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News

IBM Raises Its Voice

Several speech-technology partnerships and products may help Big Blue get heard over the revenue din of its competition.

by [Coreen Bailor](#)

Wednesday, January 25, 2006

TOP STORY



IBM took additional steps toward strengthening its footing in the speech technology market Tuesday, revealing a handful of speech recognition-focused partnerships and products at its Future of Speech Day, in New York. Among the announcements were partnerships with Openstream, a mobile Internet infrastructure platform and applications provider, and VoiceBox Technologies, which delivers conversational voice-search functionality, and an upgrade to the IBM Embedded ViaVoice software.

Openstream will embed IBM WebSphere Everyplace Multimodal software into its mobile solutions platform. This will allow end-users to access information by talking to a device or typing and tapping buttons on devices like phones and PDAs. "Mobile workers are able to access information more freely and easily in non-traditional environments, which will enhance productivity and efficiency," says Daniel Hong, senior voice business analyst at Datamonitor.

"The partnership facilitates a much-needed product integration that simplifies the sale of multimodal solutions," Hong says. Openstream already has a partnership with IBM that included Openstream contributing speech components to the IBM-Apache RDC (Reusable Dialog Component) framework.

IBM also announced that VoiceBox will integrate IBM Embedded ViaVoice, its speech-recognition engine, into VoiceBox Navigator, a conversational voice-search platform. XM Satellite Radio is the first user of the fused functionality, enabling drivers to carry out tasks like switching XM channels and requesting sports and weather information by talking to their XM radio. VoiceBox also has entered into a multiyear deal with Johnson Controls, which specializes in automotive systems and facility management and control, to deliver VoiceBox Navigator's conversational voice search and retrieval capabilities using IBM Embedded ViaVoice.

Last, the company announced its IBM Embedded ViaVoice 4.4, allowing

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drivers and handheld-device users to speak naturally. Enhancements include improved acoustic model training techniques and improvements in speech-silence detection. In the past year, IBM has not been as successful as its competitors in the network speech arena, according to Hong. "However, I expect IBM will have greater success this year as it centralizes its network speech and WebSphere product lines and strategies."

Outside of the announcements, IBM executives discussed trends like industry consolidation and open standards. "One of the things that's interesting, if you look at speech over the last ten years...is the correlation to the World Wide Web. It started off as the wild, wild West. Everybody had their own speech, their own proprietary methods, their own proprietary connectors, and then standards started to kick in and the world changed," said Brian Garr, program director and segment manager for contact center solutions at IBM Software Group. "Where we see value adding in the enterprise now is not just a [niche-type] of thing. Businesses want to be on-demand businesses. They want to be able to adjust to threats and opportunities. One of the ways to do that is through service-oriented architecture and one of the entry points to service-oriented architecture is speech."

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