Comparing WSDL-based and ebXML-based Approaches for B2B Protocol Specification

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Abstract. When automating business processes spanning organizational boundaries, it is required to explicitly specify the interfaces of the cooperating software systems in order to achieve the desired properties of interoperability and loose coupling. So-called B2B protocols provide for the formal specification of relevant aspects of an interface, ranging from document types to transactions. Currently, there are two main approaches proposed for the specification of B2B protocols, the WSDL-based approach supporting Web Service languages, and the ebXML-based approach supporting languages defined along the ebXML project. Unfortunately, these approaches are not compatible, thus an organization wanting to engage in B2B collaboration needs to decide whether to embark on any of these new approaches, and which ones to use. This paper introduces a conceptual framework for B2B protocols, and based on this framework, a methodical comparison of the two approaches is provided, answering the questions of what the differences are and whether there are chances to achieve interoperability.