

News

Eclipse gaining ground at five-year mark

IDC: One in five software developers use Eclipse

Heather Havenstein 08/11/2006 08:51:14

Five years ago this week, the Eclipse consortium was unveiled by IBM and others with an eye toward offering tools based on the Eclipse open-source integrated software development environment.

Since then, use of Eclipse has spread among corporate developers working with both the publicly available Eclipse source code as well as packaged tools based on the technology from vendors such as IBM, BEA Systems and Borland Software.

Research firm IDC estimates that more than 20 percent of software developers worldwide work in organizations that make significant use of Eclipse. The IDE has been managed by the nonprofit Eclipse Foundation since early 2004.

"Compared to other commercial products, Eclipse is much better in quality and features," said Barry Strasnick, CIO at CitiStreet, a U.S.-based benefits provider. "There is very little reason to spend money on commercial IDEs anymore. We have not enforced [Eclipse's] use for all developers, but it has become the de facto standard."

Based on surveys of CitiStreet developers, Strasnick said that Eclipse makes software development more efficient because it reports errors as soon as code is typed and because it can organize Java code without requiring that it be manually changed.

"The quality of the Java code produced using Eclipse is much better than code produced using other tools," Strasnick said. "Nowadays, most developers [at CitiStreet] wouldn't think of developing even small Java programs without using Eclipse. It just does not make sense to do it the hard way."

John Cunningham, president of U.S.-based Band XI International, said his company used Eclipse to build a commercial wireless application that runs on handheld devices and monitors sensors for nerve agents, cyanide, radiation and other threats.

The application, called Cyrano, was used by the Michigan National Guard to patrol for possible biological, chemical or nuclear attacks at the 2006 Super Bowl in Detroit and at NASCAR races in June and August.

Philip Rusiecki, survey team leader in the Michigan National Guard's 51st Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team, said that before automating the monitoring effort with Cyrano, soldiers at such events would use a radio to report the readings from sensors to a central command center. The unit first used Cyrano at this year's Super Bowl, he said.

In the past, soldiers -- who would typically be the first to respond to a terrorist attack -- would spend 20 percent to 30 percent of their time reporting results, he said. "Cyrano allows us to log all the readings that come back from the hot zone," Rusiecki said. "It allows the soldiers to concentrate on their mission and not on reporting back readings from radiation meters."

Rusiecki said he was initially worried that the system might not work with new detectors and sensors but found that it is "very adaptable."

David Johnson, director of software engineering at E! Entertainment Television in Los Angeles, said that most developers at his firm choose to use the Eclipse IDE. "Eclipse early on integrated well with our source management system, where other tools were lagging behind in support," he said.

Mike Milinkovich, executive director of the Eclipse Foundation, said in a typical month that the foundation -- which became independent of its founder IBM in 2004 -- has 500,000 download requests for the production version of its software development kit.

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