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Drummond Submits AS4 Requirements to OASIS

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by **Alex Woodie**

Buoyed by the success of AS2 and the need to streamline business document exchange via Web services, [EXTOL International](#), [Sterling Commerce](#), [Cisco Systems](#), and the interoperability testing firm [Drummond Group](#) submitted a list of functional requirements to the standards body [OASIS](#) last week for the creation of a new B2B protocol, called AS4, that would adopt AS2 for use with Web services.

With the acceptance of the ebXML Messaging Services (ebMS) 3.0 as a full standard last fall, the OASIS Messaging Services Technical Committee approved the creation of a subcommittee to develop a "profile" of ebMS 3.0 called AS4, the goal of which was to come up with a standardized way to achieve secure B2B document exchange using Web services.

In the same way that the first three Applicability Statements (AS) protocols enabled vendors to develop software that standardized the sending and receiving of EDI documents using e-mail (AS1), HTTP (AS2), and FTP (AS3), the new AS4 protocol would provide for the safe and secure exchange of purchase orders, advanced shipping notices, and other EDI content using the next generation of highly autonomic computer-to-computer integration controls known generally as Web services.

The Drummond Group says it has been working with its partners (and sometime customers) to come up with a simple and secure method for exchanging EDI-type business documents using the new generation of Web services protocols, including WS-*, WS-I, and a good helping of SOAP. The goal was to adapt the widely successful AS2 spec, which Drummond calls "simple and elegant," for use with Web services.

"It is exciting to see this work finally coming to fruition," says Drummond CEO Rik Drummond. "Web services messaging is loosely defined in a variety of places, but this work builds on constraining the options to make it simpler and easier to implement and more importantly, to be interoperable. The buyers of Web services technology will thank those involved for their effort."

AS4 will boost the value that companies are already experiencing with Web services, according to Jim O'Leary, vice president of product management for EXTOL, which develops AS2 and EDI software primarily for the [IBM i](#) operating system (formerly i5/OS and OS/400). "The AS4 initiative will increase the business value of Web services between Web service implementations, putting these projects within the scope of the limited resources and existing skill sets available at most mid sized organizations," he says.

The recognition of standardization from OASIS should boost the acceptance of AS4, according to Chris Johnson, vice president of product management for AT&T subsidiary Sterling Commerce, which develops B2B software for the [i OS](#), in addition to other operating systems. "We are proud to support the AS4 standard as it will turn the hype of Web services into the reality of an evermore powerful and easier-to-use multi-enterprise business process," Johnson says.

As part of its AS4 program, Drummond will work with vendors like EXTOL and

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Sterling to co-develop AS4 software, in addition to testing the interoperability of multiple vendors' AS4 products. This iterative approach to "develop a little and test a little" will lead to fewer code mistakes and greater interoperability and adherence to the standard, Drummond says.

Drummond's Timothy Bennett is the chairman of the ebXML Messaging Services AS4 subcommittee at OASIS. Other companies sitting on the subcommittee include representatives from [Axway](#), [BT](#), and [Fujitsu](#). Interested parties can submit a request to join the subcommittee by visiting this [OASIS AS4 Web page](#).



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