"Expanding Your Business with Mobile Enabled Portals" September 18, 2009

Lauren: Hello and thanks for tuning in to this podcast titled, "Expanding Your Business with Mobile Enabled Portals". Please note that this podcast is intended for all customers and partners who use WebSphere Portal and have an interest in extending their personalized portal applications to mobile audiences. We'll talk about the benefits and details of the latest Mobile Portal Accelerator Version. This new technology can let organizations seamlessly extend portal applications to over 6700 mobile devices worldwide, streamline business processes, improve productivity and strengthen relationships with existing and new customer audiences.   My name is Lauren Wendel, product manager for WebSphere Portal and Mobile Portals, and I have with me Van Landrum, IBM Certified IT Specialist, Mobile Portal solutions, and Mike Craney, worldwide sales leader for WebSphere Portal and Mobile Portal Solutions.

Q (Lauren): Mike let's start with you.   Could you give us a brief introduction to the Mobile Portal Accelerator, what it is?

A:Mike: Sure.

IBM Mobile Portal Accelerator (which used to be called IBM WebSphere® Everyplace® Mobile Portal Enable) is an advanced content adaptation product that allows users to deliver WebSphere Portal Server's portlets to any mobile device in existence, with the content properly formatted and customized for the calling mobile device. This allows us to provide mobile device user experiences which are just as transformational and compelling as those delivered by WebSphere Portal Server to individuals using standard web browsers on standard computing devices

Web portals, particularly when served by WebSphere Portal, provide users highly personalized web experiences customized to the user's role, context, actions, location, preferences and team collaboration needs. The Mobile Portal Accelerator extends access to those same services to the 3 billion or so mobile devices in use. This helps enterprises maximize their business opportunities.

Our customers report that an increasing number of their end users, whether they employees, partners, or customers, expect to be able to access portal applications from their mobile devices. They expect the environment provided to them on that mobile device to be both useful and compelling.

Mobile Portal Accelerator plugs into WebSphere Portal and lets them meet this demand for mobile access, providing leading edge mobile services to existing and new customer audiences. When combined with the Portal's ability to tailor content based on user profile and interest patterns, organizations are now able provide dynamic and useful web experiences to their mobile audiences. This gains them market advantage, increases customers loyalty, and leads to increased revenues.

So, IBM's Mobile Portal Accelerator software provides an easy, cost-effective way to deliver content and applications to virtually all mobile devices. It includes out-of-the-box mobile portal samples and tools to develop portlet applications for those mobile devices. When a Portal page is called, it reads the user-agent of the mobile device, references

the characteristic of that device held in its device repository, and sends wireless markup specifically customized to that device in response. Developers are then free to "write a portlet only once" but can still render personalized Web content quickly across over 6700 different mobile device types.

Q: Mike, I'm sure this product is of high interest these days, as the number of mobile users continues to rapidly increase. What is included with the Mobile Portal Accelerator software?

A:Mike: IBM Mobile Portal Accelerator provides out-of-the-box mobile portal samples and tools to develop portlet applications for mobile devices. It includes an intelligent Multi-channel Server component which adapts the content for each mobile device based on the specific device characteristics as defined in the software`s device repository.

Users can purchase and enroll in a subscription service that entitles them to receive updates to the mobile device repository. These updates include both improved versions of existing mobile device templates, as well as templates for new mobile devices as they are released to the market. So, users are assured of always being able to support existing and new devices in the best way possible.

Q. Van you have a lot of experience working with customers that have implemented the Mobile Portal Accelerator software with WebSphere Portal. What are some of the reasons they choose to do so, rather than to extend some of their portal applications to specific mobile devices, such as the iPhone or Blackberry devices?

A:Van That's a common question I've received from many customers I've worked with. If organizations choose to develop a mobile application for a specific device, or a few devices, they quickly realize that approach does not scale. For example, if they need to modify the mobile application with a new feature, or they want to support more devices, they need to completely re-write and redeploy that mobile application, or worse yet, create multiple versions of that application.

One such customer was maintaining seven versions of its mobile application to be able to serve seven different classes of mobile devices. When they switched to a Mobile Portal environment, they were able to have one application deliver content to all types of devices. Mobile Portal Accelerator, with its multi-channel server, device policies, and device update service delivers mobile portal content to devices in a manner that is appropriate for the specific device that requested it.

Also, the developer does not need to be concerned with making code changes to keep up with new mobile devices. Mobile Portal's Device Update Service adds new devices to the device repository database as they enter the marketplace.

Mobile Portal Accelerator also provides many out of box mobile applications, and samples that developers can use as a start to create or extend their existing portal content to mobile devices. This gives Developers and IT staff more time to focus on new applications and business opportunities, and apply the benefits of the Mobile Portal Accelerator to those new applications and business opportunities.

Q: What are some other common questions you've received from customers as they investigate the benefits the Mobile Portal Accelerator can provide?

A Van. Another common question customers ask me is - is what exactly is required to extend their existing portal applications to mobile devices using the Mobile Portal Accelerator.

In many cases, a customer can take an existing portlet application, and with minor modifications, adjust that application so that it can be rendered to mobile devices using the Mobile Portal Accelerator. It is possible that only a new set of JSPs and some layout and image policies are needed and customers may not need to touch the core portlet code much at all.

 A bit of technical background: Usually the content in a portlet is marked up with HTML tags that describe how to display that content. This creates a one to one relationship between the content and the way it is displayed. Having only one way to display the content works fine for desktops and laptops but not for the variety of mobile devices in the marketplace.

Mobile Portal instead uses a form of XML markup called XDIME. XDIME describes the content but does not describe how to display that content. So when the portlet runs, it basically creates an XML document that passes the content to the The Multi Channel Server. The Multi channel server uses device policies from the device repository to determine how the content should be displayed. This decoupling of the content and display allows Mobile Portal Accelerator to have a single source of content and many ways to display it. Which is just what you need for the mobile environment.

That brings up another important (and efficient) point to consider. Customers can have a single portlet that renders both to desktops and to Mobile devices. The combination of Portal and Mobile Portal lets IT managers centrally administer and deliver content to desktop and mobile audiences from the same portal platform.

Q. Mike, What are some of the latest enhancements in the Mobile Portal Accelerator?

A.Mike The most recent release of Mobile Portal, just released this July, makes it much easier to leverage Lotus Web Content Management to author and publish web content to mobile audiences. With this deeper level of integration, the Lotus Web Content Management authoring and presentation templates automatically wrap web content in XDIME, resulting in seamless publishing to mobile devices. If you take a look at the Mobile Portal Accelerator wiki, you can see a good demonstration of this capability. Web Content Management managed content presents differently, but is perfectly tailored to, the device display characteristics of the iPhone, Blackberry and Nokia mobile phones used in the demonstration. Doesn't get much easier than that...

The new release also includes new out of box mobile enabled portlets, including an updated RSS mobile portlet, stock reporting portlet, and the client framework widget sample portlets. The widget sample portlets provide support for Smartphone devices with the ability to render, for example. Web 2.0 capabilities such as AJAX client side rendering. These portlets provide examples for the development of application widgets

tailored to those devices. The sample widgets provide over fifty rich, client side interfaces that can be used to deliver an enhanced, more native experience to devices that are capable of client-side rendering.

Some examples include widgets for styling, transition, AJAX tables, autocomplete, popups, ticker tapes, and many more. You can see demonstrations of some of these capabilities on the Mobile Portal Accelerator wiki.

This release also introduced several features and priorities that were planned jointly as we worked with our customers and partners to understand their current and future plans for mobile portal applications.

Q: Mike what are some examples of how customers are using the Mobile Portal Accelerator today?

A. Mike. There are many. Examples include online mobile banking, management of store-manager task lists in retail environments, customer care/customer service in telecommunications, account management in insurance, and others. Mobile Portal is useful in any situation where there is a need to support a workforce disconnected from the normal office,or in any situation where information and applications must be provided to customers, vendors, or business partners.

In all these cases, our customers can leverage the highly scalable and secure WebSphere Portal infrastructure, including centralized administration and personalization services, to deliver applications designed to meet the needs of their users, be they customers, prospects, business partners or internal employees. Since the Mobile Portal Accelerator software delivers content to mobile devices that 'fits' the unique display characteristics of the mobile device, whether it is an iPhone, Blackberry, Nokia or simpler phones with fewer display options, a user experience which properly leverages the abilities of the phone in use is assured. Also, since the Mobile Portal device repository support over 6700 devices (or, all known mobile devices, the answer to the key question we are often asked --- do you support THIS device or THAT device – is always "yes".

With Mobile Portal Accelerator, customers increase their ability to introduce new products and services to both their connected and mobile audiences. End users are able to seamlessly complete tasks, collaborate with others, and contribute new and updated information using their preferred device and work style. This greatly improves their productivity, the productivity of the enterprise, and the competitiveness of the enterprise. The end user of the Mobile Portal is presented with a productive mobile experience, since the mobile display (including navigation, text and images) are all optimized for the display characteristics of their mobile device. This reduces the frustration mobile users can experience when accessing mobile content designed for delivery to the "lowest common denominator" web mobile experience, and eliminates unnecessary scrolling and missed information due to an incomplete display.

Q: Where can I go for more information?

A. Mike: Just search on the term Mobile Portal Accelerator. That brings you to the IBM Mobile Portal Accelerator page. From there, you'll have access to all of the product detail and information about the services and demonstrations we've mentioned during this podcast to assist you, such as the product documentation, sales information, demonstrations, technical white papers, and more. It's a great time to get involved with this technology; nearly every customer is interested in it, and it provides our customers with tangible, competitive advantages in delivering exceptional web experiences to server and mobile based audiences.