

Sun's Portal Server Regains Momentum

Ray Valdes, David Mitchell Smith, Yefim V. Natis, Gene Phifer

The upcoming release of Sun ONE Portal Server 6.0 should raise the product's visibility in a crowded market. Prospective customers should take a closer look at Sun's offering.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Event

On 3 June 2002, Sun Microsystems announced Sun ONE Portal Server 6.0, formerly iPlanet Portal Server. Product enhancements include role-based user access management and a scalable repository for user profiles (a result of integrating Sun ONE Identity Server and Directory Server). Portal Server 6.0 also adds support for Java 2 Enterprise Edition (J2EE) application servers from BEA Systems and IBM, and for Windows and Linux operating systems (OSs).

Analysis

This announcement provides Sun's portal product with some important points of differentiation. Integrating Identity and Directory servers increases Sun ONE's value proposition in an area that will prove key to Web services. Sun also announced earlier its pending bundling of the Directory, Identity and J2EE platform servers into the forthcoming Solaris 9. Sun's portal is thus positioned as both a stand-alone solution and a component of the broader Sun ONE application platform suite.

Marketed a relatively long time under the iPlanet name, Portal Server 6 has accumulated a solid track record. However, since mid-2001, the product has struggled to maintain visibility in a market crowded with credible offerings from pure-play vendors such as Epicentric and Plumtree Software and from industry giants such as BEA, Computer Associates International, IBM, Oracle, PeopleSoft and SAP.

Sun's upcoming support for multiple application servers and OSs differentiates it from large infrastructure players, such as BEA, IBM and Oracle, that view portals as part of a lock-in strategy. Combined with Sun's recent announcement to bundle its application server with its OS, the bold move of supporting other application servers accepts that Sun's application server has lost ground in a maturing market and attempts to change the rules of engagement. However, Sun's time line will allow competitors to respond. Sun still has time to back out if changing market conditions favor a conventional lock-in strategy; however, Gartner views this outcome as unlikely.

Overall this move will benefit Sun by maintaining Sun ONE Portal Server's competitive status in a crowded market — although it does not provide it with a clear advantage except in the differentiators noted earlier. Competitors need to bulk up their portal offerings with additional bundled industrial-strength feature clusters. Sun portal customers should welcome the added value although prices will likely rise. Prospective portal customers should give a second look to Sun's offering.

Analytical Sources: Ray Valdes, David Smith, Gene Phifer and Yefim Natis, Gartner Research

Recommended Reading and Related Research

- "Big Change Evident in 2H02 Horizontal Portal Product MQ" (M-16-3524). There's has been a major power shift of power in the horizontal portal product market. **By Gene Phifer, Ray Valdes and Yefim Natis**
- "Portals: A Key Source for the Smart Enterprise Suite Market" (SPA-16-2749). Portals will become one of the key root technologies in the smart enterprise suite market. **By Gene Phifer**

(You may need to sign in or be a Gartner client to access all of this content.)

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS

Corporate Headquarters
56 Top Gallant Road
Stamford, CT 06902-7700
U.S.A.
+1 203 964 0096

European Headquarters
Tamesis
The Glanty
Egham
Surrey, TW20 9AW
UNITED KINGDOM
+44 1784 431611

Asia/Pacific Headquarters
Level 7, 40 Miller Street
North Sydney
New South Wales 2060
AUSTRALIA
+61 2 9459 4600

Latin America Headquarters
Av. das Nações Unidas 12.551
9 andar—WTC
04578-903 São Paulo SP
BRAZIL
+55 11 3443 1509