

Sun Delivers First Open-Source Java EE 5 Application Server

Yefim V. Natis, Mark Driver

Sun and the GlassFish open-source community have delivered the first production-scale open-source Java EE 5 application server. This challenges the dominance of market leaders like Red Hat and IBM.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Event

On 17 September 2007, Sun and the GlassFish community announced the availability of GlassFish V2, the open-source Java Platform, Enterprise Edition (Java EE) 5 application server, and the commercially supported Sun Java System Application Server (SJSAS) 9.1.

Analysis

The GlassFish community is the first open-source project to deliver production-class Java EE 5 compliance, beating the market leader Red Hat JBoss and Apache Geronimo. Sun is the second global software infrastructure vendor to deliver a production-scale Java EE 5-compliant application server (BEA Systems was first). This announcement is likely to put new pressure on Sun's competitors to complete their slow-to-arrive standard upgrade of Java EE products.

GlassFish is available as a "use at your own risk" download. Sun's SJSAS is a certified, supported and indemnified offering from GlassFish, and is available by subscription or as a perpetual license. Sun is adopting Red Hat's successful dual-offering business model. Both companies heavily sponsor their open-source communities (GlassFish and JBoss.org, respectively), offer free use-at-your-own-risk open-source technology and a separate supported subscription-priced distribution. IBM WebSphere Community Edition and Apache Geronimo have a similar relationship. This approach has emerged as the workable commercial model for open-source software, meeting both the business needs of the vendors and the cultural needs of the communities. Sun makes a progressive step by adopting this model.

Sun trails the leaders in the application infrastructure markets and hopes to capitalize on its new standards leadership to advance on its competitors. It offers many differentiators including lower support prices, leading standards support, use of GlassFish as the standard Java EE reference implementation, some advanced technology features (such as clustering, remote management and deep integration with Microsoft .NET 3.0), a broad overall technology offering and a large Solaris installed base. But these would not be sufficient without an effective business and marketing strategy in the application infrastructure markets and convincing production-user testimonials — most of which are still to be demonstrated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Enterprises using or considering enterprise-class Java frameworks:** Examine the new Sun products as promising alternatives to the current open-source Java EE products. But acknowledge the limited industry production experience with these products and exercise some caution in the short term. Expect Red Hat, Apache and IBM to rush their Java EE 5-compliant releases to market, to mitigate Sun's challenge.

RECOMMENDED READING

- "Key Issues for Platform Middleware" — Gartner research on platform middleware will help users find their way as this market enters a tumultuous phase in which new technologies, business models and go-to-market strategies are introduced. **By Massimo Pezzini and Yefim Natis**
- "Magic Quadrant for Application Infrastructure for New Service-Oriented Business Application Projects, 2Q07" — This research examines the ability of leading application

infrastructure vendors to single-handedly support projects that require a complex collection of capabilities in runtime-enabling technologies and development tools. **By Yefim Natis and others**

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

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS

Corporate Headquarters

56 Top Gallant Road
Stamford, CT 06902-7700
U.S.A.
+1 203 964 0096

European Headquarters

Tamesis
The Glanty
Egham
Surrey, TW20 9AW
UNITED KINGDOM
+44 1784 431611

Asia/Pacific Headquarters

Gartner Australasia Pty. Ltd.
Level 9, 141 Walker Street
North Sydney
New South Wales 2060
AUSTRALIA
+61 2 9459 4600

Japan Headquarters

Gartner Japan Ltd.
Aobadai Hills, 6F
7-7, Aobadai, 4-chome
Meguro-ku, Tokyo 153-0042
JAPAN
+81 3 3481 3670

Latin America Headquarters

Gartner do Brazil
Av. das Nações Unidas, 12551
9º andar—World Trade Center
04578-903—São Paulo SP
BRAZIL
+55 11 3443 1509