Research Reviews on Middleware Presales Consulting

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Abstract- Middleware becomes a strong research area. The reason is the ability of middleware technologies to solve all the integration problems in an enterprise. This technology combined with other technologies can solve pressing problems for mankind.

Index Terms- Middleware, Integration, PreSales, Request for Information, Request for Proposal.

I. INTRODUCTION

The term Middleware defines " A set of software programs that connects different programs together ". In today's computerized world, there are lot of benefits to mankind. If all computerized systems talk to each other effectively and efficiently there would be lot of benefits to mankind. Presales professionals play a key role in architecting the solution for any enterprise with middleware technologies. The paper focuses on the reviews of presales consultants and their views.

II. IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH IN MIDDLEWARE

Given the fact that middleware adds a lot of value, there has to be a lot of effort that goes in each architectural framework. The framework need not be technical. Mostly in sales engagement, competencies of middleware professional are key in suggesting and evangelizing the middleware technologies. Every customer has issues and challenges in their IT setup and complexities. It is upto the middleare presales consultants to understand, discuss, elaborate, present and articulate the benefits of middleware.

III. STUDIES AND FINDINGS - REVIEWS

- Patrick Isom, a Technical PreSales consultant says "Pre-sales is all the stuff that happens to develope a sale. As a pre-sales consultant I am closely tied to the sales team but support them in a technical way. I started as a technical person, then went into full on sales and now am back as a technical consultant. Pre-sales consultants are instrumental in technical sales cycles as they are able to analyze the customer requirements and assist in developing a proper solution. Most products these days are not a one size fits all and most successful business are in solution oriented sales. As a pre-sales technical consultant it is my job to make sure the solution fits the customer requirements and will work properly once implemented. You dont have to be a sales person but you do need to understand sales cycles. You do need to be the "expert" in your field and understand how your product works." -February 7, 2012.

- Cristian Dinescu says "In short you have to fill the gap between the functional and business requirements of the Customer and the actual technical implementation of your highly-specialized technical team proposed to do the job. So, you have to speak the "bits-and-bytes-and-MHz" technical language and translate it into common language understandable by a non-technical Customer Manager who needs to know some important information about his business. And present the solution more like benefits, TCO, lowering risk, automation, control, audit trails instead of "We deliver our servers with the fastest Intel processor installed and we have more useful storage compared with our competition." It takes long time to became a true Presales Professional because you need to have technical skills in your domain of expertise, but also Sales skills and preferably also knowledge in PM (Project Management) and BM (Bid Management). It is someone who stops the Salesman to promise to the Customer un-realistic things and also makes sure that a System Engineer doesn't include in the offer 10 man-day just to install an operating system on one server." -February 8, 2012.

- Olga Kuzmina says "It's a very unique set of skills, you have to be technical to understand what would be the best way to design the solution and with perfect customer facing skills at the same time. The most difficult bit it to "translate" customer words into a valid requirement." -February 8, 2012

- Jeff Mason says "Of course the simple answer is any function or task that is performed before the actual contract is signed. But what does that mean in real life? I will try and run through what I have experienced in the pre-sales cycle: Initial visibility in the sales pipeline: Typically you are going to be involved with a pre-sales cycle with a prospect as a result of either the prospect making contract with the company, or the company reaching out to the prospect in one way or another. A good portion of the time, this initial contact, is handled by the salesperson, whether that is inside sales, or out. Most sales people are sensitive to the time and resources that they obtain from within the company and it's at this stage that the sales person will qualify the prospect to ensure that expending company resources on it are worthwhile. However, for a number of valid reasons, the sales person will reach out to you for assistance, education, involvement, or just to discuss the opportunity with you. This stage is formally managed through the sales

pipeline that can take the form of a spreadsheet for small companies, or a software system with processes around it in medium to large companies. It's to your advantage and I would say mandatory that you have some visibility at this stage of the pre-sales cycle so you can understand what can be possible coming your way and to allow you to share and leverage your experience and skills with the sales team. Initial Contact: This can take the form of a sales person contacting the prospect and getting them to agree to a conference call, demo, initial preliminary discussion, or face to face. I have observed that a face-to-face meeting this early on is the exception, but it does happen and more times than you would think. Typically this is a conference call and Webex to discuss the overall solution and most of the time it involves a demo of the product. All of the steps outlined here require everyone to be at the top of their game, but demos are that event that require experienced resources, planning, coordination, and fall back procedures in case something goes wrong. Too many times the demo is lacking because prior planning wasn't taken and the lack of coordination can lead to confusion and the perception or reality that you as a company are disorganized." -February 9, 2012

IV.   CONCLUSION

Based on the research reviews, middleware professionals can help customers and product companies to understand, get the requirements and use their competencies to build a framework for suggesting the successful   architecture using middleware technologies.

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