Sun tries sharing Java again; still not open source

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Created *21/06/2005 - 2:44pm*
Submitted by srlinuxx on Tuesday 21st of June 2005 02:44:08 PM Filed under OSS [1]

Sun quietly launched GlassFish on June 6 and plans to discuss it at its JavaOne conference, which begins next week in San Francisco. The project makes the Sun Java System Application Server Platform Edition 9 available under the Java Research License (JRL), which grants some access to source code but prohibits full open-source privileges, such as permission to redistribute the software or use it beyond research projects.

"GlassFish is a window and entry point into Sun's development process where community members can review source code, submit improvements, and join in technical discussions," Sun said on the Web site. "GlassFish is a renewed partnership between Sun and the larger enterprise Java community."

Or perhaps a renewed effort by the company that invented Java to make its Java application server more relevant. Sun's application server has not attained the popularity of rival products from IBM, BEA Systems and JBoss. In a 2003 effort to boost the program's fortunes, Sun started giving away the basic Platform Edition for free.

Application server software, widely used by banks and other sophisticated Internet operations, lets the same Java program run on servers using a wide variety of processors and operating systems.

The GlassFish move follows Sun's $50 million "share" campaign and its first major moves making its Solaris operating system an open-source project. But GlassFish still isn't open-source software.

Software governed by the JRL "is only for initial research and development projects," the license terms say. "If you decide to use your project internally for a productive use, and/or distribute your product to others, you must sign a commercial agreement and meet the Java compatibility requirements."

Sun would be better off putting Java under a real open-source license, said Burton Group analyst Anne Thomas Manes. "The JRL, from my perspective, is Sun's way to try to generate a community to fix bugs and create test cases and add value to the Java platform for free," but it doesn't grant outsiders rights in exchange for those labors, she said.

Full Story [2].

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