

IBM Podcast

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BRUNEL: Welcome to another edition of Getting The Most Out of IBM U2. I'm Kenny Brunel, your host for this podcast series, and today we're going to discuss UniVerse 10.3, the latest release of the data server.

Here to tell us more, I have several guests with me here in the studio. My first guest is Helen Beylkin, and Helen is the development manager for the U2 data servers. Helen, thanks for joining me today.

BEYLKIN: Morning, Kenny. Thank you.

BRUNEL: My next guest is Jackie Burhans. Jackie is the portfolio manager for the U2 product suite. And Jackie, thanks for your input today.

BURHANS: Thank you, Kenny. Glad to be here.

BRUNEL: Also with me in the studio is the UniVerse product manager Dave Peters. Dave, welcome.

PETERS: Thank you, Kenny. Glad to be here, too.

BRUNEL: And joining us remotely over the phone today is Neil Morris. Neil is an advanced support engineer for

UniVerse.

MORRIS: Hi, Kenny. Glad to be here today.

BRUNEL: So first of all, let's talk about some of IBM's overall initiatives. IBM's been getting a fair amount of press recently with some of its Smarter Planet initiatives, including appearances with the President of the United States. And Jackie, I can think of no better person than you to talk about this.

BURHANS: Thank you Kenny. What we see here at IBM is that something really meaningful is happening: the world is getting flatter, the world is getting smaller, the world is about to get a lot smarter. And it really needs to. With today's business climate, there's really a mandate for change.

When we talk about a Smarter Planet, there are many facets to this. One of them is about working smarter, and that fits in really well with the U2 theme of empowering business solutions. And I think that also fits well with this particular release, where what we're doing is providing the tools to empower our partners, to develop world-class business solutions.

BRUNEL: Thank you, Jackie. Dave, now I'm going to turn to you as the product manager. Perhaps you can talk about

some of the things that we're doing in UniVerse that fit into the Smarter Planet initiative, and maybe you can highlight some of the improvements in UniVerse 10.3.

PETERS: Sure, Kenny. As you probably know, our next major release of the UniVerse is scheduled for 2010, that will be UniVerse 11.1. When users saw what we were planning for our next versions of UniVerse, they expressed an interest in getting certain features that they needed now as soon as possible. So we came up with UniVerse 10.3 as a minor release, and this release is going to be focused on two things primarily: enhancements for application developers and improvements to security.

BRUNEL: Jackie, Dave first mentioned improvements to application development; perhaps that's something that you could drill down into a little bit for us.

BURHANS: Certainly, Kenny. One of the ways that you work smarter is that you have better tools, and that's where we focused on UniVerse 10.3, is providing new tools or improving the tools we already have for application developers.

And of those, one of the foremost is our Basic Developer Toolkit -- or, BDT. This is a great graphical tool for exploring your U2 accounts, your files, your dictionaries

and for coding. And it's a very powerful, professional tool for basic developers to create programs, edit them, compile them and debug them all in one very, very professional development tool.

Another area that we worked on was extending our UniObjects for .NET and providing a compact framework version of that.

So for people wanting to build tools for smart phones, for PDAs, what have you, this lets them take the power of UniObjects for .NET down to the smallest of devices.

And then finally, one of the other areas to focus on is some improvements to our XML support. We've had XML support for quite some time, and where we focused on this release was improving some of the encoding functionality and extending the API for those people who are writing applications that need to support multiple languages.

BRUNEL: Neil, another point that Dave brought up were the improvements to security in UniVerse 10.3. And being in support, I would suspect you are especially sensitive to what our customers needs are in terms of keeping their own data as well as their customers' data secure. So perhaps you could just give us an overview of what those security enhancements to UniVerse 10.3 are.

MORRIS: Sure, Kenny. Security is a very important

consideration for our customers. At UniVerse 10.2 we added ADE -- or, Automatic Data Encryption for encrypting data at rest. Based on customer feedback, we've added a couple of very important features at UniVerse Release 10 to improve the ease of use and implementation of that functionality.

One of those is an encryption key wallet. It basically allows you to logically group a set of encryption keys and enable or disable those keys as a group. This actually eliminates the need to have to activate or deactivate lots of individual keys, and that helps the application developer localize the activation and deactivation of those keys. This capability was also integrated with the U2 client software at UniVerse Release 10.3.

So at 10.3, the client software can now make calls to activate or deactivate this group of keys, providing the clients with all the security and protection of the automatic data encryption functionality.

The second feature with Automatic Data Encryption added at 10.3 is the ability to import and export the key store metadata. This allows you to move...easily move and securely move data from one system to another in the encrypted format.

You know, one example is you might want to move a copy of

your production data to a development machine; this capability allows you to do that, move the encryption key metadata very easily, but it's secure as well because it's protected by multiple passwords.

Another security feature at 10.3 is the UniVerse now supports Pluggable Authentication Modules, PAM; and, Lightweight Directory Access Protocol, LDAP. This basically enables UniVerse applications to authenticate users through the use of independent authentication modules at runtime.

And finally, another security area is the use...is the securing of your data while in motion. This is something that's been added to the different interfaces over time, and at 10.3, this capability was added to the UniObjects for .NET product by incorporating the SSL stream capabilities available in the .NET framework.

BRUNEL: Thank you, Neil. Helen, as the U2 development manager, I know that having our products be better, more user-friendly, more intuitive for our customers has always been something important to you. And I don't think Dave mentioned it specifically, but I'm sure that you've made improvements to this version of UniVerse in terms of consumability. Can you talk to that a little bit?

BEYLKIN: Certainly, Kenny. In this release we have

added a deployment wizard to U2 Web Services Developer, which is one of our most popular development tools. This wizard makes it very easy for developers of Web Services to deploy their newly-created U2 SOAP service to production machines and subsequently administer and monitor those SOAP servers.

While the U2 Web Services Developer itself only is supported on Windows and Linux platforms, using this deployment wizard U2 Web Services can be deployed to any type of a machine whether this is Windows, UNIX or Linux. Other consumability improvements include a better organized client CD installation menus and a greatly simplified installation of Eclipse-based tools.

Our tools include what we just mentioned, Web Services Developer, also basic development toolkits, XML DB2 and others. Yet another feature worth noting is the new browser-based interface for readme notes with its easy to use navigation and search capabilities.

BRUNEL: Thank you, Helen. Dave, as I understand it, you took a slightly different approach to gathering input for this release. Can you explain the process that you went through for UniVerse 10.3?

PETERS: Sure, Kenny. We consolidated input from our

customers and focused on what they said they needed as soon as possible. And those areas turned out to be development and security features enhancements. But we also made this a minor release. We added new functionality and new features, but we did not enhance or rearchitect the core functionality that our customers depend upon. So we anticipate this will be an easy upgrade for our customers.

In addition, we've...in order to take advantage of some of the new features we had to upgrade our build platforms. So the build platforms for 10.3 are greater than they were for UniVerse 10.2. That means that if you were using an AIX platform, you'd have to be using AIX 5.3 or greater if you upgrade to UniVerse 10.3.

In addition, we had an open beta for the first time. By open beta, we mean that we make the code available to anybody that wanted to test it, go out and get it, they could go out and get it.

BRUNEL: So we talked about some of the improvements that we made in security, some improvements in consumability and also the new application development tools that are available with UniVerse. So now I would like to throw it out to the group to talk about how our users get the most out of these new features and new functionality.

PETERS: Well, Kenny, I'd like to bring up the fact that users could go out and download the Personal Edition from www.ibm.com. That would give them a non-charge edition that they could play with and experiment with. If that turns out to be not enough and they need more power in the server, they can ask for an evaluation copy. I'd also like to bring up that they should watch for upcoming events and webinars through the U2 News Flash.

BURHANS: Those are good ideas, Dave. Some other things that I would add is that we're going to be doing another series of U2 University events this year: one here in Denver, Colorado, where a lot of us are located, developers, support folks as well as product management.

We'll also be in the UK and in Sydney, Australia, as well. So if you can make it to one of those, you'll get to see some sessions on some of these new technologies as well as existing technologies you may not have had a chance to explore.

Another great resource for you though is the Developer Zone.

This is a new section of our Web site that's geared towards developers that is really organized in a way that gets you quickly to the information you need.

Whether you are a basic developer, a Java enthusiast, or you

like to program in the .NET environment, or you'd like to use one of our tools, we've got information there for all of you in a handy format where you can find what you need.

And finally, if you're needing a quick start to get going quickly or you need some help with a very big project, you might think about engaging with our U2 Lab Services folks. They've got really deep skills and a lot of great experience in helping people learn new technology and implement it in large-scale implementations.

BEYLKIN: And remember, UniVerse documentation is another great source of information. It is available on the documentation CD and also online in the library section of the U2 Web pages. You can learn what's new in this release from the manual called new features. For additional indepth information, follow the developerWorks U2 link in the Resources section of the main U2 page.

Recently published articles include U2 Security In Motion and Securing U2 Web Services. And if you are interested in developing applications for handheld devices, look for an upcoming article on the development with the UniObjects .NET for Compact Framework.

MORRIS: From a support perspective, having an active subscription of the support agreement in place can provide a

lot of benefits, provides access to both voice and electronics support services. For Severity 1 issues, live 24 by seven coverage is available.

It also provides access to an extensive knowledgebase containing technical articles and documents. This knowledgebase can be used to assist in directly solving problems as well as providing helpful information on new features of the...or functionality that you're implementing.

And additionally, having an active support agreement provides access to all new releases containing the new functionality as we've discussed today as well as defect corrections.

One other option available is premium support. If you're looking for assistance beyond what's available in the standard agreement, premium support may be the answer. Premium support services include advanced support for application development, upgrades and installations and various administrative tasks. There is actually separate podcasts dedicated specifically to premium support, so if you're interested in more information you can take a look at that podcast.

BRUNEL: Thank you, Neil. And I think that pretty much wraps up today's episode. So I would like to thank each of

my guests for joining me today. Neil, thanks for calling in from Portland, Maine.

MORRIS: Thank you, Kenny. I was happy to be here.

BRUNEL: Jackie, Helen, Dave, you guys are great.

BURHANS: Always a joy to be here with you Kenny.

BEYLKIN: Thanks, Kenny.

PETERS: Thank you, Kenny.

BRUNEL: And I would like to thank our listeners for tuning in today, and I hope you found today's podcast useful. Be sure to e-mail us with your feedback, any comments you may have, and suggestions for future episodes.

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