

An eoSTORE – further thoughts

I return to the subject of the ITT to create a platform for micro e-services issued last week by ESA. By my reading, the objective is to create what we called an eoSTORE in our study of the Marketplace for EO Services (MAEOS) 2 years ago. After study and consultations, we split the Marketplace into 2 parts just like a shopping centre (Mall). The first part is the surrounding infrastructure, eoMALL, with a very sophisticated guide to find the services for which a client is looking. Once found, they are directed to one or more shops where they may buy the service. In our case, the EO service provider. Several service providers may come together to create an eoSTORE.

We talked about the example of looking for shoes. When the client enters the shopping mall they search based on whether they look for shoes or trainers; do they want the trainers for the gym, running, for hiking boots or trainers for style. Do they want a brand or a generic? As a result of the answers they may be directed to a high-end brand store (Nike), a general shoe shop (Geox), a specialist sports store (Adventure) or a bulk store (Decathlon). We (EARSC) build and run the Mall whilst the companies build and run the shops.

EARSC is a neutral player and is owned by the companies which are members. Hence all the companies offering their services through eoMALL have a stake in the service. It is a form of co-operative and in my view is the only business model which can really work. On the other hand, when it comes to the selling transaction, most companies prefer to handle this themselves.

We foresaw that several companies could come together to offer combinations of services. These could be specialised or simply complementary. In doing so they could increase the attractiveness of their respective offers as well as saving costs on the transaction processing. This is where we see the e-commerce platform fitting as an eoSTORE.

But, as I said in my previous blog, if one service company is successful in the tender to ESA, we see a lot of danger of market distortion, inconsistent with our Marketplace visions expressed in MAEOS. Hence, we take the view that the e-commerce platform needs to be run by several eo service companies and, to offer maximum benefit, it should be fully compatible with eoMALL. As a way to achieve this, I can see two different possible models:

1. A group of companies come together to develop the e-commerce platform. It could then be operated in multiple forms by each company, or as in the eoSTORE vision, operated by them in co-operation. It would link to eoMALL as well as company web-sites and enable the sales transaction to be executed for all the partners. Several governance models would be possible to be explored.
2. A single company is charged with developing the e-commerce platform, but which is not itself offering eo-services. It would then make the e-commerce platform package available to companies to each install as they wish. The business model would be based around licensing and supporting the software and not selling the services.

At EARSC we are willing to play a role in this so maintaining the views of MAEOS. We have talked with a number of companies which have approached us and would be happy to talk with others. I hope during this week, to be able to express further how we believe we can proceed.