

NetSuite launches new business applications

ON-DEMAND business software solutions provider NetSuite is taking Software as a Service (SaaS) business applications for the mid-market to the next level.

With the launch of NetSuite Version 11.0, the software company is helping mid-sized companies profit from advanced features that go beyond customer relationship management functions.

Contrary to the on-premise business application architecture, SaaS is a software distribution model where service providers and software vendors host their applications on a network, typically the Internet, for easy access and collaboration by customers.

NetSuite Version 11.0 contains hundreds of new features, but three elements make the on-demand application stand out.

Said to be a first in an SaaS business application, Version 11.0 features an Ajax (Asynchronous JavaScript And XML)-powered interface that brings greater ease of use to areas such as reporting, scheduling and document management. The Ajax interface offers real-time dashboards with drag-and-drop personalisation as well as enhanced graphical report snapshots and trend graphs.

The second key element helps mid-market businesses to manage business processes. Called SuiteScript, this is a platform built on industry-standard JavaScript. Complex processes

can be automated using SuiteScript, giving growing businesses an extensible business management solution.

With Version 11.0, NetSuite has also added two mid-market vertical suites for mid-sized wholesale, distribution and services companies.

The Wholesale/Distribution Edition lets wholesale and distribution companies manage their entire business cycle, from lead generation through sales, warehouse and inventory management and shipping, with accounting support throughout.

The Services Company Edition helps consulting and professional services companies manage their clients, projects and business operations without having to invest in a computing infrastructure.

These announcements reflect NetSuite's business strategy, said Mr Zach Nelson (picture), the company's chief executive officer. Twenty per cent of NetSuite's customers worldwide are distributors and more than 2,000 of its customers are e-tailers. "It shows how important we believe in building vertical versions of business applications and we will continue in this direction," he said.

There is no extra charge for existing customers for the core features of NetSuite Version 11.0. It will be delivered to customers in phases, starting this month and continuing through June. — **ELAINE NG IN SAN FRANCISCO**



At a finger's touch

Personal information could be encoded and used to bring like-minded people together, says BT

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IN SIX years' time, your children could be entertained by video tiles in the bathroom, sitting in a playroom with wallpaper that changes appearance to promote feelings of happiness or calm, and interacting with smart toys that respond to their voice with matching emotions.

Those are some of the predictions from the futurology department at BT, formerly known as British Telecom. The communications solutions provider recently unveiled its Technology Timeline vision, predicting technological advances that would have an impact on our future, via a video conference hosted in the United Kingdom to journalists in Singapore and Hong Kong.

A key element in the future of communication technology is ambient intelligence, said Mr Ian Pearson, a futurologist at BT.

Ambient intelligence allows human beings to interact with intuitive interfaces that are embedded in the objects in their surroundings. Built on recent technologies that make use of ubiquitous computing and communication as well as intelligent user interfaces, the environment around us would be able to recognise and respond to our individual preferences and needs.

The architecture around us would be able to transform virtually, at the touch of a button, much like what we see with virtual reality today. Buildings could be made to look different through the use of sensor and radio frequency identification (RFID) chips, predicted Mr Pearson.

By 2015 to 2020, telematics – which refers to the use of computers and wireless telecommunications technologies to transmit data – would allow electronics to be printed onto the human skin and to connect to our nerve endings.

This kind of skin technology, said to be capable of data transfer at a rate of 2Mbps, would be able to transmit information about our personal preferences, such that shopping malls could cater to individual tastes.

Sensors and RFID chips could even be used as a matchmaking device. According to Mr Pearson, per-



A GLIMPSE INTO A BRIGHT FUTURE: BT's Ian Pearson is confident technology will change the way people socialise.

By 2012, children could be entertained by video tiles in the bathroom, sitting in a playroom with wallpaper that changes appearance to promote feelings of happiness or calm, and interacting with smart toys that respond to their voice.

— BT's futurology department

sonal information could be encoded and used to bring like-minded people together when they are in close proximity. These possibilities are not as far-fetched as some might believe, especially since sensor RFID and storage chips would be "dirt-cheap" in the near future, he added.

Said Mr Pearson: "Technology will enhance the way people interact and change the way people socialise and do things."

SHORTCUTS

NEW CITRIX SYSTEMS CALL CENTRE HERE

Access infrastructure solutions provider Citrix Systems has opened a call centre in Singapore to serve its 21,000 customers in the Pacific region, following the company's recent establishment of other dedicated customer facilities, including the Pacific Customer Care Centre and Asia Consultancy Services Practices, here.

The call centre, one of four major Citrix call centres worldwide, is the Asean headquarters for Citrix Systems.

SALESFORCE.COM TO OFFER ON-DEMAND APPLICATIONS FOR MOBILE DEVICES

On-demand customer relationship management specialist Salesforce.com is offering mobile applications with AppExchange Mobile, through its acquisition of Sendia Corp. With AppExchange Mobile, current and future AppExchange partners will be able to extend their on-


demand applications to most mobile devices with no extra development cost or complexity needed.

The AppExchange Mobile platform provides features for mobile development, including data transfer and support for a variety of handheld devices, wireless operating systems.

PLANS TO CREATE AN INDUSTRY-WIDE SPECIFICATION FOR INFORMATION SHARING

BMC Software, Fujitsu, HP and IBM have announced plans to create an interoperability specification that would enable customers to federate and access information from multi-vendor IT infrastructures.

The companies plan to submit a draft specification to an industry standards organisation later this year. They will collaborate to develop an open, industry-wide specification for sharing information between configuration management databases.



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