

## ZSL develops Web 2.0 assets 3 times faster with IBM WebSphere sMash

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### Overview

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#### ■ **Challenge**

*Enabling workforce collaboration and innovation*

#### ■ **Solution**

*Quickly implemented Web application incorporating rich interactive features such as wikis, blogs, forums and a search engine*

#### ■ **Key Benefits**

*Web application built in 3½ weeks; 67% reduction in time-to-market for developing Web 2.0 assets; 90% less time to implement best-of-breed programs; ability to reuse 25% of code; out-of-the-box functionality vs. 2½ days to install comparable software*



Collaboration is not an option in companies today. It's a necessity. Not only does collaboration provide employees with critical information and ideas that they would not otherwise have, it gets them working together as a team—even if they're spread apart—which helps to boost productivity and speed time to market.

Consider, for instance, global IT solutions provider ZSL Inc., which needed to enable its developer community to answer each other's questions, build on each other's work and be more productive together.

ZSL's R&D Division, called IDEA (Innovative Development of Enterprise Applications) Lab, is located in Chennai,

India with the technical workforce distributed in the UK, Malaysia, Singapore and the U.S. The IDEA Lab is a rapidly growing business united with more than 75 R&D engineers that needed to enhance their collaborative innovation using a Web platform that would enable the sharing of information and ideas and the development of reusable technology assets.

"On a typical project, each department was centered on its own activity, not knowing what other departments were doing, and we ended up reinventing the wheel," says Naveen Noel, senior solutions architect, ZSL. "The same code would be repeated multiple times."



An IBM Business Partner, ZSL was introduced to IBM WebSphere® sMash because they were developing Web 2.0 solutions. IBM invited ZSL to join a small community of early adopters of WebSphere sMash and in parallel began to develop SOA solutions with the rest of the WebSphere portfolio.

WebSphere sMash is a platform—optimized for time-to-value—for building Web 2.0 assets using PHP or Groovy scripting languages or Java™ code. It seemed like the right solution for quickly building a Web application with wikis, blogs and other interactive tools for collaboration. The WebSphere sMash development and execution platform is based on the highly acclaimed public incubator Project Zero (hosted at [projectzero.org](http://projectzero.org)). Because it was developed in the open, companies such as ZSL were able to take advantage of it early on as beta users.

#### **Welcome social networking**

Working with a four-person staff consisting of two recent college graduates and two developers with two years of experience, ZSL launched the Web application project. “In three and a half weeks, they built the entire Web application with most of the features we wanted,” says Noel.

The result of the effort is a Web application framework called Enterprise 2.0 SocNet (which stands for social network). The SocNet is a framework consisting of reusable assets such as wikis, blogs, forums, social bookmarking, tagging, search engine and other Web 2.0 capabilities, which developers can leverage to build collaborative solutions in a variety of platforms. At first, these tools enabled IDEA Lab developers to share their ideas, knowledge and expertise and to find information they are looking for, but now ZSL has extended this framework to other departments within and across different geographic locations. ZSL is currently looking at implementing this solution to all business partners.

“The Enterprise 2.0 SocNet that we built with WebSphere sMash is helping our developer community worldwide to collaborate and contribute their ideas to develop innovative business solutions and also address our Knowledge and Digital Assets Management issues effectively” says Shiv Kumar, executive vice president, ZSL. “And they can validate those innovative ideas with their counterparts in other countries, which drives and encourages the global innovation.”

#### **Incorporating best-of-breed, open source programs in hours**

Within weeks of SocNet’s inception the ZSL team was already enhancing it. “We’re going forward and refining the information the SocNet provides so that it can be better tailored to meet the users’ needs,” says Noel. “Since we spent so little time writing the SocNet, we can accelerate the value we provide to the organization and its partners almost immediately.”

That extraordinary speed to market comes courtesy of WebSphere sMash. The IBM software makes best-of-breed, open source tools easy to integrate. "We're using phpBB, a popular Internet forum package, to structure our forums," says Noel. "We picked that up in a couple of hours. We spent a couple of days incorporating Apache Lucene, which is the best search engine on the Web and it runs on Java. Had we not used WebSphere sMash, we would have spent a month incorporating these tools into our SocNet."

The development team already knew PHP and Java and found Groovy easy to pick up. A second team within ZSL was working on a similar social network application without WebSphere sMash and spent five months on their project.

"If they had been using WebSphere sMash, they would have been able to cut off at least 33 percent of that time," says Noel. "Right now, with the improvements IBM has made to sMash prior to its release, we can reduce our development cycles by 67 percent. That means we can bring a service to market three times faster. And sMash runs almost out-of-the-box, as opposed to a minimum of two days to install any comparable software product. The runtime is so small that you can run it off a thumb drive. And the fact that at least 25 percent of the code is reusable helps accelerate the development process."

#### **It's all about leveraging information**

The next release of SocNet, which will be available to ZSL business partners and customers, will be able to pick up threads from discussions and turn them into leads for a customer service agent. The solution will detect key words and meanings when a customer expresses a desire to build an application in WebSphere sMash, for instance, and will send an alert to the customer service agents' CRM system. An agent can contact the customer directly.

"Using WebSphere sMash and using the SOA foundation to integrate with other enterprise applications, we are bringing a much more collaborative environment, not only to our technical workforce but beyond that," says Kumar. "Web2.0 and WebSphere sMash are the driving force for long-term SOA development for us."

"WebSphere sMash is all about using Web 2.0 assets to achieve business transformation in very little time," says Noel. "And putting information in the right place at the right time for the right people. That's what will enable us to profit more from the information and the contacts we have."



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