Apache Kick-Starts Open Source Web Services

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Go beyond a few basic protocols, and confusion still reigns in the wild world of Web services and SOA. Not just the towering, complex stack of Web services specs, but also fundamental questions about how those specs should work together and how Web services should be deployed and managed.

A new open source answer to those questions, dubbed the Apache Synapse project, has arrived from an unlikely location: Sri Lanka. That country, not known as a technology hotbed, is the home of WSO2, a Web services venture founded by leaders of the Apache Web services project. Synapse, which WSO2 is publicly submitting to the Apache Software Foundation today, is intended to produce a lightweight, scalable, distributed services broker based on Web services standards. The kernel will be X-broker, donated by software vendor Infravio, which will participate in the project along with middleware players Blue Titan, Iona, and Sonic Software.

"Apache Synapse is another significant step in our path towards creating the best possible Web services middleware platform in Apache," said Paul Fremantle, vice president of technology at WSO2 and former senior technologist at IBM.

The Synapse project differs from Java-based open source ESBs (enterprise service buses) from Iona, Sun, and others, in that it promises a pure Web services implementation based on SOAP, WSDL, and the extended WS-* stack, including WS-Policy, WS-Addressing, WS-Security, and WS-ReliableMessaging.

Miko Matsumura, vice president at Infravio, said Synapse will produce a "ubiquitous and standard run-time environment for Web services." Widespread adoption, he said, will raise the common denominator for dynamic Web services connectivity, transformation, management, and monitoring. With Synapse, developers could avoid messaging grunt work and enjoy better interoperability among Web services across platforms. Plus, the possibility of an SOA infrastructure built on open source becomes much more real.

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