

## XML: Implications and Applications

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### Abstract

XML or eXtensible Markup Language is the latest Internet buzzword, but it is also a rapidly maturing technology that has powerful real world applications, particularly for business-to-business communications and the management, display and organisation of both structured and unstructured data (Hunter, 2000).

XML evolved from standard generalised markup language (SGML) and became a World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) recommendation in February 1998. One of XML's main goals is to separate the structure and content of a document from its Web presentation. This means that virtually any application type irrespective of the presentation medium being used can read data in XML documents ([www.w3.org](http://www.w3.org)).

The critical enabler here is that XML is not a language per se but a standard for describing syntax that can be used to create particular vocabularies which can be shared by others ([www.W3.org](http://www.W3.org)). Basically the structure and content of the data are defined once in a Document Type Definition (DTD) and an XML document, these can then be parsed and displayed in a myriad of ways by applying a particular stylesheet (XSL).

The anticipated benefits of XML include easier integration of legacy systems, improved business-to-business communications, simplified delivery of management information and platform independence across the complete customer-supplier value chain (Information Age, August/September 2000) (Morrison et al, 2000) (Finkelstein & Aiken, 2000).

These benefits are vital in the push for increased Internet services across a variety of business types and customers. If your business is involved with or is considering offering services and information through the Web, then XML should be investigated as a potential new strategy in your IT armoury ([www.W3.org](http://www.W3.org)).

This minitrack will look at the implications of XML on IT strategy and operations and how XML has been used in real world business applications. The minitrack will aim to provide IT managers with information on the benefits of XML and how it can be used as part of IT strategy development. Practical knowledge will also be provided for systems developers through the presentation of case studies involving XML designs and implementations.