

Are Web 2.0 Office Apps Just Wired Wikis with Weird Names?

No one said the taboo words "bubble" or "boom" at the Dealmaker Media Under The Radar conference at the Mountain View Microsoft campus on Friday. But the mood was certainly festive.

"This is just such an exciting time," said Rafe Needleman, founder of the technology blog Webware , as well as a writer for CNET. "I don't want to use the word bubble, but we are just doing great."

Several hundreds of attendees gathered at Under The Radar to hear about new, early-stage consumer technology companies. PC Magazine attended Friday morning, when the sessions pertaining to group scheduling and group project applications were presented.

InvisibleCRM: InvisibleCRM works as an Outlook plug-in to sync CRM data to common productivity tools within Windows and Office. The company's core products, SalesDesktop, SalesFolder, and SalesAlerts, integrate mostly Salesforce data.

Chief executive officer Vlad Voskresensky said that the company believes that sales VPs within the enterprise will be able to use these tools to better grasp and analyze their CRM data. "Our key design principle is 'Do not change the people, but change the software,'" he said.

Scrybe: This is a calendaring, task, and clipping Web application service that works both offline as well as online. The offline experience is exactly the same as the online experience. Data expands when a user mouses over it, and is able to be dragged and dropped. Users cannot save changes to their account if they don't come back online on the same machine, obviously, but as soon as they sign back on, the data is synced.

This is a solid application but as Firefox builds offline integration into version 3.0, it may be less novel than it otherwise might have been three months ago. As Needleman said, "That window of offline activity is closing. So get it out there, man!"

Faizan Buzdar, chief executive officer of Scrybe, says that the last beta phase will roll out in "two weeks," when it will be open to the public.

Calgoo: Calgoo also works online, as well as offline, but it is not its own Web application. It takes the open APIs of the more popular calendaring applications and allows users to sync them with other members of their family, friends, and coworkers. It works specifically with Outlook, iCal, and Google calendar.

"Essentially, calendaring does not recognize the fact that there is life outside of work," said Andrzej Kowalski, the chief executive officer of Time Search, Inc., the company that makes Calgoo. "So make something that works online and offline and keep it relatively simple. The world doesn't need another Web-based calendar."

Kowalski showed his own Calgoo calendar that was essentially a mash-up of information from his wife's personal calendar, his son's soccer team schedule, as well as his own business schedule.

Calgoo plans to become profitable through an event-based advertisement channel where advertisements are sold based on information within calendar appointments.

Tungle : The company just came into public beta on Friday. It's a calendar plug-in that allows users to schedule meeting through a downloadable application that looks and feels just like an instant messenger. It

works with Microsoft Office, Google, Yahoo, Skype, Mac, and MSN. You suggest meeting times and your recipients can easily accept or deny, offering alternative times in the case of denial, and the data syncs with users' calendars.

It seems a lot like TimeBridge, which PC Magazine covered at the Web 2.0 conference. Tungle is free with paid tiered services for things like resource sharing calendars for when users want to create calendars to book boardrooms or presentation projectors.

Blogtronix: Blogtronix is a social media suite of Web applications, geared towards the enterprise. It has blogging, wikis, RSS, workgroups, corporate social networks, analytics, etc. It basically has every Web 2.0 function imaginable, which the company refers to as a full Web 2.0 suite. Blogtronix is outsourced through Bulgaria, which founder Vassil Mladjov said keeps operating costs low. The service is billed per user per month. A mobile online version is expected out in April.

BrainKeeper: Brainkeeper is an enterprise collaboration tool. The company calls itself the "Wikipedia for your company." It is essentially a wiki that was designed with a similar user interface to Wikipedia, but there is more corporate control over who can contribute and when. The interface is simple and well designed but as far as this presentation, there doesn't seem to be much within this product that already offered by Jotspot or Socialtext.

Firestoker: Firestoker is another social network for the enterprise. Blogging is possible but there is no wiki within the application, although the company is looking to partner with one. The presentation, which interestingly was the only one to be given on a Mac (at the Microsoft campus), stressed the transition from personal life to professional life as the company's advantage. The next generations of employees know how to use Facebook and MySpace, so the theory is that they will assimilate into the workforce better if there is a social network within their companies. Users can join groups, and network within those groups, as well as enter all the pertinent information about themselves in their own profiles.

System One: Also a corporate wiki without the fancy social networking and blogging functionalities. System One is probably the cleanest corporate wiki that presented during this panel but beyond a nice user interface, the application also analyzes entries to projects in real-time, and allows users to find related results from other wiki pages. System One is offered as a Software as a Service, or SaaS, and it is in private beta, although invitations are currently being given out.

At the end of each session, audience members could vote for their favorite companies, via text. I chose Calgoo from the first panel, which included InvisibleCRM, Scribe, Calgoo, and Tungle. At the end of the second panel, between Blogtronix, BrainKeeper, Firestoker, and System One, I chose System One. Even if you weren't there, you can check out who the audience of venture capitalists, entrepreneurs and journalists thought held out the best chance of success by visiting the Under the Radar blog ; winners will be posted at the end of each day.

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