

GigaSpaces Focuses on Cloud-Enabled XTP With XAP 7.0

Massimo Pezzini

GigaSpaces' eXtreme Application Platform 7.0 is one of the first industry examples of a cloud-enabled, extreme transaction processing platform. It gives GigaSpaces a technology advantage over IBM, Microsoft and Oracle.

Event

On 14 July 2009, GigaSpaces, a provider of application middleware platforms, announced the launch of eXtreme Application Platform (XAP) 7.0.

Analysis

Following a dramatic downsizing and a change of top management, GigaSpaces has announced a new, significantly revamped version of its extreme transaction processing platform (XTPP). XAP combines industry standards and open-source technology including JavaSpaces, Spring and elements of Java Platform, Enterprise Edition (Java EE). Since its inception, XAP has provided elastic scalability and transaction support enabled by a JavaSpaces-based distributed caching platform (DCP). An installed base of some 80 to 100 high-profile customers use these capabilities in production. Version 7 introduces several technical improvements aimed at better supporting cloud deployments, including:

- Full service-level-agreement-driven autoscaling of the platform — now extended to a Java EE Web container (currently Jetty, though others will be added)
- New administration application programming interfaces, extending the XAP management tooling, that enable integration with third-party monitoring environments and make it possible for XAP applications to “automanage” themselves (for example, triggering a new virtual machine in a cloud environment to increase processing capacity)
- Significant performance improvement and a simplified programming model for multicore processor environments
- Metadata-driven, multitenancy support for cloud deployments
- Improved integration with the Amazon Elastic Compute Cloud (EC2)

GigaSpaces' progressive and well-established support for popular standards like Spring and parts of Java EE is already helping lower users' concerns about use of an “unusual” platform. More user support will likely come from the planned adoption of OSGi Alliance standards in future versions. The full integration of Jetty is a notable new marketing proposition that can appeal to mainstream enterprises looking for ways to non-intrusively scale up and down Java ServerPages/Servlet applications. This paves the way for more strategic adoption of XAP full capabilities in these accounts. The core DCP, the cloud deployment options and the new multitenancy capabilities are likely to appeal to independent software vendors, system integrators (SIs) and leading-edge organizations looking for new technology opportunities for business diversification.

Other vendors, including Oracle and IBM, plan to extend their DCPs with OSGi, Spring and Java EE elements. But none has yet architected a full cloud-enabled XTPP like GigaSpaces. This gives the company at least a year's competitive advantage on the technology front. GigaSpaces' main challenge is to capitalize on this advantage before large vendors roll out their improved XTPP offerings. Therefore, GigaSpaces needs to complete its company restructuring by rapidly establishing a network of channel partners to build sales momentum, listing high-profile alliances with system vendors or SIs to gain the confidence of risk-averse companies, and developing an ecosystem of partners providing application solutions and add-on tools to increase the appeal of XAP for users looking for packaged solutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

GigaSpaces users

- Evaluate whether the new capabilities, especially the performance improvements and enhanced management features, can provide concrete benefits for you before upgrading to XAP 7.0.

Mainstream users

- Look at the new Web container auto-scaling capability as an opportunity for reducing costs and improving availability and scalability of established Web/JSP/Servlet-based applications, especially if the impact on these applications is likely to be minimal.

Leading-edge organizations

- Evaluate whether XAP 7.0 adoption can help you design breakthrough new applications with quick returns on investment in areas such as online gaming, e-commerce, software as a service and others where scalability, availability, rapid application development and cloud support are critical for success. But be aware of GigaSpaces' limited support capabilities in some regions.

RECOMMENDED READING

- "Distributed Caching Platforms Are Enabling Technology for Twenty-First Century Computing" — Distributed caching platforms remain leading-edge technology, but mass adoption will come from bundling into multiple software products. **By Massimo Pezzini**
- "Emerging Technology Analysis: Extreme Transaction-Processing Platforms, Application Infrastructure" — XTPPs are of interest to vendors that operate in the platform middleware market because the vendors can achieve diversification through premium products in this potentially highly lucrative segment. **By Fabrizio Biscotti and Massimo Pezzini**

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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