

ZAPTHINK ZAPNOTE™

IDV SOLUTIONS LOCATION-BASED DATA MASHUPS FOR MICROSOFT SHAREPOINT

Analyst: Jason Bloomberg

Abstract

Combine rich user interface capabilities, deep location-based information, and the power and breadth of the Microsoft SharePoint portal environment, and you have a clear value proposition for IDV Solutions' Visual Fusion Suite. Visual Fusion Suite provides an environment for creating data-based enterprise mashups that combine diverse data sources by leveraging a location-based metaphor. As so many diverse enterprise information needs rely upon location, IDV Solutions is able to offer a broad range of capabilities to enterprises and government organizations worldwide.

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Rich Internet Applications and the Rise of the Enterprise Mashup

The days of simple Web pages and Web sites—now known as “Web 1.0”—are finally behind us. In their place, a new class of presentation layer is now emerging. These *Rich Internet Applications* (RIAs) provide a user experience that is similar to client/server applications, with a rich graphical user interface, responsive performance and highly interactive functionality. RIAs present a rich variety of data and business logic to a broad audience without sacrificing either the economics of the Web or the rich user experience that traditional client/server applications provide.

Generally, RIAs are capable of providing advanced capabilities for user interaction, including desktop-like GUI features and data integration. RIAs enable the composition, and thus the integration, of local and remote sources of data and business logic. These applications can also loosely couple presentation from application logic, allowing developers to change server-side logic without breaking the usability of their applications. Furthermore, RIAs offer more capabilities than either the thick or thin client approaches of the past ever have. As companies desire richer interaction between their Services-based applications and the users of those applications, rich client solutions will increasingly gain prominence in the enterprise.

In fact, it is the combination of RIA technologies with the loosely coupled Services that Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA) enables that deepens the value proposition of these technologies in the enterprise context. To address the core business drivers of agility and user empowerment, organizations must bring together rich interface capabilities and business Services to build, evolve, and share Service-Oriented Business Applications in collaborative environments—in the context of what people are now referring to as *Enterprise Web 2.0*.

Enterprise Web 2.0 is an umbrella term that brings together the family of collaborative, Web-enabled capabilities that fall under the Web 2.0 banner, and makes them relevant for the enterprise. Such buzzwords, of course, are still quite new and inherently flexible, and are one of the many side-effects of emerging markets. Into this buzzword-heavy Web 2.0 world comes yet another important term—the mashup. According to Wikipedia, a mashup is a Web site or Web application that seamlessly combines content from more than one source into an integrated experience.

Mashups, in fact, are closely related to SOA, because SOA enables the composition of content or functionality from more than one source into an integrated experience. What mashups bring to SOA is the rich interface. The enterprise mashup, therefore, combines RIA capabilities with SOA, enabling flexible, composable, and collaborative business applications with rich interfaces.

Location: The Enterprise Mashup “Killer App”

Among all the forms of information that people leverage in the course of their work, location-based information is perhaps the most appropriate for enterprise mashups. After all, location-based information is pervasive in the enterprise and its business processes. Mashups that

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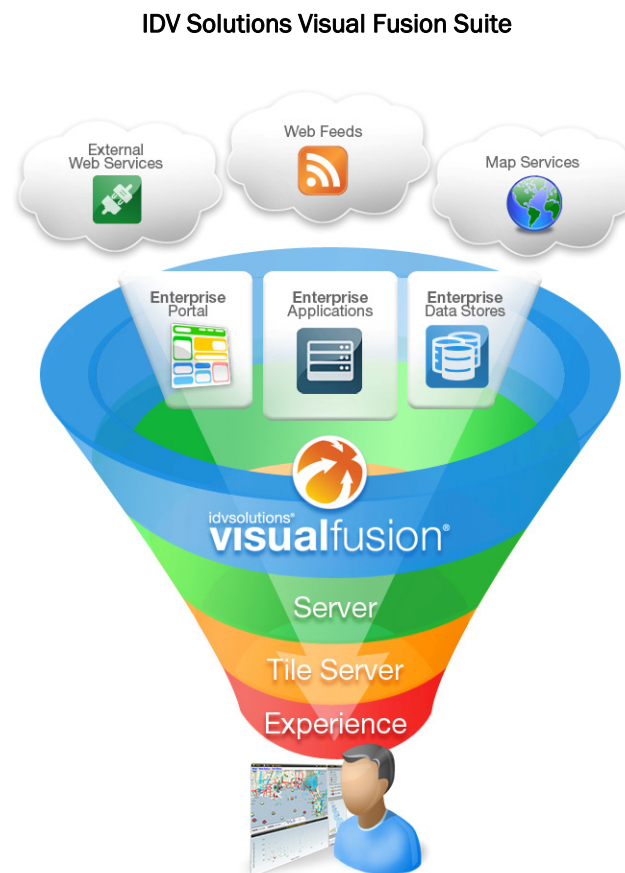
combine location information with business intelligence and data visualization can augment and support a wide range of strategic business activities.

Visualization in relation to location usually refers to mapping, since maps are an intuitive way to see and understand data. The visual power of maps can illustrate trends, patterns, and insights in a way that other data presentation formats cannot. However, location intelligence is more than mapping. It also includes advanced analysis related to spatial relationships. Such spatial analysis asks questions in terms of location. Another linchpin of location intelligence is the data enhancement value proposition that mashups enable by combining various sources of enterprise information with other data sources both internal and external to the enterprise.

IDV Solutions: Location-Based Enterprise Mashups

IDV Solutions provides visual composite applications by leveraging the Microsoft environment. Their suite of products, *Visual Fusion Suite*, helps organizations engage their enterprise data in an interactive RIA environment. IDV Solutions thus helps their customers make their information more accessible, understandable, and contextual. Through the visual integration of numerous data sources including location-based information, IDV delivers intuitive and compelling enterprise mashups by visually integrating disparate data sources and maximizing the benefits of SOA.

Visual Fusion Suite consists of three core applications: Visual Fusion Server, Visual Fusion Experience, and Visual Fusion Tile Server, as shown in the figure below. *Visual Fusion Server* (VFS) goes beyond typical enterprise mashup software to integrate with and extend Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007 (MOSS) and connect to any data source or Web Service. VFS empowers users to create compelling, interactive data-based mashups.



Source: IDV Solutions

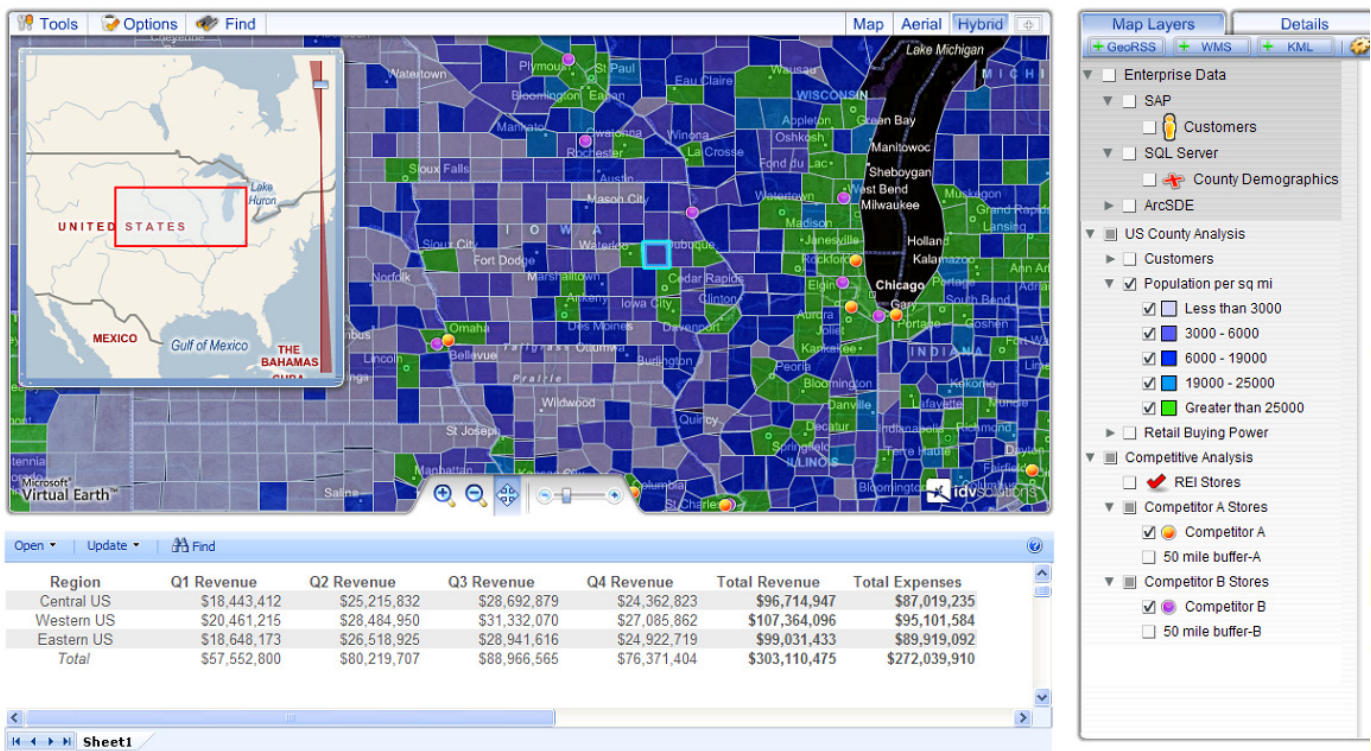
Furthermore, VFS offers advanced spatial operations that leverage MOSS functionality such as Excel Services, Enterprise Search, the Business Data Catalog, and security. VFS also enhances MOSS Libraries and Lists with geospatial data from existing enterprise data stores, such as SQL Server and ArcSDE, Web Services, and various information feeds, all on top of a Virtual Earth base map.

Visual Fusion Experience (VFE) is a set of RIA components that users can deploy as SharePoint Web Parts or as standard Flash Web page components. VFE makes use of a map as the primary metaphor for interacting with, exploring, and viewing enterprise information. VFE compliments VFS by offering a rich client that provides advanced mapping, information, and data display functionality. Key components to VFE include map viewer, legend layer control, data viewer, as well as various charts and graphs.

Visual Fusion Tile Server (VFTS) enhances the functionality and capabilities of the Microsoft technology stack for Web-based mapping. VFTS takes advantage of advances in map tiling and caching, providing a way for organizations to serve up imagery and other Web Mapping Services. VFTS serves up map tiles compatible with Virtual Earth 2D and 3D map controls, and also caches the tiles, enabling map access while offline or in a disconnected environment.

An illustration of a location-based enterprise mashup that leverages IDV Solutions Visual Fusion Suite appears in the figure below:

Location-Based Mashup with Visual Fusion Suite



Source: IDV Solutions

IDV Solutions' Visual Fusion Suite Features

Overview:

IDV Solutions' Visual Fusion Suite provides organizations with enterprise-ready location software that leverages Microsoft SharePoint to provide a platform for bringing data together in an intuitive mapping and information display. It enables customers to bring the power of location to their intranet portals, dashboards, Web sites, and decision support systems.

Visual Fusion Suite Features:

- **Location Intelligence** – Combines business intelligence with location-based software and Services to increase understanding of business information.
- **Enterprise GIS** – Uses the power of geography to uncover hidden patterns, visually combine data sets, and identify new opportunities.
- **Interactive Data Visualization** – Enhances productivity by enabling more informed decisions through interactive visual displays and tools.
- **Rich Internet Applications** – Increases the usability and user-experience of Web-based applications through richer functionality and dynamic interactivity.

Value Proposition:

- Visual Fusion Server helps organizations save time and gain a return on their data investments by integrating and leveraging their data sources into a single Web portal. VFS provides comprehensive data management with a consistent user experience.
- Visual Fusion Experience provides browser-based components for displaying and analyzing information that unlock the ability to make quicker information-based decisions.
- Visual Fusion Tile Server enhances enterprise mapping by increasing performance of existing Web mapping services. VFTS provides enterprises with mapping technology that enables rich, compelling visual composite applications.

The ZapThink Take

Even though the location-based mashups that IDV Solutions enable leverage loosely coupled Services that SOA provides, the SOA story fades into the background, which is where it belongs. Visual Fusion Suite provides user value at the interface through the flexible mashing up of data important to the organization. In essence, the enterprise mashup becomes the “killer use case” for SOA, delivering business value in a flexible, visually intuitive manner.

It is also important to note that while the most common uses of Visual Fusion Suite leverage earth-based location information, the tools work equally well for any two or three dimensional graphical environment, including blueprints, floor plans, etc. With the addition of the time component, the power of the software remains largely untapped, as IDV Solutions' customers have only taken advantage of the most straightforward capabilities of the software. ZapThink

expects that as organizations increasingly take advantage of such capabilities, they will achieve increasing levels of value from their enterprise mashups, and in turn, their SOA initiatives overall.

Profile: IDV Solutions		March 2008
Funding:	Self-funded	
CEO:	Mark Morrison	
Products:	Visual Fusion Suite	
US Address:	5913 Executive Dr Suite 320 Lansing, MI 48911	
URL:	http://www.idvsolutions.com	
Phone:	(517) 853-3755 x204	
Contact:	info@idvsolutions.com	

Related Research

- *JustSystems* ZapNote (ZTZN-1222)
- *XAware* ZapNote (ZTZN-1220)
- *Corizon* ZapNote (ZTZN-1216)
- *Hyfinity* ZapNote (ZTZN-1210)
- *Nexaweb* ZapNote (ZTZN-1207)
- *JackBe* ZapNote (ZTZN-1204)
- *Service-Oriented Data Access* White Paper (WP-0162)
- *Rich Internet Applications: Market Trends and Technologies* Report (ZTR-WS112)
- *Rich and Smart Clients for Service-Oriented Architectures* Report (ZTR-WS111)
- *Composing Services into Enterprise Mashups* White Paper (WP-0144)
- *Enterprise Mashups: The Face of SOA* ZapForum Podcast (ZTP-0292)
- *Building Rich Enterprise Applications* ZapForum Podcast (ZTP-0283)



About ZapThink, LLC

ZapThink is an Enterprise Architecture (EA) strategy advisory firm. As a recognized authority and master of Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA) and EA, ZapThink provides its audience of IT practitioners, consultants, and technology vendors with practical advice, guidance, education, and mentorship solutions that assist companies in leveraging SOA to meet their business needs and presenting viable SOA solutions to the market. We provide this audience a clear roadmap for standards-based, loosely coupled distributed computing – a vision of IT meeting the needs of the agile business.

ZapThink provides IT practitioners strategic insight and practical guidance for addressing critical agility and change management issues leveraging the latest EA and SOA best practices. ZapThink helps these customers put EA and SOA into practice in a rational, well-paced, and best practices-driven manner and helps to validate or recover architecture initiatives that may be heading down an unknown or incorrect path. ZapThink assists with solution vendor, technology, and consultant selection based on in-depth, objective evaluation of the capabilities, strengths, and applicability of the solutions to meet customer needs as they relate to EA initiatives and as they map against emerging best practices. ZapThink enhances its customer's skills by providing education, credentialing, and training to EAs to develop their skills as architects.

ZapThink helps to augment consulting firms' EA offerings and intellectual property by providing guidance on emerging best practices and access to information that supports those practices. ZapThink provides frameworks for product-based consulting based on ZapThink insight and research, such as SOA Implementation Roadmap guidance, Governance Framework development, and SOA Assessments, and provides a means to endorse and validate consulting firm offerings. ZapThink also accelerates consulting firms' efforts to attract, retain, and enhance the skills of EA and SOA talent by providing education and skills development

For solutions vendors, ZapThink provides retained advisory for guidance on product strategy, as well as marketing, visibility, and third-party endorsement benefits through its marketing activities, lead generation activities, and subscription services. ZapThink enables vendors to leverage ZapThink knowledge to transform their offerings in a cost-effective manner.

ZapThink's Managing Partners are widely regarded as the "go to advisors" and leading experts on SOA, EA, and Enterprise Web 2.0 by vendors, end-users, and the press. Respected for their candid, insightful opinions, they are in great demand as speakers, and have presented at conferences and industry events around the world. They are among the most quoted experts in the IT industry.

ZapThink was founded in October 2000 and is headquartered in Baltimore, Maryland. Its customers include Global 1000 firms and government organizations, as well as many emerging businesses. Its Managing Partners have worked at such firms as IDC, Saga Software, Mercator Software, marchFIRST, and ChannelWave, and have sat on the working group committees for standards bodies such as RosettaNet, UDDI, and ebXML.

Call, email, or visit the ZapThink Web site to learn more about how ZapThink can help you to better understand how SOA will impact your business or organization.

ZAPTHINK CONTACT:

ZapThink, LLC
108 Woodlawn Road
Baltimore, MD 21210
Phone: +1 (781) 207 0203
Fax: +1 (815) 301 3171
info@zapthink.com
www.zapthink.com