

Adobe Aims for Enterprise Collaboration, but Challenges Loom

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With the acquisition of instant-messaging vendor Antepo, Adobe will add IM capabilities to its Acrobat software portfolio, further augmenting its content creation services with collaboration elements.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Event

On 31 January 2007, Adobe announced the acquisition of Antepo, an enterprise instant messaging (IM) company with presence capabilities. The Antepo technologies will be integrated into the Adobe Acrobat software family, which includes Acrobat Professional and Acrobat Connect.

Analysis

Adobe intends to offer a collaboration suite, adding IM and presence capabilities to its portfolio through the Antepo acquisition. With Antepo, Adobe gains a presence engine which could potentially be tied to IP telephony infrastructure, federates with multiple IM networks and runs on Windows and Linux. Although Adobe's strength has been in the authoring and publishing tools market, enterprise-level collaboration will require a more direct and focused sales effort. Adobe's acquisition of Macromedia resulted in rebranding Breeze (Macromedia's Web conferencing product) to Adobe Acrobat Connect, and brought the first wave of real-time collaboration capabilities to integrate into its document-centric collaboration strategy. This "buy versus build" approach of gaining collaboration components can potentially move Adobe more quickly into the enterprise market.

Adobe plans to embed IM and presence capabilities into its product line, particularly in Acrobat, and ultimately create links to Microsoft and IBM via Antepo's dual protocol (XMPP and SIP/SIMPLE) IM and presence platform. Extending multiple points of presence into its document-centric collaboration framework will enable Adobe to support contextual collaboration capabilities regardless of the enterprise infrastructure. Presence information from team members could be surfaced in a shared document context with the ability to launch a Web meeting.

Adobe faces the challenge of finding a niche where it can add value to collaboration capabilities from incumbents such as Microsoft and IBM, where Adobe's document-centric collaboration can be used with Windows SharePoint Services or IBM Lotus QuickPlace (Quickr). In addition, Adobe will have to integrate Antepo technology into the Acrobat framework and maintain support for Antepo customers. Adobe must also continue to improve its enterprise focus in sales and marketing efforts outside of its traditional creative-professionals customer base.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Antepo customers on the current platform don't have to upgrade now, but should ask about Adobe's plans for support and details regarding integration plans for the product.
- Enterprises should ask Adobe to share how it plans to incorporate Antepo product features into existing and future Adobe products.

RECOMMENDED READING

- "Adobe Boosts Market Position With Acrobat 8 Capabilities" — Acrobat 8 expands Acrobat's historic role as a creative desktop tool player with an archive format and universal distribution medium via Acrobat, Adobe Reader and PDF. **By Lou Latham, Toby Bell and Jeffrey Mann**

- "Adobe Makes a Strong Play in the EDRM Market" — Adobe's new software and services offerings will have a strong competitive advantage in the enterprise digital rights management market. **By Eric Ouellet and Ray Wagner**

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