

WS-Security Takes Good Step Toward Being Web Service Standard

Ray Wagner

The Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards (OASIS) will oversee the Web Services Security (WS-Security) specification and won't charge royalties. A good step toward standards, but challenges remain.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Event

On 27 June 2002, IBM, Microsoft and VeriSign announced they will submit the latest version of the WS-Security specification to OASIS for development. WS-Security allows systems to interoperate in a platform- and language-neutral manner. Baltimore Technologies, BEA Systems, Cisco Systems, Documentum, Entrust, Intel, IONA Technologies, Netegrity, Novell, Oblix, OpenNetwork, RSA Security, SAP, Sun Microsystems and Systinet have all said they will participate in the OASIS development effort.

Analysis

Gartner believes this is a strong step toward making WS-Security an industry standard. The IBM/Microsoft/VeriSign alliance will make WS-Security royalty-free, a step that boosts its chances of becoming a standard. The participation of competitors and industry heavyweights such as BEA, Cisco and Sun also indicates an understanding of, and support for, standardized security mechanisms within Web services. Gartner urges all participants to continue cooperation on such standards.

Gartner cautions enterprises, however, that Web services have important security issues that remain unresolved. Proposed Web service security mechanisms highly depend on the distribution of digital certificates and on the underlying trust that supports their use. Credentials will be available from many different sources, including enterprises' own products, and "meta-trust" issues remain. The lack of any guaranteed level of trust between enterprise Web service deployments will represent a major stumbling block to widespread deployment beyond the enterprise. This issue has slowed the acceptance of public key infrastructure for years and must be resolved for Web services to become ubiquitous beyond enterprise boundaries.

Analytical Source: Raymond Wagner, Gartner Research

Recommended Reading and Related Research

- "WS-I Rejects Sun, Fires First Shot in Web Standards War" (FT-16-3749). The Web Services Interoperability Organization's (WS-I's) refusal of Sun's bid to become a founding member threatens future vendor cooperation on industry standards. **By Daryl Plummer, David Smith, Massimo Pezzini and Yefim Natis**
- "Sun's New ID Management Line Shows Promise" (FT-15-8855). Sun Microsystems' release of its first Liberty Alliance-related identity management products is good, but more real-world technology and standards are required.. **By David Smith and Daryl Plummer**

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