

Google – beyond search: an update on enterprise applications

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Abstract

In 2007 – as I documented in *Google Version 2: the calculating predator* (Infonortics Ltd., 2007), Google shifted from its Appliance approach to enterprise search with a surprising and aggressive change in tactics. First, the Appliance is available from a partner-reseller or the US mail-order operation Ingram-Micro. Second, the company expanded its business application offerings with enhanced versions of Google Docs. Third, the company continued to deliver on technologies once locked in the arcane legal mumbo-jumbo of patent applications; for example, a mechanism for making a remote server part of a Google ‘grid’ or ‘extended network’.

But perhaps the most interesting move was the company’s purchase of Postini, a back-office vendor of spam and email solutions. Postini, however, has a patent portfolio of nine interesting inventions and more than 30,000 business customers. Over 120 ISP (internet service providers) use Postini to create mail, filtering and security services that are then resold to thousands more small-, medium-, and large-sized businesses.

Google, a reluctant bride for some enterprise application services, is now being pulled into organisations. The vacuum is caused because existing vendors are not meeting certain organisations’ needs.

What few enterprises realise is that Google’s powerful distributed computing platform is of interest to many organisations. Google is being pulled into sectors long dominated by the likes of IBM, Oracle, and SAP with its ‘consumer services’ such as ad-supported or ad-subsidised applications, analytics, and data storage. The trade press and popular media both focus on Google’s ad revenue and its 70 per cent plus share of worldwide web searches. But for years, I’ve referred to Google as Googzilla. It is becoming increasingly clear that Google is more than search. Google is a different type of online company and one that few appreciate or fully understand beyond ads. A realistic appraisal of Google is essential for search vendors as well as other enterprise software ‘players’ in 2008.

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