

Adobe's New Collaboration Services Can Enhance Applications

Tom Austin, Gene Phifer, Eric Knipp

Adobe's LiveCycle Collaboration Service will allow application developers to make enterprise applications more valuable by embedding real-time collaboration functions that are Flash-based and hosted by Adobe cloud services.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Event

On 5 October 2009, Adobe Systems announced LiveCycle Enterprise Suite 2. The announcement included the launch of LiveCycle Collaboration Service (LCCS), a hosted set of real-time, multiuser services that developers and enterprises can integrate into new or existing Flash-based rich internet applications (RIAs). The services include functions such as chat, whiteboarding, video sharing and "room rosters."

Analysis

Adobe will likely become the first vendor to offer cloud-based component collaboration services that can be integrated into business applications. For example, an enterprise could create a training tool for sales agents where the students act as customers to help each other improve skills for customer interaction and upselling. Rosetta Stone's use of LCCS to deliver online classrooms and multiplayer games in the new "social" version of its application shows what enterprises can accomplish with LCCS and some creativity (see http://blogs.adobe.com/collabmethods/2009/07/rosetta_stone_announces_totale.html).

LCCS is part of the LiveCycle family; LiveCycle is a business process management suite (BPMS) that focuses on e-forms and document-centric workflow. But LCCS's use cases and benefits are independent of whether the enterprise uses the rest of LiveCycle. LCCS integrates with Flash and Adobe's broader tools for building RIAs. (Adobe also markets LCCS under the Adobe Flash Platform Services brand targeted at Flash developers.) Thus, developers can use LCCS in any application on any platform supporting Flash, regardless of whether the application uses other LiveCycle capabilities.

LCCS extends the usefulness of the Flash platform by simplifying the inclusion of various collaboration services. The integration with LiveCycle also attempts to expand the usefulness and scope of document-centric workflow applications. Adobe's strategy is to make the Flash platform stickier with complements like LCCS in the hope of creating stronger barriers against imitation by competitors.

Challenges: Adobe will need to sharpen its marketing messages. Flash users may miss the value of LCCS because it is tied to LiveCycle, and LiveCycle customers may miss the value because the product family is thought of as a high-touch workflow tool. LCCS is just one of several components in the LiveCycle announcement and so did not receive as much attention as it could have.

LCCS is limited to the Flash environment. While Flash is a strong RIA platform with broad market penetration, it is not the only RIA platform (Microsoft Silverlight is another).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Application Managers:

- Evaluate LCCS as a Flash-based alternative to in-house collaboration services.
- Work with developers to find creative ways to enhance enterprise applications with LCCS.

RECOMMENDED READING

- "Magic Quadrant for Business Process Management Suites"— The position of vendors in the 2009 BPMS Magic Quadrant has changed more than usual because we have altered one of the key evaluation criteria from product capabilities to four use cases that the products support. **By Janelle Hill and others**
- "MarketScope for Ajax Technology and RIA Platforms"— The focus of buyers in this market is on technology, despite Gartner's long-standing advice that success in presentation-oriented development projects results more from a user-centered design process than from adding a new layer of technology. **By Ray Valdes**

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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