

**Accenture Springs into Open Source Software**

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Comment by [Matt Lawton](#)

On May 8, 2007, Accenture and Interface21 announced that they are collaborating to launch Spring Batch, an open source framework for the development of enterprise batch applications. Building on the [Spring Framework](#), which is an open source programming model for enterprise Java, [Spring Batch](#) enables the bulk processing of business transactions and data. [Accenture](#) is contributing formerly proprietary software and its considerable expertise in batch processing while [Interface21](#) is a commercial entity that created and provides ongoing support for the Spring Framework. Spring Batch will be licensed under Apache 2.0, the same license as other Spring Framework open source software.

On the surface, this announcement is similar to many others that seem to be made quite regularly, where a company has decided to pitch some code into the open source arena to try to establish a community that will use and support the code, while leveraging the publicity and (at least short term) good will that may ensue. But IDC sees this as an important step from a company that is a significant member of a category of commercial companies, system integrators, that has to date been rather quiet about open source software. Here's why we think this is important:

- System integrators have a great opportunity to use open source software as part of their software implementations for their clients. They can provide expertise about what open source software is safe to use, how best to leverage the open source software, and even contribute to some degree in the evolution of existing open source software projects, like Bull is doing with JBoss (see *Shaking Up the Status Quo: Recent Developments in Open Source Software Put into Context*, December 2006, [IDC #204823](#)). But large system integrators are stepping carefully into supporting open source software, since they currently generate a sizeable and profitable revenue stream from implementing and supporting proprietary software. These companies know they need to be more involved with open source software, but they don't know exactly how, nor do they understand the impact on their business model. By putting software Accenture had developed over the past five years or more into the open source arena, the company is testing the theory that it will be able to establish a platform for batch processing that will grow the market for its services rather than diminish the market due to easy access to the framework by its competition.
- The act of contributing its own code to create an open source software project is a public expression of Accenture's emerging strategy to go beyond being an integrator of open source technologies. In IDC's terms, Accenture has now become an open source project vendor in addition to being a project partner and/or a vendor partner (see *IDC's Worldwide Open Source Software Business Models Taxonomy, 2006*, December 2006, [IDC #204547](#)). Accenture could have chosen to embrace an existing open source project as the way to get in the game of supporting open source software. But instead it chose to become much more active in open source, by actually contributing code and working to establish a community around that code, with the help of Interface21. This is no small task for a system integrator. Not only must it learn the ins and outs of community development, but it must also worry about ensuring that none of the software its employees have written under contract for its clients (and owned by its clients) is allowed to creep into the open source project. This will require ongoing vigilance and the establishment of strong internal procedures at Accenture — something that the company has identified and has already taken steps to address.
- The Spring Batch project is the first project established by Accenture in the open source community, but there may be many others from Accenture. Accenture sees this project as

- both a viable project in its own right and as a test of a path for several other intellectual property projects that Accenture has developed.
- Other system integrators should take notice. If Accenture's action today in establishing an open source software project proves successful over the coming years, it will serve as both a model for other system integrators and as a competitive threat. One only needs to look at the success of IBM's initial establishment of the Eclipse project to see the potential benefits that may accrue to the organizations that get this right.

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