

IBM Has Versata for Setting the Rules in the WebSphere

Analysts: Sally Cusack and Steve Garone

IDC Opinion

What does IBM's partnership with Versata, Inc. (formerly known as Vision Software) offer customers in terms of value add when implementing an ebusiness strategy?

The recently announced partnership between IBM and Versata Inc. marries the strength of IBM's WebSphere application server solution with the flexibility of Versata's rules-based E-Business Automation System. In this flash, IDC reviews the recent announcement and the companies involved and speculates on the future of rules-based systems in ebusiness initiatives.

The Announcement: The Versata/IBM Relationship

Versata, Inc., based in Oakland, recently announced a strategic relationship with IBM to integrate Versata's E-Business Automation System with IBM's WebSphere Application Server Advanced Edition and WebSphere Studio products. The companies also announced that WebSphere Studio (which includes Visual Age for Java, Professional Edition) will be packaged with Versata Inc.'s E-Business Automation solution as well. The integrated product is scheduled for release in the first quarter of 2000.

The Vision Value Add

The Company and the Product

Versata Inc., a privately held company, has been selling software to the enterprise development community for almost five years. The company provides an E-Business Automation System, the focus of which is to allow customers to rapidly define, deploy, and evolve their software in today's highly dynamic ebusiness market. In today's business climate, time to market is at a premium.

Based on a distributed component-based, thin-client architecture, the Versata E-Business Automation System is compliant with the OMG's CORBA specification and EJB.

Based on a distributed component-based, thin-client architecture, the Versata E-Business Automation System is compliant with the Object Management Group's (OMG's) CORBA specification and Enterprise Java Beans (EJB). This allows organizations to create industry-standard, 100% Java components within the Versata environment.

Currently, Versata's E-Business Automation System is distributed via direct sales channels in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany. The company has also enlisted more than 200 Versata Internet Partners (called VIPs) and has signed 25 licensed distributors. Versata lists more than 200 customers around the world, with reference accounts that include ITT Fluid Technology, Hilton Hotels, and J.P. Morgan.

Versata's system architecture enables corporations to utilize declarative business rules to automatically deploy an ebusiness application.

Versata's system architecture enables corporations to utilize declarative business rules to automatically deploy an ebusiness application. Rules created within the Versata system can eliminate many time-consuming tasks. For example, a single business rule within the Versata's system is capable of creating several hundred lines of Java code. Additionally, once these business rules are created, they are reusable and changeable within the Versata system, as they function separately from the application-specific code.

When coupled with the power and scalability of IBM's WebSphere Application Server, this solution can create an appealing development and deployment scenario.

IDC believes this approach encourages IT shops to collaborate with business managers and place functionality ahead of procedure in the development cycle — a significant value add when designing distributed applications for rapidly changing business demands in the Web-driven ecommerce world. When coupled with the power and scalability of IBM's WebSphere Application Server, this solution can create an appealing development and deployment scenario.

Quoting IDC Information and Data: *Internal Documents and Presentations*—Quoting individual sentences and paragraphs for use in your company's internal communications does not require permission from IDC. The use of large portions or the reproduction of any IDC document in its entirety does require prior written approval and may involve some financial consideration. *External Publication*—Any IDC information that is to be used in advertising, press releases, or promotional materials requires prior written approval from the appropriate IDC Vice President or Country Manager. A draft of the proposed document should accompany any such request. IDC reserves the right to deny approval of external usage for any reason.

Copyright 1999 International Data Corporation. **Reproduction is forbidden unless authorized.**
For additional copies please contact Cheryl Toffel, 508-935-4389.

Check us out on the World Wide Web!

<http://www.idc.com>
Printed on recycled materials. ♻️

Versata and WebSphere

Versata's E-Business Automation System differs from more general-purpose application servers, such as WebSphere, because it is designed and optimized to perform a specific function: the automated implementation of business rules. In other words, it works in tandem with an application server, not in replacement of one. As organizations recognize the strategic advantage of rules-based automation, the need for products such as Versata's will grow. IBM has obviously recognized this need and sees Versata's system as a valuable complement to its WebSphere offerings.

IDC defines application servers as customizable execution environments for business logic that provide services for transaction execution and integrity in a distributed, multitiered architecture.

IDC defines application servers as customizable execution environments for business logic that provide services for transaction execution and integrity in a distributed, multitiered architecture. Application servers operate as a middle tier, communicating with the client tier and the adjacent tiers via data access or procedural interfaces. Application servers must include either development tools and/or one or more of a set of middle-tier functions, such as security, data connectivity, legacy access, management, or business component connectivity.

The application server market was measured in 1998 to be about \$454 million, and it is forecast to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 39.1% through 2003.

The application server market was measured in 1998 to be about \$454 million, and it is forecast to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 39.1% through 2003. In a very real sense, application servers are at the core of virtually every significant IT trend, now and for the foreseeable future — whether it be the Internet in its various forms, portals, or multitiered client/server architectures.

WebSphere (discussed below) and the Versata Business Logic Server work together in a complementary fashion to implement rules-based systems. WebSphere is a more general-purpose application server, and it is used by IBM's customers to implement solutions that are consistent with IDC's three major usage segments for application servers: data access/integration, business processing, and application integration. The Versata Business Logic Server uses the types of services and component architectures that are found in most application servers to implement business rules-based implementations, which is a much more specific application server approach.

IBM's WebSphere Advanced Edition and WebSphere Studio

IBM is positioning its WebSphere Application Server product line as an easy-to-implement, scalable solution for customers that want to build, manage, and run ebusiness applications in a reliable, secure, and stable way.

IBM'S WebSphere Advanced Edition enables the use of Java servlets, JavaServer Pages (JSP) technology, and XML to allow customers to build dynamic content. The product provides both user session and state management as well as high-performance database connectivity via JDBC pooling capabilities. With the recently released Version 3, IBM has "upleveled" the JSP to 1.0 specification standards and doubled the speed of the XML parser. Additionally, servlet speed performance is said to have an increase of 50+%.

A critical functionality for customers that are developing in WebSphere is the use of EJB containers. Using the EJB containers, the Advanced Edition can host multiple servers on multiple machines or multiple servers on a single machine. Business or application logic can be partitioned for optimal workload management and fail-over scenarios to ensure scalability in an unpredictable, Web-driven environment. The servlets and JSPs run in the same EJB container, and the EJB architecture is capable of supporting multiple platforms, databases, and transactions systems.

IBM has developed WebSphere Studio as a tool for Web site authors and Web application developers that need tools that help them develop and deploy dynamic Web site content and logic, and therefore help them implement sites with a high degree of interactivity. WebSphere Studio applications will reside primarily on WebSphere Standard Edition. Studio can also be used to create presentation logic that resides on the other WebSphere editions.

IDC Conclusion

The Versata E-Business Automation System, combined with IBM WebSphere Application Server Advanced Edition, will offer customers a scalable, EJB-compliant solution for custom ebusiness applications.

The Versata E-Business Automation System, combined with IBM WebSphere Application Server Advanced Edition, will offer customers a scalable, EJB-compliant solution for custom ebusiness applications. As stated previously, the automation and reuse provided by the business rules paradigm, when coupled with the flexibility, power, and scalability of the IBM WebSphere products, presents enterprise customers with a strong solution set for creating business-driven applications.

IDC believes that Versata's recent alliance with IBM will serve to significantly enhance the former's visibility and presence in global markets while leading it to expand relationships with independent software vendors (ISVs). Conversely, IDC believes the partnership will enhance IBM's ability to provide customers with a complete development offering in this area while underscoring IBM's commitment to openness and best practices focus in the ebusiness space.

This OEM relationship gives Versata a significant leg up in the ebusiness marketplace. Under the agreement, IBM will support Versata Inc.'s development and marketing efforts to integrate the Versata E-Business Automation System with the aforementioned IBM WebSphere products. Additionally, the agreement calls for IBM to work with Versata to integrate international translation for the Versata system. IBM will assist Versata in a variety of marketing activities, including white papers, Web briefings, seminars, and trade shows. Almost immediately, IBM and Versata began offering an ebusiness "Master Class" to educate potential users on the importance of a rules-based approach to developing, deploying, and maintaining ebusiness applications.

Business managers want and need results. In sum, IDC views the Versata/IBM alliance as a "win-win" in today's market for customers that are looking for a comprehensive ebusiness automation solution.

Document #: 20939E
Publication Date: November 1999
Published Under Services: Components Objects and
Development Environments; Java
