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Mainssoft Enables .Net, Java Interoperability

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By Darryl K. Taft

Mainssoft, which specializes in .Net and Java interoperability, is helping organizations integrate their .Net-based environments with popular Java-based technologies such as IBM's WebSphere.

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Mainssoft is announcing Aug. 6 that its software is enabling the Belgian University Hospital Ghent (UZ Gent), based in Gent, Belgium, to deploy IBM's WebSphere Portal solution despite being a .Net development shop.

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UZ Gent has chosen IBM WebSphere Portal Version 6.0 to develop a self-service virtual information center for its 5,000 staff members, students, health care

professionals, and more than 380,000 patients and their families who visit the hospital each year, said Bart Sijnave, CIO of UZ Gent.

Using the .Net-Java interoperability software from Mainssoft, UZ Gent's .Net development team will use the Visual Studio 2005 development environment to integrate its existing .Net application framework, 15 strategic .Net applications, more than 5 terabytes of data stored in an Oracle database and an LDAP (Lightweight Directory Access Protocol) repository into a WebSphere Portal environment running under Linux, Sijnave said.

Rather than rewriting the .Net code in Java, Mainssoft for Java EE Portal Edition will enable UZ Gent's enterprise development team to cross-compile .Net-based code into Java executables that run locally on WebSphere Portal, Sijnave said.

"One of the most specific points is that although we have a team of developers doing .Net, we chose IBM WebSphere as our portal solution," Sijnave said. "We wanted a portal and Microsoft SharePoint would have been the logical solution, but the IBM solution was much better for us. But that left us with a dilemma."

Sijnave said the hospital had to migrate to a standard platform, "so we chose to 'uniformize' our development team. We said it was going to be either .Net or Java; we chose .Net," he said. The hospital's head of development was skeptical about whether the Mainssoft solution would work, "but it turned out to be very successful."

Larry Bowden, vice president of portals and Web interaction services at IBM, said the health care sector is the third largest sector for IBM's portal business, with government and banking ranking first and second, respectively. "We heard from some of our customers that they wanted to have the benefits of WebSphere Portal but they had started down the path of .Net," Bowden said. "Mainssoft plays a perfect role there. And our customers can leverage everything from the portal to the .Net environment."

Earlier this year, Mainsoft released tools for moving C++ Windows applications and C#-based ASP.NET Web applications to Linux and Unix. [Click here](#) to read more.

Yaacov Cohen, president and CEO of Mainsoft, in San Jose, Calif., said his company has "a passion for .Net-Java interoperability, and we found the portal market a good place to invest." UZ Gent's team of 10 .Net developers is building the portal to support multiple audiences, including surgeons.

The hospital's virtual information service center will cost \$2.65 million to build, Sijnave said. The portal will be built and installed in stages. Completion of the first stage will be capped with the online implementation of the Internet portion of the Web portal. After that, UZ Gent will carry out information updates through a powerful Web content management system.

During the second phase, which will be completed by the end of 2008, the electronic patient data exchange and content management will be expanded with an integrated search functionality, access control and single sign-on to existing applications at UZ Gent, transactional services, services for content and knowledge management, and security. The final stage will federate the portal with affiliated hospitals.

Expected benefits of the portal include enhanced communications with patients and their families, streamlined collaboration with health professionals, and an enhanced resource for researchers and students to exchange knowledge and best practices in health care.

"Mainsoft's custom suite of .Net-Java EE software integration tools has established proprietary software systems such as C# 2.0 and Visual Basic as fully supported languages by WebSphere software," Cohen said. Meanwhile, Mainsoft has other customers doing similar things with the company's products.

Urx, a Boston-based vendor of predictive modeling software for health care insurance companies and a Mainsoft customer since 2005, is using the Visual Studio IDE and Mainsoft software to extend its proprietary logic and analytics calculation engine to open systems, without having to rewrite more than 150,000 lines of C# code in Java.

According to Atul Mistry, vice president of technology at Urx, "Mainsoft enables our in-house .Net development team to focus on core product innovations, without having to worry about the added costs and complexities associated with maintaining separate code bases."

Mistry estimates his company will save \$200,000 a year by not having to rewrite the code in Java and maintaining separate code bases.

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