

## **App engine: Google's cloud-computing weapon**

*Stacey Higginbotham*

*Now that Google charges for App Engine, and has added Java support, the platform may stand a better chance of winning over corporate IT.*



*Google App Engine*

Google's (GOOG) participation in the cloud relies less on offering raw computing power and more on offering applications such as e-mail and a platform for coders to use. Depending on your point of view, Google has chosen to offer one of the simpler cloud experiences or is exercising draconian levels of control. But one way or another, Google wants to persuade developers and corporations to use its App Engine platform to promote adoption of its services inside the enterprise.

App Engine debuted in May 2008 as a coding platform geared toward smaller Web startups building applications. It only supported the Python programming language, was free, and didn't allow users to consume a lot of resources without permission. Google started charging developers to use App Engine three months ago, and earlier this month added to it support for Java, a programming language popular in the corporate world.

App Engine is Google's attempt to offer a platform as a service—what we think of as the middle ground inside the cloud. If software as a service is dinner at a restaurant and infrastructure as a service is making a meal at home using already prepped food from the grocery store, then platforms as a service are the semi-convenient middle ground, where you put a selection of precut and prepared vegetables together to make a bunch of meals. You have some ability to customize, but there are still limits to what you can make with the choices provided.

Still too proprietary?

The premise of these platforms is they take away the complexity of managing a bunch of actual machines (even if they are in the cloud) but still allow developers to build customized programs. However, with that simplicity comes a loss of control. Some developers dislike the way App Engine requires them to handle data and have complaints over the proprietary nature of the standards Google uses, which means that apps built in App Engine won't easily port to another platform.

Mike Repass, a program manager for App Engine, acknowledges the complaints but defends those limits, saying the way Google forces programmers to code is a function of the company being concerned about scale. Google's expertise, after all, is in scaling out applications to millions of users without a hitch. A key question will be whether corporate IT wants to lock itself in and change the way it codes for the sake of easy scaling—a feature that may not be as important when building an application designed for internal use.

Google will compete with platforms as a service from Microsoft and Rackspace. Both Google and Microsoft are also planning to use their platforms to create deeper ties between their software products and the custom apps built on the platforms, much like Salesforce.com has

created Force.com or Intuit has Quickbase. However, Google and Microsoft will support programs that have no relation at all to their own products.

Repass says the goal is to offer existing corporate customers of Google's software products, such as Google Docs and Gmail, the opportunity to build on top of them. The custom programs will abide by the same compliance and authorization rules the existing Google Apps use, Repass says. Since the next battle over enterprise software is going to be fought in the cloud, Google is beefing up its platform as a service to wield as a weapon against its rivals.

HIGGINBOTHAM, Stacey. App engine: Google's cloud-computing weapon. **BusinessWeek**, New York, 1 maio 2009. Disponível em: <[www.businessweek.com](http://www.businessweek.com)>. Acesso em: 5 maio 2009.

A utilização deste artigo é exclusiva para fins educacionais