards.

  - Particular attention will be paid to co-ordination with the TMF in preparation of the SLA handbook.

  - Create a set of vendor requirements designed to shape product direction so that enterprises can meet their business level service goals.

Project Phases and Methods - Phase 1

- Data Collection

  - Collect input via surveys, email, meetings and teleconferences on:

    - Requirements and goals for SLAs at the business level.

    - Collection of issues related to the identification of specific services and their association with users.

    - Utilising information from previous two points, collect data about issues related to marking and measurement of these services.

Project Phases and Methods - Continued

- Complete Phase 1 - Generate White Paper based on collected data.

- Share data with groups inside and outside Open Group as appropriate.

- Phase 2 - Technology vendor assessment (more in the future).

  - Review and identify technologies and standards that can meet requirements found in white paper.

  - Communicate requirements to vendors and other standards bodies.

The Questionnaire

Section 1 - Proposal

What we mean by a Service Level Agreement (SLA):

A Proposal:

A service level agreement can range all the way from an informal arrangement between cooperating departments in an enterprise to formal contractual agreements between business organizations or organizations and individuals.The agreements can cover a large variety of service delivery expectations, ranging from security provided to timeliness of responsiveness from a user or other perspective.
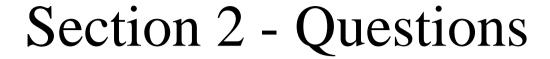
Section 1 - Questions

1. How does this proposal fit with your understanding?

2. What aspects of service behavior should they cover?

    a. Performance.

    b. Security.

    c. Availability.

    d. Others - please specify.

    e. Combinations - please specify.

3. Does your organization current use them?

4. If not is this something that they would like?

5. If you use them how are they expressed, in contract form or some other way?

6. How would they ideally be expressed?

Section 2 - Proposal

Why do we want SLAs and how do they support our business goals?

SLAs are needed to clearly specify the what, where, when, and how much of a service. The what in this case is not at a technology level such as Differentiated Services. It is expressed in terms of particular work elements like transactions level of security or latency of traffic on a network or any combination of factors. The were identifies locations that the service is to be available, and in some cases what alternatives are available in the case of a failure. The when covers the time of day, day of week etc that the customer expects the service to be available at the performance, security and other levels specified in the agreement. How much describes the volume of the traffic or number of transactions (or whatever units make sense in the service level agreement) that is guaranteed during specified times.In short SLAs are contracts for computing and network services.

Section 2 - Questions

1. Why do you want service level agreements and what do they do for your organization?

2. What business areas do they cover for you?

3. Do you seek to expand them and if so to what areas?

4. How do they work for you. That is are they meeting your expectations. If so why and if not, why not?

5. If you current use them, what impact have they had on your operations?

6. Are there specific business goals that they support, please list them.

7. Are there other goals that you would like SLAs to help you accomplish and what is needed for them to do so.

8. What are the obstacles to achieving goals at a business level with SLAs?

Section 3 - Proposal

Management and SLA Flexibility:

The modern business environment is quite dynamic in that business needs change rapidly. As a result, SLAs may be long or very short lived. Whether one creates a new SLA to cover each variation or modifies an instance of an SLA to meet a customers changes needs does not matter as much as the need for such change. The elements that deliver the service must be designed in such a way that the management infrastructure can cause near real time additions, deletions and changes. With regard to manageability, much of the forgoing is in the management domain. For correct verification of the SLA activity the management systems must be part of or tightly integrated with these service provisioning facilities so that failures can be recorded and usage metered and monitored for performance levels.

Section 3 - Questions

1. How flexible must SLAs be:

   a. How often do they change?

   b. What characteristics most often change?

   c. Who typically initiates the change?

   d. What types of change control do you have or should there be?

2. How are the changes accomplished, are they?

   a. All manual?

   b. Some manual and some automated.

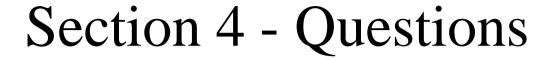   c. Describe your process.

Section 3 - Questions Continued

3. What are the management requirements for your SLAs? For each of the following, please indicate if your systems do it now, and you think it is important. If your systems do not provide this information is it important. Does it matter from a business perspective?

  a. Report usage?

  b. Report failures?

  c. Report impaired service?

  d. Report over or under-utilizations?

  e. Output to billing systems?

  f. Dynamic (re)configuration of the elements that deliver the

    service.

4. How, if at all, are business service level agreements tied to 'the real world' so that operational staffs can implement them?

Section 4 - Proposal

SLA SCOPE AND METRICS:

Any element of a corporate computing and network infrastructure can and should be part of an SLA if it is important to the delivery of the service. At a business level there is a simple metric of met or not met. Additional details that are not technology specific are needed, but depend on the type of service level agreement. For example a service level agreement could talk about transactions per unit time as seen by the 'customer' with describing the details of how the transaction is accomplished.

Section 4 - Questions

1. What parts of your infrastructure do you include in your SLAs. If you do not current have SLAs but would like to, describe the scope of them as you would use them.

2. Are there any parts of the infrastructure that are specifically excluded?

3. Do you have a separate SLA for each major component of your infrastructure. For example is there one for your data center and another for the network for the same business service?

4. What metrics do you use to:

   a. Show that an SLA has been met?

   b. Has not been met?

5. What are some of the consequences of not meeting your SLAs?

Section 4 - Questions Continued

6. What are the consequences when a supplier to you does not meet their SLA.

7. Are SLAs most often between:

    a. internal organizations.

    b. external organizations.

8. Please list the type of internal and external organizations involved and if there are differences in how the business SLA is expressed when between internal versus organizations that are external to yours.

9. Without getting into too many technical details, describe what types of services you currently have SLAs for. (We will get much further into traffic identification etc, in surveys that will follow this). Do services like video teleconferencing make sense at this business level?

Additional Questions

1. Can you quantify what the business impact to you is for SLAs.

2. Should charges for the service or penalties for non-conformance to the SLA be part of the SLA. If so how should they be stated. If not where should they go?

Closing Comments and Next Steps

- Thanks for your input and participation.

- Meeting notes will be integrated with written and email input into a first draft of the first part of the white paper.

- Additional comments welcome. Send them to the qos mailing list or:

saperia@jdscons.com