

Microsoft's Open-Source Wiki Tools Target Developers

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Microsoft's new open-source wiki collaboration tool, FlexWiki, is not yet ready for strategic implementations.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Event

On 28 September 2004, Microsoft introduced a Web-based Wiki authoring tool, called FlexWiki, based on its .NET platform. Microsoft has released the source code for FlexWiki to developers and customers as part of the Shared Source initiative.

Analysis

FlexWiki — Microsoft's third open-source release in 2004 — is further evidence of the company's increasingly sophisticated response to the threat from the open-source community.

Making open-source applications available for .NET will enable Microsoft to elicit interest from developers, who may otherwise be enticed by the ongoing attention to Java, PHP and Perl (Practical Extraction and Reporting Language), which dominate open-source development today. FlexWiki should also help to soften Microsoft's anti-open-source image, and enable the company to gain deep insights into a key open-source issue: the trade-off between the benefits of greater developer and user-community engagement and the drawbacks of decreased control over intellectual property. Gartner believes these issues are driving Microsoft's open-source efforts.

Wikis — "electronic blackboards" that enable groups of users to collaborate easily on online documents — are receiving increased attention from enterprises. Despite this interest, FlexWiki will likely not achieve mainstream adoption, though it may appeal to a minority of users who want to experiment with wikis but are more comfortable with .NET and with Microsoft's backing.

Recommendations: Experiment with open-source wiki tools such as FlexWiki, but wait for supported tools for high-risk strategic activities.

Analytical Sources: Nikos Drakos and Regina Casonato, Gartner Research

Recommended Reading and Related Research

- "Wikis Can Improve Collaborative Work and Knowledge Sharing" — Wikis offer powerful collaborative publishing tools, but they do have limitations. **By Nikos Drakos, Alexander Linden, Martin Reynolds and Mark Raskino**
- "Apply the Knowledge Gained From Building a 'Wiki'" — Three Gartner analysts' personal experience should help you get the most out of this highly touted collaborative technology. **By Betsy Burton, Rita Knox and Nikos Drakos**

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