

Skyway Software springs into new strategy with release of open source RIA platform

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Sector: Enterprise Software

Event summary

- Skyway Software has announced a new version of its visual application development platform. The product, known earlier as Skyway Visual Workspace, has been renamed Skyway Visual Perspectives.
- Skyway Visual Perspectives has moved from internally developed design and runtime environments to an Eclipse-based IDE and a runtime based on SpringSource's Spring Framework.
- Skyway's business model will now revolve around providing support for an enterprise edition of Skyway Visual Perspectives. The company has 14 existing customers.

The 451 take

We are happy that Skyway's new release leverages Spring Framework and Eclipse, two particularly influential forces in the Java developer community these days. We think these technological underpinnings can provide a viable path for developers to enhance their skills as well as produce an application based on de facto standards, which IT departments can maintain. Even if this makes the future look rosier for Skyway, migrating existing customers to the new platform can be tricky.

Details

Skyway Visual Perspectives consists of two products: Skyway Builder, an application construction tool, and Skyway Director, an application deployment tool. Skyway Builder is now available in a free Community Edition and an Enterprise Edition. The Community Edition beta, available as an Eclipse plug-in or a stand-alone design environment, was introduced in March 2008. Betas for the Enterprise Edition and Skyway Director will debut in April 2008. The platform is expected to come out of beta in June 2008.

Skyway's design-time components are licensed under GPLv3, whereas the Spring Framework-based runtime is licensed under the Apache Software License. **Skyway Software** said that this release has greatly improved switching between model-based development and coding by hand. Skyway Builder relies on the Eclipse Modeling Framework, which enables industry-specific model elements to be easily added to the design palette. Generated code has a special annotation that developers can

remove if they wish to manually maintain that code in the future. Skyway believes the productivity gains from using a model-based design tool make this release especially well suited to novice and intermediate software developers. We agree with Skyway's view that coordination between offshore and onshore teams in a development organization can be improved by using the models as a basis for communication.

Competitive landscape

Skyway competes with **Bungee Labs**, which provides a browser-based visual development and hosted deployment environment aimed at software developers. Bungee Labs applications may be developed visually and customized using Bungee Connect, a programming language that we think resembles C# in its language constructs. **Servoy** is a Dutch RIA platform vendor with an Eclipse-based development environment that can be used to write business logic that can drive both RIAs and rich client applications. Servoy has had particular success targeting technology ISVs looking to modernize their offering.

WaveMaker Software makes a browser-based development environment that produces enterprise Java deployment collateral that can be deployed on-premise. WaveMaker's platform is targeted at technically savvy end users or business analysts rather than at software developers. Other vendors that make end user-oriented application development platforms, especially around business applications, include **Salesforce.com** and **Relationals** with LongJump. Other Java-centric products in the RIA market include Icefaces from **Icesoft Technologies**, XUI from **Xoetrope** and Google Web Toolkit from **Google**.

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