

## Sun/Google Collaboration Is Too Little, Too Soon

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Sun Microsystems and Google will collaborate on offering Google's toolbar in the Java Runtime Environment (JRE). The application world is changing, but this joint effort fails to change much of anything.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

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### Event

On 4 October 2005, Sun announced its intention to distribute the Google Toolbar as an option in its JRE. Google said it is also looking at potentially promoting and enhancing the OpenOffice productivity suite and "exploring other related areas of collaboration."

### Analysis

Adding the Google Toolbar to Sun's JRE benefits both firms, letting each leverage the other's distribution channels and market presence. But the announcement fails to deliver significant customer benefits, which we had expected based on intimations in Sun President and COO Jonathan Schwartz's blog (<http://blogs.sun.com/jonathan>). The announcement did not include any form of a "Google Office" service or any commitment by Google to distribute and exploit StarOffice (OpenOffice). The only new development is the Toolbar-JRE distribution deal.

We believe that more could potentially have come of this collaboration: For Sun, this deal seems centered on driving Java usage. But Google has not committed to making a significant move toward Java on the desktop. (Google's catchy user interfaces in Gmail, Google Maps and Google Select are built in AJAX; the term "AJAX" is a contraction of "Asynchronous JavaScript + XML.") Google may have been driving to obtain more support from Sun for a set of AJAX-based, lighter-weight "Office"-like tools, rather than the much heavier-weight StarOffice technologies. We believe that Sun and Google weren't able to get what they really wanted; hence, the "non-announcement."

Google's specific interests deserve further analysis. There is a broader trend among vendors offering Office-like, rich-but-lightweight desktop tools, delivered as services. Yahoo's new mail client is based on AJAX, as are [www.writely.com](http://www.writely.com)'s collaborative editor (with spell checking), Google's Gmail and Maps applications, and MSN's upcoming, unofficially unannounced work on a new Hotmail client (see <http://spaces.msn.com/members/mailcall/>). Before year-end 2006, at least two vendors (such as Yahoo, Google and Microsoft) will offer lightweight, office-like Web-based tools that will eventually undermine usage of heavyweight office suites like Microsoft Office (0.8 probability). IT departments will exploit this new class of technology, even as they continue to buy, install and integrate Microsoft Office.

**Recommendation:** Start evaluating how and when to exploit lighter-weight, Internet-sourced "office" tools like those from Google, [www.writely.com](http://www.writely.com), Yahoo and others. They are unlikely to replace heavyweight office suites that require local installations, but they will serve as intermittently used temporary alternatives to these suites.

**Analytical Sources:** Tom Austin, Thomas Eid, Michael Silver, Daryl Plummer and David Smith, Gartner Research

### Recommended Reading and Related Research

- "The Workplace Application Classification Framework" — Gartner's Workplace Application Classification Framework is based on four key application classes, which every enterprise should integrate into its strategic thinking and planning methodology. **By Tom Austin**
- "Eight Trends Will Change the Role of the IT Organization" — Diminishing returns from automation and other trends will make these efforts lose precedence to augmenting the performance of knowledge workers. **By Tom Austin**

(You may need to sign in or be a Gartner client to access the documents referenced in this First Take.)

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