

Google's Web Accelerator Not a Necessary Feature for Many

Allen Weiner

Google's Web Accelerator helps speed searches for broadband users, but it has limited appeal because it will not download rich files faster. Look for upcoming Web portal peer-to-peer networks to speed big-file downloads.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Event

On 5 May 2005, Google released a beta version of Web Accelerator, a free browser plug-in that speeds Web surfing. It can be used with Internet Explorer 5.5 and above or Firefox 1.0 on Windows 2000 or XP.

Analysis

Web accelerators were hot topics years ago, when many users were surfing the Web via dial-up connections. Today, with the popularity of broadband options, an increasing number of users will not find a Web accelerator compelling, and they cannot speed downloading of rich media files, such as large, network-clogging music and video files.

Google Web Accelerator takes advantage of Google's network of servers as well as its proprietary company research of consumers' Web behavior and click patterns. This information is used to facilitate "pre-fetching" — grabbing frequently used Web pages before a user actually requests them. To accomplish this, some records of users' search behavior are cached on the users' computers, and some are stored with Google. While this raises concerns among privacy experts, who see potential for abuse, Google states that it is clear about its privacy policy, which goes into detail about how the accelerator works and offers tips on how a user can continually clear his cache to avoid any privacy infringement.

Web Accelerator is not a major competitive force in Google's battle for market leadership as a search provider. Neither Microsoft nor Yahoo will likely respond with similar products. For most consumer Internet users, Web accelerators are more of a "nice to have" option than a "must have" feature.

Recommendations

Web Portal Providers: Do not view this as a major competitive threat at this point. Because AOL, MSN and Yahoo plan to build closed peer-to-peer networks based on instant messaging that will offer fast file transfer, Web accelerators are unlikely to increase the value of the service.

Web Consumers: Recognize that Google's Web Accelerator offers little threat to security or privacy concerns because of Google's explicit privacy policy.

Analytical Source: Allen Weiner, Gartner Research

Recommended Reading and Related Research

- "Leading Search Providers Add Desktop Search Capabilities" (<https://www.gartner2.com/qa/qa-0105-0003.asp>) — All the major desktop search providers are battling for consumers, which may lead to more features and better technologies. **By Allen Weiner**
- "As Search Evolves, Media Titans Look to Gain Competitive Edge" (<http://www.gartner2.com/rpt/rpt-1004-0096.asp>) — As search becomes the favored way to find content, new opportunities and threats will arise for search providers. **By Allen Weiner**

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