

using BACnet in the situations it is perfectly designed to function in. Just expose your BACnet message to an XML-based interface i.e. a web service.

- 3) And finally, because web services have already infiltrated the organisation anyone hoping to put digital equipment across the network is up against a mighty gatekeeper. The IT director who must guard the organisation's data will only allow compatible data signals to pass in his domain. Web Services (XML) may pass, proprietary protocols may not.

And over the hill came the oBIX cavalry to the rescue

The Open Building Information Exchange Initiative was formed in April 2003 under the auspices of CABA's (Continental Automated Building Association) XML Technical Committee. The catalyst was Paul Ehrlich of Trane. Over the past 12 months companies of many kinds from different industries joined oBIX. All have one thing in common, the need to put equipment supplied from different manufacturers into a building project with varying degrees of integration/data exchange to deliver to the facility user the measurement, command and control levels demanded.

oBIX Mission Statement

"The mission of the Open Building Information Exchange (oBIX) committee is to develop a publicly available web services interface specification that can be used to obtain data in a simple and secure manner from HVAC, access control, utilities and other building automation systems, and to provide data exchange between facility systems and enterprise applications. In addition, the committee will develop implementation guidelines, as needed, to facilitate the development of products that will use the web service interface."

The individuals and companies contributing to oBIX want something that works and they want it fast. No endless discussions. Action is demanded. There is to be no faking over 'open standards'. Too many organisations claim their protocol to be 'open' but only if you purchase all their products. The user cannot truly choose a best-of-breed product due to that outdated concept, customer lock-in.

No re-inventing the wheel is required. Large amounts of work in

XML have been carried out and these can be incorporated into oBIX saving time. Security? Have you been told scare stories about open standards? All the data security that could be desired has been built in by the developments in IT. Having an open standard does NOT mean that your network can be hacked or your data attacked.

OASIS

XML is a language to create languages - a metastandard. It is the product of the Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards, the global not-for-profit consortium that drives the development, convergence and adoption of e-business standards worldwide. A standard passing OASIS earns ISO acceptance without quibble. What can hold out against Microsoft, Sun Microsystems, IBM, HP, Boeing, Oracle, and Visa International etc? If they work to agree a standard, it stays agreed. At the oBIX meeting held at the BullConn conference in Dallas in April, a motion was accepted that to ensure global acceptance and recognition as a standard of quality, oBIX will continue development under OASIS. A move to place oBIX with ASHRAE (American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-conditioning Engineers) was defeated. ASHRAE can be seen as too HVAC-centric. True integration must cross all disciplines.

What next for oBIX?

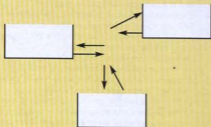
Paul Ehrlich of Trane and Toby Considine, the Technology Officer for Facility Services at the University of North Carolina jointly chair the new OASIS Technical Committee for oBIX. Toby's experiences of running a large multi-site campus have given him a passionate determination to achieve the vision of true integration.

Release 1 will have data exchange and security and is hoped to cover alarms. Efforts from other industries will be examined and what can be utilised in oBIX will be such as from XML for OPC, GBXML, BACnet, LonTalk and so on.

- For more information or to join oBIX for which there is no fee, www.obix.org or go to www.oasis-open.org and scroll down the list in the box on the left side to Open Building Info Exchange.

The Current Situation

- No shared data
- Must go through a human operator



oBIX Future with Web Services 'wrappers' around the different systems exchanging XML messages

- Seamless data exchange
- No need for operator after configuration

