Preface

Agent technology is one of the most vibrant and fastest growing areas of information technology – new agent-based products, applications, and services are being announced on an almost daily basis. The reason for this intense interest is that the metaphor of autonomous problem solving entities cooperating and coordinating to achieve their desired objectives is an intuitive and natural way of conceptualising many problems. Moreover, the conceptual apparatus of agent technology provides a powerful and useful set of structures and processes for designing and building complex software applications.

Agent Technology: Foundations, Applications, and Markets identifies and distills the key conceptual foundations of agent-based computing and presents them in the context of a variety of commercial and industrial application domains. This makes it the first book to be targeted specifically at a broad audience of software managers, designers, and developers who are considering whether and where agent technology will be useful for their organization. For those who are familiar with the foundations of agent technology, the book provides an indication of the likely future direction of the field and a number of case studies offering insights into the problems and benefits of developing and deploying agent-based applications.

As agent technology matures and moves into the mainstream of software development, we expect to see the everyday pragmatic issues of agent-based software development increasingly debated. We believe this volume represents the first major contribution to this debate. We hope and expect that it will stimulate interest not just from those already working in the field, but from practitioners in all information technology disciplines.

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