

## The World Wide World: IT Ain't Just the Web Anymore!

*The following is excerpted from the March 2005 issue of Release 1.0.*

### **JotSpot: Do-it-yourself personal apps**

BY CHRISTINA KOUKKOS

JotSpot is not “just” a wiki company, insists founder and CEO Joe Kraus. “It’s the long tail of software,” he says. “The Long Tail” is a concept introduced by *Wired* magazine editor Chris Anderson to describe the enormous but fragmented market for niche products and services, and refers to the long, descending curve on the right side of a power-law distribution curve tail. “So far the long tail has been applied to consumer-oriented stuff: Amazon for books, Netflix for movies, Technorati for blogs,” says Kraus. “JotSpot brings it to applications.” Kraus and co-founder and CTO Graham Spencer previously co-founded Excite, the portal and search engine they sold to broadband provider @Home Network for \$6.7 billion in January 1999. After leaving Excite@Home, the pair co-founded Digitalconsumer.org, a non-profit that protects consumer fair-use rights to digital media, before starting JotSpot last year.

JotSpot includes all the usual functionality of a wiki – a sort of mini website on which it’s easy for any (authorized) user to add and edit pages and to track any changes with seamless background version management. But it also offers standard functional workflow and light data tools such as forms, the ability to attach documents or to send and receive e-mail messages to a page, calendars and integrated Google search results.

JotSpot users can combine its integrated tools, applications from the JotSpot user-generated “application gallery” and their own personalizations to build simple, easy-to-adapt mini-applications designed for a specific purpose. “Right now, people build small applications [such as a spreadsheet to manage a project] in Excel and e-mail it around” to the people that might find it useful, says Kraus. “You do it in Excel because no [software developer] is going to build that little app. Anyone can do it. It’s incredibly easy, so it’s disposable: You make it and throw it away. But you would *never* do that with so-called real software.”

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Instead of throwing away Excel mini-apps, JotSpot allows users to re-use, re-purpose and even share applications. “You can even take an Excel sheet you already built, suck it in [to your JotSpot wiki] and make it an app,” says Kraus. “You don’t even know that you’re building an application.”

“The first phase of Web was building data,” explains Kraus. “Now it’s integrating that data” to build personalized experiences and applications. “Not *customization*, but *personalization*,” he stresses.

Unveiled in October 2004, the company raised \$5.2 million and has “thousands” of customers for its free beta accounts. Customers are using JotSpot for “anything from managing the launch of a product, to coordination of its foreign talent pool by a Chinese TV station,” says Kraus. JotSpot currently is in open beta. In the coming months it will officially launch the service, which will cost customers about \$5 per user per month. But before that, it will launch another product (that’s as specific as Kraus would be!) at PC Forum.