Market Roundup

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Redmond Feels the Warmth of a LAMP

By Jim Balderston

According to news reports, Microsoft is poised to release a version of SQL Server called SQL Server Express that would allow tables and files to be stored on a Web site. The new release is apparently designed to allow developers to do more complex computing functions using Visual Studio 2005. Microsoft officials were quoted as saying that the new offering would have "LAMP-like capability to quickly build a Web site." Linux, Apache MySQL Perl/Python/PHP (LAMP) is an open source stack that allows developers to build on top of it to provide Web services. Microsoft is also offering Visual Studio 2005 Express for $49 while also looking at ways to give the product away as well. SQL Server Express will be offered for free.

IBM should feel a small amount of pride due to the fact that the company coined (and minted) the idea that products designed for quicker adoption be tagged with the "Express" label. In IBM's case, Express products are designed to be adopted by SMBs seeking enterprise-class software at a price that meets an SMB budget. To date, IBM has been successful in providing just that while giving the growing SMB a migration path to the enterprise-class offerings that come without the "Express" label. It is a seamless and relatively painless transition, and one that IBM believes will provide ample revenue in the coming years.

But unlike Microsoft, IBM is investing in LAMP and its component parts. While Microsoft hopes that offering a free, lightweight version of SQL server will attract developers that would otherwise look at the LAMP stack, we have to wonder if this is merely posing for the cameras. The open source development gestalt is not so much about the product produced as it is about the means by which a product comes to life. Open source development threatens traditional software development firms like Microsoft, which historically has been very aggressive in protecting its software franchise while limiting the amount of freelance work produced on top of its code base that is done without a hefty licensing fee. Essentially, Redmond is fighting not a different option of operating system choice but an entirely different means by which an operating environment is brought to market. In this move, as Microsoft offers a lightweight, free development opportunity, we see one and one only salient fact. LAMP and open source have made an impact and Redmond is paying attention.

Adventures in Collaboration: Documentum eRoom Enterprise 7.3

By Clay Ryder

EMC has announced EMC Documentum eRoom Enterprise 7.3, which is focused on improving business process efficiencies to enhance organizations' decision-making processes. This latest release allows teams to model their business processes within an easy-to-use environment and eliminates barriers involved with building dynamic, team-based applications. It provides automated dashboard capabilities across multiple active project workspaces and leverages the EMC Documentum enterprise content management platform to ensure that content generated adheres to compliance controls and can be seamlessly shared with other Documentum applications. Integration with Instant Messaging provides integrated realtime communication to decrease the time-to-decision interval. Content created or changed in the EMC Documentum Content Server can be automatically synchronized through linked folders that notify project teams of content changes. Users can also access the EMC Documentum

Enterprise Content Integration Services to create search queries across all relevant information sources. New security capabilities support selective access to data thus providing greater flexibility in offering data access to third parties while protecting proprietary data. EMC Documentum eRoom Enterprise 7.3 is immediately available in English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Japanese, and Korean. EMC Documentum eRoom collaborative suite is also supported by EMC's new value-added software services including Designated Support Engineer, providing a single, product-specific support contact and priority case handling; Onsite Support Engineer, augmenting the customer's IT staff with a designated, onsite, product-specific resource; and Priority Onsite Support, delivering onsite technical support at the customer's discretion.

Over the past couple or so years EMC has been on a buying spree, snapping up software companies at continuing clip, and purchasing some which to many may have seemed at best tangentially related to EMC's core business. However, this announcement demonstrates once again the wisdom and strategic nature of EMC's transformation beyond that of being an iconoclastic big storage vendor. The growing integration and leverage of capabilities offered by the formerly disparate pieces of EMC's software puzzle is bringing some new and interesting opportunities not only to users but to EMC as well. Witness this latest release, now leveraging the Document Content Server, Instant Messaging, and eRoom, among other technologies, to create a more realtime, event-driven, collaborative environment, which incidentally also features a dashboard metaphor for rapid visual assessment of the state of affairs. Of course, as all this collaboration and information sharing grows, so does the demand for storing the information, which feeds quite nicely back into EMC's historic business of storage solutions.

The stated intent of integration with Microsoft Office at some point next year we believe also holds promise in simplifying the collaborative process. Office is the native working environment for many information workers and although there are collaborative offerings, such as SharePoint, too many of these workers still toil in a manual and serial environment. Bringing collaboration and document management into this familiar context should make it easier for organizations to embrace a more strategic approach to collaboration while maintaining important corporate governance policies, and being able to manage the resulting collaborative output. Overall, we are encouraged by EMC's continuing software machinations, and look with keen interest as to what is coming down the pike next.

WiFi for the Masses

By Jim Balderston

The city of San Francisco announced this week that it intends to deploy a city-wide high-speed wireless network that would be either free or less expensive than commercially available alternatives and is inviting both for-profit and non-profit vendors to bid on the project based on recently released city guidelines. As part of the project, computer companies like Dell have pledged to provide thousands of computers. San Francisco already has a wireless hotspot in the city's Union Square area, one frequented by tourists and out-of-towners on shopping trips. Cities like Philadelphia are already underway on projects to provide free or inexpensive citywide wireless, and San Francisco is the latest city to contemplate following suit. San Francisco already enjoys a number two spot on a list of U.S. cities having free wireless provided by independent establishments within their walls, rating only behind Seattle.

Since San Francisco is a little more than a third the size of Philadelphia in square mileage, one might assume that wiring (or not wiring) the city would be a less arduous task than doing so in the City of Brotherly Love. But given San Francisco topography, we would expect that the engineering feat may be a little more involved, as getting relatively low-power wireless signals into every nook and cranny of the city's hilly geography will present some interesting — but doable — challenges. Of course, the city will also have to overcome staunch opposition from both cable franchisees and the entrenched telephone service providers.

But San Francisco has a quirky past when it comes to municipal utilities and the like, one that would be continued if indeed the city goes ahead with municipal wireless service. San Francisco was one of the first U.S. cities to take over what were then dozens of private transit firms, be they cable cars, trolleys, or trains. As many of these private

concerns failed economically the city scooped them up and consolidated them into a citywide system that relies on substantial city subsidies to run each fiscal year. The city also runs its own water system, piping water from its Hetch Hetchy reservoir in the Sierras right next to Yosemite Valley. Electricity generated at the dam powers both the city's transit system and San Francisco International Airport. Given these realities, the idea that the city would pursue a city-run broadband wireless network is consistent historically with its past actions and present holdings. It also makes sense given the city's locale on the Northern edge of Silicon Valley, and home to thousands of relatively geeky and wired inhabitants. We also expect that success of initiatives like those underway in San Francisco and Philadelphia will have substantial impact on the hundreds of smaller communities running their own water and electrical systems who are waiting for the private sector providers to find them among the corn and wheat fields of smalltown America. We would not be the least bit surprised if Smallville, Iowa someday surpasses San Francisco and Seattle as the place with the highest percentage of citizens with access to broadband as small towns continue their own traditions of municipally supplied essentials of modern life.

ICANN Can't Win

By *Susan Dietz*

First proposed five years ago, hotly debated for the last eighteen months, and now delayed at the last minute, ICM Registry's application to ICANN for an .xxx domain suffix is facing an uncertain future. When Florida-based ICM Registry first applied to ICANN for .xxx in 2000, the application was denied. However, due to political pressure, the application was later accepted for review. Now, mere days before final approval of .xxx, an apparently schizophrenic Washington D.C. has halted the process because it claims there needs to be more time to address public and government concerns. Reportedly, the United States isn't the only government to have expressed concerns about establishing a "pornography zone" on the Internet. However, there is no easily accessed public record of the protesting governments, nor is there any mention of what their specific concerns are. Nonetheless, the .xxx domain remains in limbo, for the time being.

Pollsters exploring the habits of Web surfers report that one in four say they visit a pornography site each day. We suspect those numbers are much lower than the reality, as people may be reluctant to tell strangers that they like to look at porn. But even with those reported figures, and the fact there are millions of porn sites on the Internet, the idea that creating an .xxx domain would somehow "encourage" pornography or legitimize it seems well past closing the barn door after the cows have left. Whether or not pornography offends individuals, it is something that has existed in one fashion or another since the beginning of recorded history. It's not new, and it is here to stay, like it or not.

There is little argument against protecting children — and adults who wish no contact with pornography — and there shouldn't be. But since filtering programs are not a particularly effective way of keeping sensitive eyes away from such material, an all-exclusive .xxx domain would make the task of screening off that portion of the Web much easier. As it is now, the .xxx domain would remain a voluntary choice for pornography providers, something that makes its implementation much less attractive. If some sort of economic incentive were placed in front of porn vendors, perhaps then a wholesale migration to the .xxx domain could be accomplished, thereby providing a more effective way to shelter those that should not or do not wish to view such material. Currently the Internet has the equivalent of adult bookstores setting up shop next to elementary schools, with no laws or incentives to make them move. Some countries are much more in favor of regulating rather than removing the sex industry within their borders and perceive an .xxx domain as a positive step toward said regulation. In that context, the United States' continued control of ICANN and its unilateral veto of the .xxx domain could be construed as heavy-handed and counter-productive to the wishes of other countries that may recognize that pornography and erotica will make their way into consumers' hands one way or the other, as they always have in the past. Recognizing and responding to that reality in a reasonable way may well do more to prevent inadvertent exposure to inappropriate material than simply saying it shouldn't exist.