

I have some comments on Andy Mohler's article on COTS in your May-June issue. He presents four myths. Myth #3 is that COTS will offer huge savings. I agree that it is too soon to tell whether or not this is true. We do know that most of a program's life-cycle cost is generated in the post-development, maintenance phase. However, in examining long-term costs, Mohler makes some statements which I think require further clarification. He referred to the consolidation of vendors and suggested that a program could be left with a monopoly supplier. The consolidation of vendors has occurred in the defense contracting world, not in the commercial marketplace. The consolidation of defense contractors may or may not have an effect on the availability of COTS, depending on how much you are integrating defense or commercial products.

Mohler suggests that success or failure at integrating COTS will depend on one's ability to choose a product line with broad commercial appeal, in order to ensure long-term vendor sta-

bility and product support. Popularity of a product is one factor to consider; we do not ever want to be a market of one. But perhaps more important is a product's integration into one or more widely used software architectures. We need to look at more than just products and create standards for product lines that span domains that include both DoD and commercial markets. That is the premise of the Army's SMART initiative—to standardize software architectural approaches across industries, including some areas of the DoD. We are hoping to create some standard architectures to provide guidance for long-term software decisions.

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