SimbaO2X Business White Paper

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This white paper introduces business reasons for and benefits you will receive if you use SimbaO2X to connect your OLE DB for OLAP (ODBO) enabled applications to a XML for Analysis (XMLA) data source.

Overview

Today's organizations must contend with mountains of data. To ensure operational success, many have made huge investments in tools and technologies to gain insight into what drives their bottom line. This is no more prevalent than in the growing deployments of multi-dimensional/OLAP databases where once relational databases were used.

Multi-dimensional/OLAP data stores provide many benefits to today's dynamic organizations. Most notably, they contain information in a form that is accessible to provide answers to questions that many organizations ask, such as *"Let's take a look at last year's monthly revenue at each store location see if we've been affected by any product backorder problems."* With multi-dimensional data, users can get answers to complex business questions with fewer queries compared to working with a relational data store. Furthermore, occurrence of human error is reduced because complex queries are often returned complete and thus require less analysis and splicing as with relational queries.

However, deploying a multi-dimensional/OLAP data store is not without challenges. Organizations need tools capable of accessing and manipulating multi-dimensional data. Popular Business Intelligence (BI) tools like Microsoft® Excel, SAP® BusinessObjects Crystal Reports® and many others natively speak OLE DB for OLAP (ODBO), an established multi-dimensional standard, but the emerging standard for multi-dimensional data is XML for Analysis (XMLA).

Fortunately, there is a solution. Organizations can deploy a cost effective, easy to use ODBO to XMLA bridge called SimbaO2X.

What is XML for Analysis (XMLA)?

XMLA is a data standard that allows client-based applications to access data stored in multi-dimensional or OLAP data sources. Data is conveyed using web standards, such as HTTP, SOAP and XML.

The key benefits of XMLA are:

It is an open standard. XMLA-enabled tools and technologies will interoperate, ultimately saving organizations time and money since tools and data servers will work together out of the box via the universal XMLA standard.

It is designed for a thin client / zero footprint architecture. XMLA moves analytical applications away from traditional client / server roots towards a more flexible web-based architecture. This configuration speeds response times and places less demand on resources, which ultimately boosts productivity and saves money when dealing with growing data stores. More importantly, it moves away from dependency on a single operating system, as it is OS-neutral.

It is adopted and supported by leading data vendors. XMLA is supported within popular multi-dimensional products like Oracle® Essbase®, Microsoft Analysis Services, Microsoft SQL Server, MIS Alea, and SAP NetWeaver® BW.

What is OLE DB for OLAP (ODBO)?

ODBO is an industry standard that was originally developed by Microsoft for multi-dimensional/OLAP data processing. It is the most widely supported multi-dimensional Application Programming Interface (API) to date. Many software vendors have incorporated ODBO functionality into their Windows-based software applications to gain broader appeal in the marketplace. Many leading BI products, such as Microsoft Excel, use ODBO to access multi-dimensional/OLAP data sources.

The Business Dilemma Efficiencies without Cost

Given that most applications in the multi-dimensional/OLAP server space today interface with ODBO and an increasing number of multi-dimensional servers support XMLA, organizations are faced with the prospect of having to purchase new tools that are capable of working with new technology.

For most organizations, such change is not easy. Capital investment in existing tools is otherwise lost. Efficiencies are temporarily compromised. And, the added cost to upgrade existing tools or to purchase new tools and train staff to use them is often another strain on business and operations.

The most common BI tool used today is none other than Microsoft Excel. In fact, according to a Ventana Research study, the most popular tools for creating BI documents are Microsoft Excel, followed by Microsoft PowerPoint® and then other BI software. Thirty-five per cent of the same study's respondents reported Microsoft Excel to be the primary tool that they used for BI authoring, while 56 per cent of respondents said that their BI documents included data from Microsoft Excel. *(Ventana*

Research: Integrating BI and Microsoft Office, Nov 2004)

Microsoft Excel 2013, 2010, 2007 and 2003, as well as nearly all other multi-dimensional BI applications natively speak ODBO, not XMLA.

Organizations are readily familiar with their current BI applications, like Excel. They have built processes using these applications to access and manipulate data, and to gain insight into their businesses.

With SimbaO2X, organizations gain value, maintain efficiency and reduce demand on resources in the course of generating comprehensive BI.

With developments in the multi-dimensional/OLAP server space, and new products like Microsoft SQL Server 2005 utilizing XMLA, the prospect of buying new tools, training end-user staff and ramping productivity is not appealing for most organizations.

Fortunately, there is a solution. Organizations can deploy a cost effective, easy to use ODBO to XMLA bridge called SimbaO2X.

SimbaO2X – ODBO to XMLA Bridge

SimbaO2X allows users to connect any 32-bit or 64-bit ODBO-based application to any XMLA-enabled provider/server with a single, easy to install download.

With SimbaO2X, organizations are able to move to a web services-oriented environment and continue to use familiar ODBO-enabled client applications.

SimbaO2X breathes life into the most popular ODBO-based BI applications, such as Microsoft Excel, enabling fast, powerful and precise analytics from XMLA data stores. Organizations gain the power of multi-dimensional XMLA data storage and processing with the ability to access and manipulate data with familiar tools. They have the power to gain answers to complex business questions, providing insight that positively affects their bottom line. Most notably with SimbaO2X, they do so without having to source and purchase new and expensive XMLA-enabled client applications.

SimbaO2X provides ODBO access to data stored in next generation data sources from multi-dimensional vendors like Oracle, Microsoft, Infor and SAP.

Once installed on a user's machine, it provides an interface for easy connectivity to XMLA-enabled data sources. It's easy to install, simple to configure and use, based on standard protocols, and XMLA, MDX and ODBO (both 32-bit and 64-bit) compliant.

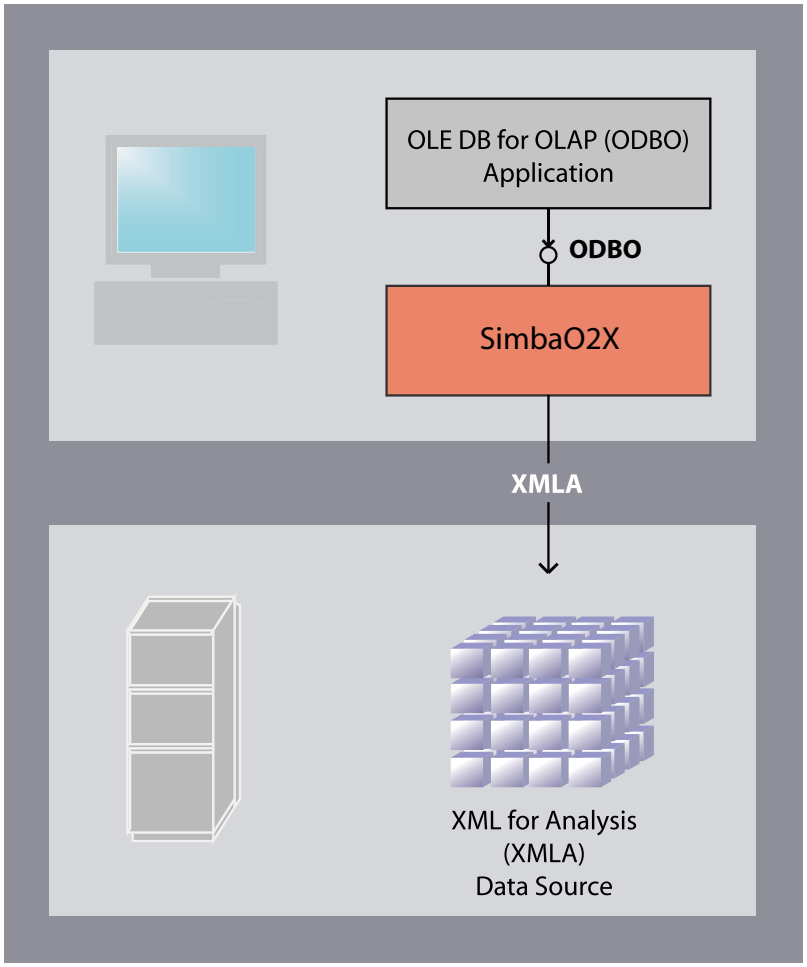

Figure 1
SimbaO2X Architecture

SimbaO2X is a client-side bridge that provides connectivity from any OLE DB for OLAP (ODBO) application to any XML for Analysis (XMLA) provider/server.

A Standards-based Solution

SimbaO2X is based on accepted industry standards. It complies with both the current XMLA specification established by the XMLA advisory council and the 32-bit and 64-bit ODBO standard established by Microsoft.

SimbaO2X's underlying technology enables easy connectivity and interoperability between standards-based BI applications and multi-dimensional/XMLA data stores.

SimbaO2X Features

SimbaO2X is a standards-based ODBO to XMLA client-side driver, which supports all the major multi-dimensional standards – MDX, ODBO, XMLA – and works in all the latest Windows environments. It allows today's ODBO-based software applications to work in a web services environment.

SimbaO2X is:

- Easy to setup
- Easy to configure and use
- Based on standard protocols
- XMLA, MDX and 32-bit and 64-bit ODBO compliant

Software and Hardware Requirements

- Windows XP Professional or later (32-bit or 64-bit)
- 10 MB of disk space (not including space for required Microsoft components)
- Microsoft .NET Framework 1.1 or later
- Microsoft ADOMD.NET 8.0

Conclusion

SimbaO2X is a standards-based ODBO to XMLA provider that allows users to connect any 32-bit or 64-bit ODBO consumer, such as Microsoft Excel, to any XMLA data server. SimbaO2X allows organizations to move to a web services environment, while continuing to use familiar ODBO-enabled tools.

With SimbaO2X, organizations gain value, maintain efficiency and reduce demand on resources in the course of generating comprehensive business intelligence.

SimbaO2X's architecture allows for interoperability between popular BI applications and XMLA data stores. SimbaO2X saves organizations time and money, protecting capital investments in existing ODBO-based tools, and enabling fast, powerful and precise analytics from XMLA data stores.

About Simba Technologies Inc.

Simba Technologies Inc. is the recognized world leader in standards-based data access and analytics solutions. Simba works with the world's leading software companies to deliver first class data connectivity solutions.

Simba is a pioneer in ODBC, MDX, ODBO and XMLA. Since 1991, Simba has developed advanced data access solutions for thousands of end users. Today, more than half of all MDX providers have been built with Simba technology, and through a partnership with Microsoft, Simba's SQL technology has been installed on more than 30 million desktops worldwide.

Simba's firm commitment to delivering the highest customer value through innovative solutions and expert support has gained the company a reputation as the industry leader for data connectivity solutions.