

Webalo promises any data to mobile app in a matter of minutes, with new SaaS platform

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Webalo has launched a SaaS, multi-tenant architecture version of its hybrid, app-based back-end data integration and representation platform. Available in three versions – Webalo Cloud, Webalo Pro Cloud and Webalo Pro Appliance – Webalo is looking to address a wide range of organizations, from SMBs to large enterprises. Currently in private beta, the product has been soft launched and will see full commercial availability by the end of this quarter. Based on its patented SOA-based User Proxy technology, Webalo has now made it widely available and hugely scalable by opting for a freemium cloud-based delivery model. The launch would culminate Webalo's plans to provide a quickly configurable app development and delivery model, since it raised over \$3m in its 2011 financing.

The 451 Take

When it comes to thinking about the next, best use case after email, there is a flood of use cases that can be mobile-enabled. Industries such as retail, healthcare, transportation and financial services are aggressively pushing toward viewing CRM, HR and finance/accounting data and business workflows on smartphones and tablets. This data can be presented either as an app or in its native format on the mobile device, depending on the feasibility and the development cost involved. There are several choices from file sharing and sync, virtualization to custom apps. Webalo has done the trick by making it effortless to present that data within the native app experience. We believe such integration and presentation capabilities bode well for the greater mobilization of internal enterprise business processes on mobile devices. It is also a part of the wider move toward commodification with the potential

to eat into the lower price end of large-scale project- or platform-driven mobile enterprise application platform (MEAP) vendors.

Context

Founded in 2000, and headquartered in Los Angeles, Webalo has 25 employees and has raised \$20m to date. This major product refresh for Webalo simplifies the product features, and focuses on rapid service delivery through a self-service, Web-based model. Webalo has traditionally sold its platform either as a managed and hosted offering or a virtual appliance; however, the new self-service Web route is expected to bring in higher volumes and eventually greater market share through upselling to enterprise customers.

The freemium model is designed to allow companies to quickly be up-and-running in a matter of minutes, and test the deployment of apps to a finite number of users. When companies are hooked on the service and need to expand the user base – or need to increase the enterprise application integration points – is when they move to a paid model. Webalo is also changing its business model, focusing on the channel, partnering with VARs and systems integrators as well as offering white-labeling through service providers and distributors.

Technology

Webalo provides a Web-based administrator interface or console, and a downloadable native app for each device type. The administrative interface allows IT or even non-IT users to select and integrate the data source. They can configure the enterprise integration in minutes, in real time, based on the required data points. The Webalo native app, or container, can then generate the interface on the fly because all the UI components have been abstracted and mapped into a native format, which can be updated anytime through the Webalo server. The Webalo native app is available for Android, Apple, BlackBerry and Windows smartphones or tablets, and can be directly downloaded from respective app stores.

Products

The SaaS version of Webalo comes in two options, Webalo Cloud and Webalo Pro Cloud. Webalo Cloud is free, for a limited number of users, and allows an administrator to prepare and pull data from spreadsheets (.CSV or Excel), directly to a Webalo native app. It also allows read/write connections to and from enterprise databases such as Oracle, Microsoft SQL Server, IBM DB2 and

MySQL. Webalo Pro Cloud adds a VPN option for enterprise data access, and is priced at either \$9.99 per user per month or \$99 per user per year, with an unlimited number of apps or devices for each user. Webalo Pro Appliance allows the service to be downloaded and installed behind the firewall, is priced at \$150 per user per annum, and adds integration with existing browser-based desktop applications or any XML Web service. The native app supports 3-D graphics animation for report viewing.

Customers

Although the product is in private beta, Webalo claims to have already signed up a couple of companies at a rate that has surprised the company itself. Some of its existing enterprise customers include Grupo Familia, Lionsgate, Inland Group, Nixon Hire, NHS UK, Volkswagen, GE, Johnson Controls and Wells Fargo.

Competition

In the mobile BI reports market, Webalo primarily competes with vendors such as Catavolt, Canvas Solutions and Roambi. SAP is heavily pushing Sybase SUP to enterprises through partners such as Antivia to allow rapid development of BI and CRM apps. The ability to view and generate reports remains one of the important use cases of tablets for professionals in sales or field functions. The larger real estate coupled with rich interactivity on a tablet brings in several possibilities that far outdo the humble spreadsheet. Roambi has introduced rich 2-D and 3-D viewing to allow a high level of interactivity experience on touchscreens.

We are seeing a trend toward commodification of basic app development, where pixel-by-pixel control is not an important functional or performance requirement. Hence, we see MEAP vendors such as Appcelerator, Antenna Software, Verivo Software (formally known as Pyxis) and Sencha shift to an unlimited consumption-based model that unburdens the enterprise either from owning the platform or going for project-based app development.

Virtualization technologies, coupled with file-sharing and sync services, have been on a high, as these technologies effortlessly provide secure access to content repositories located within the enterprise network. Quickoffice recently released significant updates to its app to allow users to view, edit and share documents. Wyse Technologies, which was recently acquired by Dell, tasted success with PocketCloud, a native app that allows complete remote desktop access along with file-sharing services. Good Technology represents competition but also a partnership opportunity with its Good Dynamics mobile for apps. Webalo will shortly run within this secure container.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

The technology to remotely push and manage the interface at real time goes hand-in-hand with the ability to readily integrate with several kinds of data sources. The new product and delivery format allows Webalo to scale its customer base and its business, without having to unnecessarily scale the company itself.

Opportunities

Webalo can eat into the MEAP app development as well as the mobile file-sharing and sync market. The business model could work well since initial free sign-ons on the Web can later be converted or expanded into high-volume paid users on the Web or, behind the firewall, virtual appliance customers.

Weaknesses

Webalo's earlier model worked on direct sales; however, it will take time for the vendor to change its business model and build a strong pipeline. This change will be important, as the company has a competitive pricing model and will need the channel to upsell products.

Threats

The mobile file-sharing and sync services market remains a potent threat because it offers higher flexibility around collaboration on reports. As more and more MEAP vendors convert to SaaS, there could be potential pressure on pricing. Other mobile BI report vendors have introduced features such as LBS, rich graphics and animation.

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