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IBM Shows Its Commitment to Web Services With New Java Tools

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IBM has released an alpha version of Java-based tools for Web services. But enterprises should wait for the commercial versions before deploying these tools.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Event

On 7 January 2002, IBM introduced a pre-release set of Java-based tools designed to enable enterprises to develop, integrate and manage Web services. The new tools can be downloaded for free in an alpha version; IBM plans to make most of them commercially available by 3Q02, either as independent products or as options for WebSphere Application Server or other WebSphere products. IBM also released an update to its Web Services Toolkit.

Analysis

As a vendor for mainstream enterprises and one committed to Java, IBM focuses primarily on introducing Web services to complement established computing models. For example, the Web Services Gateway, which wraps established applications as Web services, complements the already available or announced support for the SOAP family of standards (which includes WSDL and UDDI) in WebSphere Application Server, WebSphere MQ (formerly MQseries), DB2, CICS and other major products. Unlike Microsoft, the other leader in Web services, IBM sees its major opportunities in providing Web service infrastructure, not in selling business services over the Web. For this reason, IBM also plans to offer a set of technologies to help true Web service providers, including:

- Public and private UDDI registries
- The extended Web Services Toolkit for developers
- Web Services Hosting Technology for tracking and billing commercial Web service transactions

Much of the new technology relies on IBM protocols and application programming interfaces, e.g., for security, tracking and billing — an approach that could result in an IBM "flavor" for Web services. IBM is working with Microsoft and others on common standards for these and other essential features of the commercial Web service infrastructure, but complete agreement will likely not occur before 2004. Enterprises should expect follow-up announcements concerning new joint standards or agreements on interoperability between the leading versions of enterprise Web service specifications. By the time IBM releases its Web Services products commercially, some (perhaps most) of the new protocols will change to accommodate this process.

This announcement further confirms IBM's commitment to the Web service model, and further strengthens the company's position as a co-leader with Microsoft in Web service technology. However, these new IBM tools preview technology to come, so enterprises should wait until they are commercially available before applying them to real-world purposes.

Analytical Sources: Massimo Pezzini and Yefim Natis, Application Integration and Middleware Strategies

Written by Terry Allan Hicks, gartner.com

Need to Know: Reference Material and Recommended Reading

- "WebSphere Software Platform: The State of the Union" (P-14-7743). The WebSphere Software Platform is more a marketing tool than a technical architecture, even though IBM provides a consistent degree of architectural coherence and technical integration

between the component parts, and will likely deliver greater convergence in the future.
By Massimo Pezzini

- “Microsoft's Web Services: A 'Trojan Horse'” (SPA-14-5560). Microsoft's primary business focus is on Web service applications. Infrastructure is necessary for applications to succeed, but Microsoft views the applications as a potential major revenue source. **By Yefim Natis and David Smith**

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