



# SimbaO<sub>2</sub>X Business White Paper

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This white paper introduces business reasons for and benefits you will receive if you use SimbaO<sub>2</sub>X to connect your OLE DB for OLAP (ODBO) enabled applications to a XML for Analysis (XMLA) data source.

## Overview

Today, organizations are faced with the convergence of new and old technologies. Transition often brings both benefit and risk. Newly introduced technologies offer greater long-term efficiencies, but they also come with added cost and lost investment for many of the tools that they replace.

Today's data space is no exception. 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 returned often complete and require less analysis and splicing as with relational queries.

However, deploying a multi-dimensional/OLAP data store is not

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without challenges. Organizations need tools capable of accessing and manipulating multi-dimensional data. Popular Business Intelligence (BI) tools like Microsoft® Excel, Business Objects™ 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 SimbaO<sub>2</sub>X."*

## What is XML for Analysis (XMLA)?

XMLA is a relatively new 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.

**It is adopted and supported by leading data vendors.**

XMLA is supported within popular multi-dimensional products like Hyperion® Essbase®, Microsoft Analysis Services, Microsoft SQL Server 2005, MIS Alea, and SAP® Business Warehouse (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 products 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 recent 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 2000, 2003, and XP, 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 SimbaO<sub>2</sub>X, organizations gain value, maintain efficiency and reduce demand on resources in the course of generating comprehensive business intelligence."*

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 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 SimbaO<sub>2</sub>X.

## SimbaO<sub>2</sub>X – ODBO to XMLA Bridge

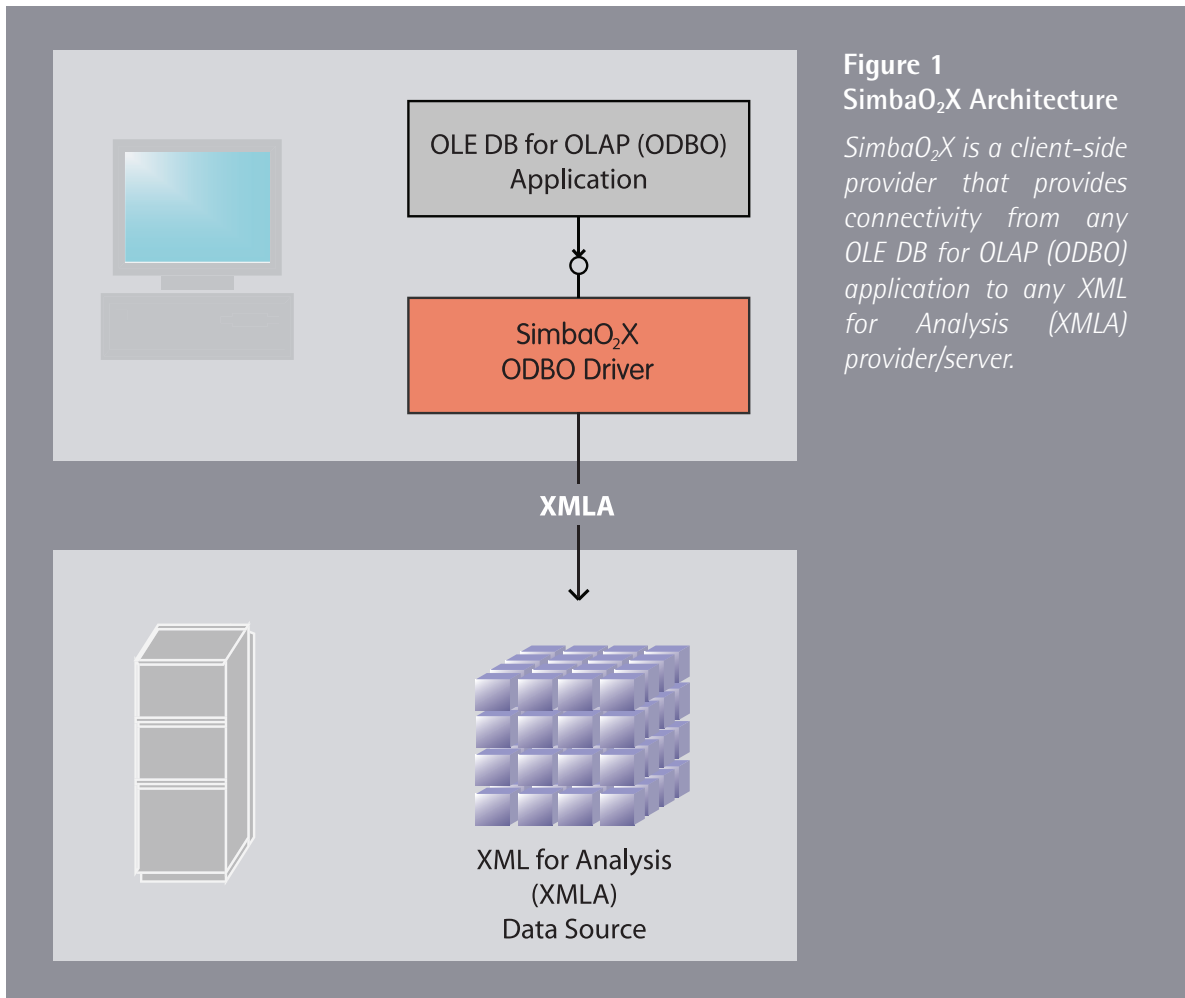
SimbaO<sub>2</sub>X allows users to connect any ODBO-based application to any XMLA-enabled provider/server with a single, easy to install download.

With SimbaO<sub>2</sub>X, organizations are able to move to a web services environment and continue to use familiar ODBO-enabled applications.

SimbaO<sub>2</sub>X breathes life into the most popular ODBO-based BI applications, like Microsoft Excel, enabling fast, powerful and precise analytics from XMLA data stores. Organizations can continue to use Excel 2000 or Excel XP with XMLA data sources rather than having to upgrade to the latest version of Excel. 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 SimbaO<sub>2</sub>X, they do so without having to source and purchase new and expensive XMLA-enabled tools.

SimbaO<sub>2</sub>X provides ODBO access to data stored in the next generation data sources from multi-dimensional vendors like Hyperion, Microsoft, MIS AG 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 compliant.



**Figure 1**  
**SimbaO<sub>2</sub>X Architecture**

*SimbaO<sub>2</sub>X is a client-side provider that provides connectivity from any OLE DB for OLAP (ODBO) application to any XML for Analysis (XMLA) provider/server.*

## A Standards-based Solution

SimbaO<sub>2</sub>X is based on accepted industry standards. It complies with both the current XMLA specification established by the XMLA advisory council and the ODBO standard originally established by Microsoft.

SimbaO<sub>2</sub>X's underlying technology enables easy connectivity and interoperability between standards-based BI applications and multi-dimensional/XMLA data stores.

## SimbaO<sub>2</sub>X Features

SimbaO<sub>2</sub>X 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 applications to work in a web services environment.

SimbaO<sub>2</sub>X is:

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



## Software and Hardware Requirements

- IBM PC or compatible machine
- Windows 2000 Professional or later
- 10 MB of disk space (not including space for required Microsoft components)
- Microsoft .NET Framework 1.1
- Microsoft ADOMD.NET 8.0

## Conclusion

SimbaO<sub>2</sub>X is a standards-based ODBO to XMLA provider that allows users to connect any ODBO consumer, like Microsoft Excel, to any XMLA data server. SimbaO<sub>2</sub>X allows organizations to move to a web services environment, while continuing to use familiar ODBO-enabled tools.

With SimbaO<sub>2</sub>X, organizations gain value, maintain efficiency and reduce demand on resources in the course of generating comprehensive business intelligence.

SimbaO<sub>2</sub>X's architecture allows for interoperability between popular BI applications and XMLA data stores. With SimbaO<sub>2</sub>X, organizations gain the freedom to use their existing and familiar ODBO-based applications to access next generation multi-dimensional data sources from leading vendors like Hyperion, Microsoft, MIS AG, and SAP.

SimbaO<sub>2</sub>X 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 products and 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.

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