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The real value of OEC's toolset is its ability to support multitier architectures and to integrate diverse, popular client/server products. The newly announced DCE support is less important, except to DCE advocates and vendors.

Open Environment Corp. (OEC), a small ISV targeting the "enterprise" client/server market, is growing rapidly because of its high visibility and unique approach to tool integration. OEC's style of distributed computing is worth evaluating, although many mainstream companies are not ready to adopt it for their largest, most important production applications.

OEC's visibility comes from references provided by Dr. John Donovan's Cambridge Technology Group executive seminars, and from OEC's own education business. As recently as 1993, 60 percent of OEC's revenue came from training users on "open cooperative processing," its particular concept of client/server architecture. However, OEC is now changing its business model to become more of a software tool vendor, and expects that two-thirds of its 1994 revenue will come from software licenses and support, with only the remaining one-third coming from training.

OEC's strategy differs from that of most other vendors in the distributed-computing market. Its biggest competitors, such as Oracle Corp. and Sybase Inc., sell sole-source toolsets that are