

LignUp Aligns VOIP, SOA with App Dev Tools

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The startup's updated Communications Application Server aims to simplify adding VOIP functions to Web 2.0 applications.

LignUp will introduce the latest version of its Communications Application Server on April 30, contributing to the effort to make it easier for application developers to add voice as a component to composite, Web 2.0 applications using Web Services.

The startup's new server release includes the LignUp Communications Integration Server, which provides a framework for developers to use, create, expose or manage a library of 125 Communications Web Services to communication-enable applications such as CRM (customer relationship management) systems.

The library spans a range of functions in such categories as call control, media control, screen pop, presence notification, personalization and provisioning.

"Our product really fits as the telephony middleware that sits between applications and legacy PBX infrastructure," said Kevin Nethercott, president and chief operating officer of the Mountain View, Calif., firm. "We're handling the ugliness of telephony with different protocols and exposing elegant Web services so the IT department can use Eclipse or Visual Studio - to - consume our 125 Web services to orchestrate composite applications between their CRM system and outbound calling," he said.

The market for such developers' tools aimed at simplifying the use of IP telephony as a component of a composite application is "not highly defined," but is being addressed by a range of vendors from small startup BlueNote Networks to Avaya and its Ubiquity Software acquisition, BEA Systems, IBM and Hewlett-Packard, according to Becky Watson, program manager at Stratecast, a division of Frost & Sullivan.

"LignUp is really targeting the developer community, smaller-tier carriers or specific niche applications for larger Tier 1 service providers," she said.

Developers working in Eclipse/Java, Microsoft's Visual Studio or .Net Framework, or BPEL (Business Process Execution Language) can consume the LignUp Communications Web Services. The LignUp software manages lower-level telephony functions, freeing developers from having to gain Computer Telephony Integration expertise in those functions.

The new J2EE (Java 2 Platform, Enterprise Edition)-based Communications Integration Server also provides developers with access to LignUp VOIPlets, which implement higher-level Web services that deliver telephony functions out of the box. For example, in real-time bank approvals, one VOIPlet packages several Web services.

"Any transaction over \$2,000, you personally - as a bank customer - want to confirm. If a transaction happens for \$3,000, the bank calls your number in the customer profile - database - , so that outbound call is one Web service. Second, in text-to-speech, there's a line of script the bank wants read to you. Then it wants to receive the proper PIN number to authenticate you. And whatever information you input, the bank wants to post back to the application. Each of those - is its - own Web service, and we wrapped those together so the - developer - can consume all those as a Web service," Nethercott said.

The LignUp Communications Integration Server includes a SIP - Session Initiation Protocol - back-to-back user agent, HTTP client and HTTP server to join, hold, park, transfer and disconnect calls. It can be programmed using an XML Call Control scripting language. It also includes a software-based high-volume media server for audio recording and playback, automatic speech recognition, text-to-speech and more. It also includes IP-PBX functions, voice mail and a unified communications application.

The server initially runs on the Apache Tomcat and IBM's WebSphere Web application servers.

"So security, provisioning, those types of things that application servers do, we can interact with that in the same environment. - Customers would use - our runtime license that would talk to those Web services as they are invoked to run these different applications," Nethercott said.

LignUp 4.0 is available now and starts at \$100,000.

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