

an ebizQ publication:

Product Spotlight

Boomi AtomSphere

ebizQ Summary

As more and more enterprises adopt software-as-a-service within their application portfolio, they face the challenge of safe, reliable integration between those cloud-hosted applications and their existing installed base of on-premise applications and data stores.

Although cloud-based application vendors provide integration APIs, they leave it to their customers to implement and manage their own connections to those interfaces. Many enterprises already have an integration infrastructure behind the firewall, but these traditional middleware solutions are not well-equipped to manage connections out to enterprise data and processes running in the cloud.

It's tempting to resolve this impasse with tactical, point-to-point integrations between the SaaS application and any on-premise resource it needs to talk to. Such solutions are necessarily short-lived. Their limitations become evident as soon as additional connections have to be added, or whenever an upgrade forces a rewrite of the integration. Management rapidly becomes an uncomfortable headache, while the cost and time required to make changes soon escalates.

To provide a more resilient, flexible and cost-effective answer to this conundrum, enterprises are turning to SaaS-ready integration platforms such as Boomi AtomSphere. Such solutions are designed to handle the unique security, monitoring and governance requirements when connecting to resources beyond the firewall. A further advantage is that, when integration is managed in the cloud, enterprises can implement a single view of the integration landscape that spans both on-premise and cloud-based resources, wherever they happen to be located.

First established 10 years ago, Boomi is a venture capital-backed private company with more than 600 customers at the time of writing. They use its Boomi AtomSphere platform to manage both SaaS-to-SaaS and SaaS to on-premise integration.



Product: Boomi AtomSphere
Type of Product: Integration platform-as-a-service
Company: Boomi
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Founded: 2000
Ownership: Private. Funded by FirstMark Capital
Number of Customers: 600+



The Insider's Guide to Business and IT Agility

Product Description

Boomi AtomSphere is specifically designed to manage integrations within a hybrid environment, where on-premise IT assets must connect both data and processes into cloud-hosted software-as-a-service applications. It has a distributed architecture that executes integrations in the most appropriate location – whether behind the firewall or in the cloud. It has the necessary breadth of capability to serve as an enterprise's primary integration platform for all types of connection, both on-premise and cloud-based, and a number of customers have chosen to take advantage of this option.

ATOMSPHERE DEVELOPMENT PLATFORM

All development, management and upgrading is performed from the cloud and controlled from Boomi AtomSphere's cloud-hosted management dashboard.

Users can log into their AtomSphere account from any web browser to develop and maintain their integrations. The visual development environment allows drag-and-drop configuration of application and data integration processes, drawing on a library of pre-built connectors and process maps.

THE ATOM

Connections are deployed as an Atom, a lightweight Java runtime engine that performs the integrations locally where they are needed, minimizing latency and contributing to a highly scalable architecture. Local deployment means that enterprises can keep their integrations behind the firewall. There's no need to ship raw data out to the cloud or leave inbound ports open on the firewall. The Atom only connects outbound as needed to the AtomSphere Platform and any SaaS applications being integrated. Keeping the integration local allows it to run faster and makes it easier to police for security and compliance.

ATOM CLOUD

For integration directly between cloud-based resources (for example, web service APIs provided by SaaS applications, FTP transfers or resources hosted on public clouds), customers have the option of cloud-hosted integration operated by Boomi. About a third of Boomi's customers choose this option.

Known as the Atom Cloud, this uses an advanced multi-tenant platform that shares a common infrastructure, offering performance and cost benefits when compared to a dedicated resource. The infrastructure uses the Java Security Framework to isolate each active integration in its own JVM instance, ensuring there is no risk of contamination from one instance to another.

ATOMSPHERE DASHBOARD

The cloud-based management function gives users a centralized overview of the health and activity of all Atoms,

wherever they have been deployed, enabling efficient and scalable integration even of multi-network, multi-cloud applications. Users can review execution history and activity logs, or subscribe to RSS feeds to be proactively notified of any errors.

Pre-built integrations. Boomi's library of pre-built and sample integrations is especially attractive for those looking for off-the-shelf connections to popular applications. A common scenario here is connecting Salesforce.com to on-premise financials such as Microsoft Great Plains.

Boomi is unique in opening up its platform to allow the community of ISVs, SIs and other integration experts to build and publish their own connectors, widgets and process maps. This growing library of ready-made integrations is available to all customers and partners.

Additional enterprise capabilities. For larger enterprises, Boomi AtomSphere includes advanced functionality such as dedicated environments for test and staging; an API to manage deployment, revision histories and rollbacks of new or changed integrations; and advanced user security to manage developer access. A web services framework supports SOA environments.

Governance. Boomi AtomSphere incorporates governance capabilities to monitor data going out to the cloud and tracks it to make sure it is delivered back behind the firewall. Conventional middleware, designed to operate within a self-contained enterprise environment, doesn't usually have this built-in ability to monitor data moving to the cloud.

Molecules. Included in AtomSphere Enterprise, Molecules are a high-performance, high-availability version of the Atom. They have intelligent load-balancing and fault tolerant, self-healing capabilities, with the ability to process high volumes of data in parallel across multiple Java Virtual Machines (JVMs).

Pricing

Pricing is set at a monthly rate and varies according to the number and complexity of connections (counting each application or data source as a single connection). The number of users or volume of data makes no difference to pricing, unless the customer chooses the Atom Cloud option, which then incurs an additional charge according to data volume.

A typical price for a small business deployment is \$550 per month. This would cover the cost of basic functionality across two or three connections, such as from CRM to on-premise financials.

An enterprise deployment with 30-40 different connections would typically cost from \$3,500 to \$5,000 per month, with additional functionality bundled in, such as dedicated test and stage and advanced user security. If not bundled in, advanced functions cost an extra \$500 to \$1,000 per month each. In practice, high-end pricing tops out at \$8,000 per month.

Competitive Landscape

Boomi is one of a number of vendors targeting the emerging market for SaaS integration. Competitors include Cast Iron Systems, Informatica and Pervasive. Of these, Boomi is the only pureplay SaaS vendor with a solely cloud-based development and management environment.

Most often, the company finds itself competing to replace a customer's own in-house alternative, typically a hand-coded integration, or sometimes a build-out of existing on-premises integration infrastructure. Boomi's competitive strength here is as a highly capable 'gateway to the cloud,' incorporating cloud-aware governance and security capabilities that are not present in on-premises infrastructure.

Distribution Channels

Boomi sells AtomSphere both direct and through partners. Sometimes these sales are under the partner's own branding or via a reseller agreement, but the majority are referred to Boomi. Where customers intend to standardize on AtomSphere as their default integration platform, they prefer a direct relationship between themselves or their SI partner and Boomi.

Customers can also go direct to Boomi. The company proactively markets itself online and offers instant sign-up for a self-service trial.

Industry Focus/Major Customers

Boomi AtomSphere has a horizontal appeal, with more than 600 customers spread across all industries. Major customers include McKesson, Electronic Arts, OpenTable, Siemens, Bank of Paribas.

In addition, it is a trusted integration partner for leading names in the SaaS industry, including Salesforce.com, Taleo, NetSuite, RightNow and Successfactors.

Partner Strategy

Two thirds of Boomi's sales come via SaaS vendors or integrators. Boomi has 'white-label' OEM agreements with certain SaaS vendors, such as talent management vendor Taleo, which has standardized on Boomi's technology to productize key integrations to vendors including ADP and Workday.

Boomi also has reseller agreements with systems integrators – and sometimes OEM deals – but the majority of sales via partners are completed as referrals.

The SI landscape for SaaS is still in an early stage of evolution, and it is likely that reseller deals will become more prevalent as specialist cloud integrators become more established and begin to build portfolios of integration ser-

vices. Boomi appears well positioned for this evolution in the market, especially with its 'open platform' approach, allowing partners to build and promote their own connectors and widgets.

Strengths

With instant sign-up for self-service trial, customers can complete proof-of-concept before spending a penny on subscriptions. This helps build confidence in the solution and demonstrates Boomi's time-to-result and cost efficiencies.

Boomi's platform is able to connect any combination of SaaS and on-premise resources. This allows customers to manage all their integrations on a single platform.

As the first pure cloud integration platform, Boomi has a strong track record. At the time of writing, the Atom Cloud processes 130 million transactions a month, more than any other player.

By opening up its platform, Boomi is better able to address the 'long tail' of connectors, leveraging the creativity and resources of partner ISVs and integrators to cater to a much broader range of requirements.

Boomi has a strong offering for large enterprise, offering high performance options and addressing governance needs such as end-to-end visibility, traceability and auditing of data movements.

Weaknesses

There is no on-premise option for development and management functions, a turn-off for enterprises that want to keep these activities behind the firewall.

Boomi is a venture capital-backed private company without the visible financial standing of public company competitors. However the company is on a firm financial footing and experiencing strong cashflow, which it is reinvesting into continued growth.

Boomi must continue to develop its governance, reporting and analysis capabilities to keep pace with the growing level of scrutiny CIOs will demand over the cloud components of their IT infrastructure.

The current Flash UI has performance issues and lacks collaboration capabilities for distributed teamwork. This will be resolved by a new HTML5-compatible UI included in the AtomSphere Summer '10 release.

Supported Platforms

Customers that opt for an entirely cloud-based deployment face no platform constraints. The Boomi AtomSphere Platform is cloud-based and requires only a Flash-capable browser to access (or HTML5-compatible after the Summer '10 release).

When the Atom connector is deployed locally, it can run on either a Windows or a Linux machine. Supported platforms are Windows Server 2008, XP Professional and Home, Windows Server 2003, Windows 2000 Server and Professional, Windows Vista, Linux Red Hat 2.1, Red Hat Enterprise Linux 3.0 and above, Suse Enterprise Linux Server and above, or any other Linux distribution that supports the Java 6 Runtime. The Atom requires Java JRE 1.6 or higher to run.

Conclusion

Now that software as a service and cloud computing is becoming an established component of enterprise IT infrastructure, there is a need for an integration solution that provides comparable cost savings and rapid time-to-value. The challenge is to find a solution that offers the right combination of flexibility, performance and oversight, especially in the hybrid environments of the next few years as enterprises introduce new cloud assets into the IT infrastructure. Boomi AtomSphere's distributed integration architecture, operated from a central, SaaS dashboard for development and management, allows enterprises to balance the need for central control with the flexibility and scalability of a distributed architecture.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: **Phil Wainwright** is one of the world's foremost authorities on emerging trends in business automation. He is a prolific writer with a ZDNet blog on Software as a Service, an eBizQ blog on The Connected Web, and a series of influential analyst reports to his name. He serves as CEO of Procullux Ventures, a London-based strategic consultancy working with leading business automation vendors and their customers.

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