IBM's Shareware that Could Be Worth Millions

By James Hobart, President, Classic System Solutions

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Building enterprise frameworks has been an elusive goal seldom achieved in many organizations. IBM has assembled a consortium and is trying a novel approach for solving this problem with its San Francisco project. The consortium will share the high cost and risk associated with developing enterprise distributed object frameworks across over 200 software vendors and leading edge corporations. Recently, IBM announced the first deliverable code to emerge from its San Francisco project. The ambitious initiative, introduced last year, is designed to provide standard Java application frameworks that can be used to build multi-platform line-of-business applications. With initial deliverables out of the way, the consortium will focus on delivering business components for warehouse management, order management, accounts receivable, and accounts payable.

San Francisco uses Java to create business process components upon which business applications can be developed. Although still in its infancy, the project is already releasing a San Francisco Developer's Kit 1.1.0 to demonstrate the functionality of the frameworks and get feedback from the consortium members.

From a user interface perspective, this project is very exciting, as it will provide a robust object-oriented foundation of industrial strength objects on which to create robust enterprise desktop solutions. It is our hope that future projects which use the San Francisco frameworks will give developers more time to create world-class user interface designs, since a large percentage of the underlying business frameworks will be available as part of a well defined layered architecture.

IBM has priced the frameworks attractively. There is no cost to try out the frameworks and build applications. Instead, the final pricing is based on a percentage of revenues generated by the sale of application packages. This approach provides a relatively risk-free way to explore the frameworks with a large upside potential if you actually deploy an application.

If successful, we truly believe San Francisco will change the way that application packages and corporate enterprise solutions are developed. As vendors extend the frameworks for their specific vertical markets, it is very possible that corporate users will actually have a 'best of breed' option for choosing enterprise solutions rather the single source solutions which are dominant today.

About the author:

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