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JANUARY 31, 2007

People, not technology, now at center of emerging tech

At DEMO 07, technology that puts the power in the user's hands takes center stage

By Ephraim Schwartz | InfoWorld

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The DEMO 07 conference, the annual gathering of the haves and the have-nots -- venture capitalists with millions of dollars to invest and startups hungering for first-, second-, and third-round infusions of cash -- got off to a big start with 16 companies presenting in the first morning session.

Chris Shipley, executive producer of DEMO, opened the show with a talk about the power shift now taking place in business and personal computing. Although she didn't use the term "power to the people," that is what Shipley implied the shift is all about.

"We are breaking away from putting technology at the center and we are putting people at the center who have the authority to influence technology," Shipley said.

Nevertheless, it will be technology that powers that shift. And at this year's conference, new products and technology were proof of that.

Created to reign in the challenge of distributed networks and distributed projects, 6th Sense Analytics unveiled a technology that will help project managers maintain visibility into the progress of any project.

Targeted at companies that make extensive use of outsourcing and offshoring on projects, the 6th Sense toolset captures all development activities and delivers them back to a hosted server.

A project manager in the United States can know when an offshore developer has instantiated the debugger or when they are editing the file. The system monitors files by checking byte count, according to Greg Burnell, co-founder and CEO of 6th Sense Analytics.

Another component called Active Time, measures the amount of time spent actively developing software such as modeling, UML design, and testing.

A third feature, dubbed Flow Time, looks at how much uninterrupted time is spent doing a particular component of the project with the idea that uninterrupted time is the most productive.

Not all the companies on stage were startups. Adobe was also on hand showing off its solution for those who worry that too much of Web 2.0, aka RIAs (Rich Internet Applications), is not a good thing.

The Apollo platform will offer nervous users the reassurance of desktop storage and desktop performance, overcoming, Adobe officials claim, "the constraints of a browser."

At the same time Apollo will give developers the ability to work with the Web 2.0 tools they are familiar with to develop desktop applications.

If there is a poster child for empowering the people perhaps it is Shipwire. This company will give small companies the ability to compete with the largest retailers by offering a SaaS (software as a service) solution for warehouse management and for the pick, pack, and ship process.

Finally, another old high-tech company, Wyse Technology, was on hand with a new concept in thin-client architecture.

Although the N10 thin-client hardware uses fewer chips than any previous device from Wyse, what really makes it different is its intelligent software that legislates where software is processed.

The hybrid processing architecture, which uses a multicore system on a chip technology, has the ability to encode and decode any file type including VoIP, but it is the software that determines whether to process that type of data on the server or on the system on a chip.

Serendipity Technologies will attempt to solve the problem non-technical executives and mangers have in extracting useful data out of complex enterprise applications.

The product, dubbed Worklight, is a server-based product that "consumerizes the corporate-based product, according to Shahar Kaminitz, CEO and founder.

Worklight allows users to define the data they want to see, and using technology similar to RSS

feeds streams that data into an easy-to-read format.

Finally, Kauffman Innovation Network demonstrated the true spirit of collaboration and power to the people with the iBridge Network that will give developers access to university research.

The site intends to aggregate research materials, technologies, and discoveries into an online easy-to-search forum.

Innovations are even classified by category, organization, or tags. Currently on the site there are more than 100 innovations categorized by devices.

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Ephraim Schwartz is an editor at large at InfoWorld. He also writes the **Reality Check blog***.*

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