WiMax Pros and Cons

I n early October, Sprint launched Xohm, its WiMax wireless broadband data service in Baltimore. Although WiMax services can operate at speeds up to 4 Mbps and for a fraction of the cost of T1 lines, WiMax has its own share of potential dealbreakers that businesses should consider before adopting:

• WiMax works well locally but might not be well-suited for companies that operate nationwide. For example, WiMax’s data rate exceeds AT&T’s high-speed packet access, but AT&T could upgrade its network and give users similar data rates as WiMax with a larger coverage area.

• WiMax can be expensive to implement. Xohm runs at a higher 2,500-MHz frequency, which requires more cell sites and raises deployment costs.

Despite these considerations, WiMax offers some positives, including security and development history.

As for Xohm, Sprint plans to deploy services in several large cities such as Boston, Chicago, and Washington, DC. Sprint will merge Xohm with Clearwire’s WiMax service later in the year. The merger will bring cities such as Anchorage, Alaska, Honolulu, Hawaii, and Nashville, Tennessee into the Xohm fold, as well as smaller cities in areas such as central California, Florida, and Minnesota.
IBM Releases Online Collaboration Software

In October, IBM released Bluehouse (https://bluehouse.lotus.com), an Internet-based collaboration and social networking service. With Bluehouse, IBM is hoping to stave off competition from companies such as Microsoft, Amazon, and Google, which have launched cloud computing services of their own. Bluehouse offers developers online communities and meetings, as well as document and contact sharing to help businesses communicate with each other. Bluehouse’s services don’t require users to install any software on their PCs. IBM is offering the service for free as part of a public beta phase until it releases the commercial version later this year.

Google Apps Suite: Now with SLAs

Hoping to lure enterprise customers from desktop-based software, Google introduced a service-level agreement for its Google Apps Premier Edition. Google will credit customers with additional service time if it doesn’t hit its 99.9 percent per month uptime mark. Compensation starts after 45 minutes of downtime per month. Outages of fewer than 10 minutes won’t count, however, nor will downtime for scheduled maintenance if Google has provided more than five days’ prior notice. Google says scheduled downtime won’t be more than 12 hours per year. It will credit customers with an additional three days of service for an uptime of 99 percent; seven days for percentages between 95 and 99; and 15 days for anything less than 95 percent.

Nigeria’s 419ers Keeping One Step Ahead of Authorities

Nigeria, home to its fair share of 419ers and other online fraudsters, plans to switch tactics and go after fraudsters perpetrating from their homes. Between December 2007 and October 2008, Nigeria’s Economic and Financial Fraud Commission (EFCC) focused its efforts on raiding cybercafes, making several arrests. However, with many of their operation bases being targeted by authorities, the scammers took their electronic toys and went home, moving their operations to private homes and hotels with broadband or wireless connections they could pick up easily with their mobiles. To combat the underground scammers, the EFCC is in discussion with mobile internet operators to access background data on users. This won’t be easy: the EFCC is up against a coverage area roughly four times the size of Great Britain, giving scammers plenty of areas to move to while launching scams on the go. Additionally, the EFCC is lobbying for registration of Internet access points and subscriber identity modules (SIMs). To cut down on the number of fraudsters using hotel rooms with which to launch their online scams, the EFCC has started to ask hotels to photocopy passports or ID cards in addition to obtaining full client information.
SECURITY

0-Day Auction Site might Shutter Its Online Doors

Slow sales might force WabiSabiLabi to close its online 0-day marketplace a year after launching. The auction site features unpatched security vulnerabilities submitted by security researchers. Buyers can bid on the information, giving security researchers a chance to earn money from their discoveries. WabiSabiLabi evaluates buyers before granting them access to the marketplace to ensure security research doesn’t fall into the hands of potential attackers.

Instead, the company might shift its focus to its line of unified threat management (UTM) appliances that are nearing their commercial release date. The UTM suite, called OneShield, helps defend networks against attacks. It also borrows from WabiSabiLabi’s 0-day auction site: customers who purchase a OneShield security device will pay a monthly subscription fee that gives them access to a 0-day library. Independent security researchers can contribute to the library and earn a monthly royalty from their contributions, paid from the subscription revenue.

We’re Number 1: IT Sector Leads in Internal User-Error Breaches

In October, Verizon released a supplemental analysis report (www.verizonbusiness.com/resources/security/databreachsuppwp.pdf) to its Business Data Breach Investigation report released in June that showed user error as the cause of most IT breaches. The supplement analyzes data from the financial services, technology, retail, and food industries between 2004 through 2007. Of the four industries studied, the tech sector leads in internal user-error breaches at 39 percent. According to the supplement, 56 percent of the financial sector’s breaches were from external sources versus 41 percent from partner-caused breaches. The food and beverage industry posted the biggest difference: eighty percent of breaches were external whereas only 4 percent were from internal sources. Verizon is compiling a new report that will include data from 2008 and is expected to be released next year.

Silver Bullet Security Podcast

In-depth interviews with security gurus. Hosted by Gary McGraw.

www.computer.org/security/podcasts

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TECHNOLOGY

Yahoo Launches Web Analytics Tool

In April, Yahoo acquired IndexTools, a provider of Web analytics software, paving the way for the beta release of its own analytics tool in October. Yahoo Web Analytics (http://web.analytics.yahoo.com/) will be available first to Yahoo’s small business users who host e-commerce sites, advertisers in the company’s custom solutions and buzz marketing programs, and developers who are members of Yahoo’s developer network or use Yahoo APIs. Yahoo is touting the tool’s real-time component, which lets users see within minutes how changes to ad campaigns affect traffic and adjust if they see a slide in site performance. Additionally, the tool gives users access to data in nonaggregated, raw form so they can create customized reports based on current and historical data. Finally, Yahoo’s tool uses a drag-and-drop interface that lets users quickly filter data and create reports.

Microsoft Releases Toolkit for Creating Multithreaded Apps

Microsoft recently released its Concurrency & Coordination Runtime (CCR) and Decentralized Software Services (DSS) Toolkit (www.microsoft.com/ccrdss). The CCR lets developers create concurrent and asynchronous programs; DSS helps distribute applications across several computers. The toolkit is based on the REST protocol and contains the .NET and Compact Framework class libraries with a notification publish/subscribe model included.

Microsoft originally released the toolkit as part of its Robotics Developer Studio but found that developers were using it for other applications and ignoring the robotics capabilities, so the company decided to release the toolkit without those components. The toolkit is available for purchase online for US$399.95.

Linux Standard Base Consolidates Distributions

The Linux Foundation released a beta version of Linux Standard Base (LSB) 4.0 in October that reconciles differences between Linux distributions and cuts the costs to port applications to different distributions. The kit lets developers create applications to earlier Linux Standard Base specs without changing software developer kits. Using LSB 4.0, developers can build to LSB 3.0, 3.1.3.2, or 4.0 specifications. LSB 4.0 contains a shell script-checker that detects potential problems between distributions. For security, LSB 4.0 includes Mozilla Network Security Services and Netscape Portable Runtime and offers Secure Sockets Layer capabilities. Developer tools and test suite for LSB 4.0 are available from www.linuxfoundation.org/en/LSB/.