

Microsoft Continues Web Service Leadership With New XML Specs

David Mitchell Smith

Microsoft's posting of specifications for three XML technologies again shows its leadership in developing Web service standards and may herald another cooperative effort with IBM to get a new standard approved by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).

NEWS ANALYSIS

Event

On 24 May 2000, Microsoft announced it had posted three additional specifications on its XML Web service Web site (www.gotdotnet.com):

- SOAP Routing Protocol (SOAP-RP), for routing SOAP messages over protocols such as TCP, UDP and HTTP
- XLANG, the XML business process language used by Microsoft's BizTalk server
- Direct Internet Message Encapsulation (DIME) protocol, a binary format that can be used to encapsulate into a single message format multiple application-defined entities or payloads of any type and size

Analysis

The announcement of these new specifications indicates Microsoft's continued leadership in XML standards development. Microsoft has previously demonstrated with SOAP, WSDL and, to some extent, UDDI that its first step toward standardization of these technologies is to post the specifications publicly. Six to 12 months later Microsoft submits the specifications to a standards organization, typically the W3C. That body's working group for XML Protocols (XMLP), which focuses on standardizing specifications for Web service technologies, is scheduled to produce its final recommendations by August 2001 and to disband by April 2002. Gartner believes Microsoft's introduction of these three technologies will convince W3C to extend the XMLP Working Group to focus on additional technologies and will extend the group by at least one year (0.8 probability).

The addition of SOAP-RP allows SOAP to be routed through intermediate transports. Although SOAP 1.1 was already independent of HTTP transport, a single transport was required for an entire SOAP interaction. DIME allows for richer binary content such as images and audio to be more efficiently handled in an infrastructure optimized for XML text-based payloads.

XLANG, the language implemented in BizTalk, which allows orchestration of Web services into business processes and composite Web services, is perhaps the most important of the three new specifications. Microsoft previously achieved recognition for WSDL by working with IBM. History may repeat itself here since IBM now has a similar technology to XLANG: In April, IBM published WSFL (i.e., Web Services Flow Language). Gartner expects IBM and Microsoft to jointly agree to submit a proposal to W3C that combines XLANG and WSFL by year-end 2001 (0.7 probability).

Enterprises should view these announcements as a continuation of Microsoft's leadership in Web services. By working with standards organizations and collaborating with IBM and others, Microsoft continues to define the Web service agenda.

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