

## Sun shines brightly on Java developers

### Latest IDE's wizards simplify coding

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Sun Microsystems' Java road show hit Toronto Wednesday and about 400 developers showed up to hear about the latest advances in Sun's developer tools.

With the 2004 launch of J2SE 5.0 and coming launch of NetBeans 4.1, Sun took developers' comments to heart and streamlined processes that previously were "damn complex," said Sang Shin, a Burlington, Mass.-based enterprise services consultant with Sun.

With the latest iteration of NetBeans (Sun's integrated development environment or IDE) a developer can, for example, just right mouse click to select the entire enterprise bean to generate look-up code, Shin said. Prior to 4.1, a developer would have had to write that portion of the code.

Also a variety of database operations can be performed without leaving the IDE, Shin said. NetBeans 4.1 also features wizards to create Web services and Web service clients, according to the company.

Another big change, Shin said, though designed less to reduce complexity than increase functionality, is the increase in collaborative capabilities. She said developers could collaborate on projects across any distance – "whether [they] are located 5,000 miles away or beside you." This is a great tool, she said, "when you have multiple developers all over the world."

But not everyone sees the need for a collaborative tool to be included in an IDE.

Adrian Stelflea, a developer with E\*TRADE Canada, said he likes the idea of collaborative tools, but collaborative technology is more a model for developing rather than a language specific, and thus tool-specific, necessity.

Though such a tool would make collaboration easy, he said it still doesn't dispense with the need for a project manager. He said if he were to develop an application collaboratively today, he would just set up a server with source control and Web access.

Regardless, E\*TRADE is a longtime Java shop, Stelflea said. Back in 1999 when Stelflea started developing in Java there were few solutions capable of working at the enterprise level, he said. E\*TRADE's Java-based solutions, running on Sun boxes, are very stable, he said. "Now we have the time to figure out how to cut costs."

Stelflea said Linux is one option, especially on the hardware side, but Java will remain the language of choice.

Another longtime Java shop is Parlay Entertainment Inc., an Oakville, Ont.-based online-games developer. CTO Perry Malone said he likes what he sees in Sun's new tools, especially the ability to create more streamlined code.

Malone said Parlay now uses the open source Eclipse IDE, but would certainly be testing the new solutions from Sun. They look like "intriguing products," he said. And though his shop is Eclipse based, Malone said he would have no problem bringing in a developer who is more comfortable with NetBeans since the two co-exist nicely.

Malone said he really likes the fact that Sun tends to wait until the open source community "sort of finds its way" with a development model before integrating it into its own products.

Shin said Sun decided, for simplicity reasons, to move to round numbers for the latest release. The previous version of J2SE was 1.4.