Whitmann Price Consulting: Software Considerations

Typical enterprise-wide system development projects include the developing three types of software: server software to provide information from corporate databases or other information and communications services, client software to run on the user's machines, and sometimes middleware to allow different types of systems to communicate.

Whitmann Price Consulting (WPC) is satisfied with its in-house systems and has no cause to change them. The goal of the Advanced Mobile Communications and Information (AMCI) system is to extend those services to employees away from the office. When Sandra and Josh committed to using BlackBerry handheld devices from RIM, they also committed themselves to a software development framework. The BlackBerry includes a wide range of software and features, and provides an easy connection to corporate servers and the software that WPC uses. Josh and Sandra think the AMCI system might need middleware software to link mobile devices to corporate servers, but that existing server systems do not need to be altered.

WPC can use BlackBerry Enterprise Solution software to connect their existing enterprise systems to the mobile handheld devices for secure, wireless access to e-mail and other corporate data. After WPC installs this software on their corporate servers, they can work with their wireless phone service provider to create the connection between traveling employees and company information systems.

BlackBerry devices come with their own powerful software. Besides cell phone and e-mail capabilities, BlackBerries include text and instant messaging, an organizer with calendar, address book, memo pad and task list, and a fully functional Web browser.

Because BlackBerry is well established in industry, many additional software applications are provided by third party vendors, referred to as BlackBerry Alliance Program members. They include software in categories such as office productivity tools, location-based services, security tools, games, and enterprise software such as ERP, customer resource management and business intelligence. Josh and Sandra have found some useful GPS software that their consultants can use for navigating around unfamiliar areas. Using GPS-equipped BlackBerries, the software provides a user's current location on a map along with instructions on how to travel to a destination.

Because BlackBerries have a fully functional Web browser, WPC's software developers can create custom Web-based applications to run in the Web browser. A common programming development platform for the BlackBerry, known as the BlackBerry Java Development Environment (JDE), can be used along with the Blackberry's API to create BlackBerry-specific software. Josh and Sandra are confident that any special needs not addressed in existing software can be addressed through the development of proprietary software.

Sandra and Josh have now found software solutions, and the means for developing them, for all of the needs of WPC divisions as well as some useful software that no one had considered. Considering the software from RIM, BlackBerry Alliance Program members, and their own

custom-designed proprietary software, the new AMCI system is shaping up to be more powerful and useful than anticipated.