

The Open Group and CalConnect Move Closer to Solving Free/Busy Problem

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During The Open Group's IT Architecture Practitioners Conference being held this week at the Hyatt Regency Coral Gables in Miami, members of the Calendaring and Scheduling Consortium (CalConnect) demonstrated a proof-of-concept application to aggregate and display free/busy information collected from multiple organizations using multiple calendaring applications.

This demonstration was in response to The Open Group Free/Busy Challenge issued in January 2006 on behalf of The Boeing Company. The challenge had a very aggressive schedule and was based upon specific needs identified by Boeing. The Open Group and Boeing, which is a member of both consortia, invited CalConnect to partner with them in addressing the challenge.

The proof-of-concept demonstration represents a coordinated effort between The Open Group's Messaging Forum and CalConnect to find ways to identify free/busy status for people from different organizations using different calendaring systems as an aid to scheduling joint activities, such as meetings and teleconferences.

The specific objectives of the proof-of-concept project were:

- a real-time mechanism;
- ability to extract and collate/display free/busy information;
- integration of at least three major calendaring systems;
- open standard protocols; and
- can be implemented today.

“Our members identified the need for a simple mechanism to see when a group of people would be available for a meeting, whether within or outside of their companies,” said Allen Brown, president and CEO, The Open Group. “CalConnect is a logical partner for us in solving the interoperability problems that make current approaches inefficient and time-consuming.”

The Calendaring and Scheduling Consortium (CalConnect) is working on comprehensive standards-based solutions for calendar and scheduling functionality and interoperability, of which exchange of free/busy information is an important part.

The objectives of the proof-of-concept project were fully achieved within the specified time frame. The demonstration in Miami included display of free/busy data aggregated across seven different calendaring systems, including Bedework, Google Calendar, Lotus Notes, Microsoft Exchange, Oracle Calendar, OSAF's Chandler and TimeBridge. The core technology used was CalDAV, an open standard for calendar access and management. Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, the developer of the Bedework Calendar, used its open source CalDAV implementation and developed a Free/Busy Aggregator and browser interface. Boeing and IBM contributed connectors to interface CalDAV with Exchange and Notes respectively. TimeBridge demonstrated its scheduling service's ability to aggregate free/busy information across multiple organizations directly within a user's Microsoft Outlook client.

“CalConnect was very pleased to demonstrate a practical application of the emerging CalDAV standard to address a real world problem, and thanks its members, in particular Rensselaer Polytechnic, The Boeing Company, IBM and TimeBridge, for their efforts,” said Dave Thewlis, the Executive Director of The Calendaring and Scheduling Consortium. “The only way that this accomplishment could have been met within the timeframe was by building upon open standards-based implementations.”

Based upon CalDAV and other standards, such as iCalendar, the free/busy technology demonstrated can readily be enhanced as the standards are evolved to address such issues as calendar user discovery, automated scheduling and authentication.

The Open Group and CalConnect will continue to work together to produce a comprehensive report of the achievements to date, encourage the deployment of the solutions demonstrated, and plan how to enrich the functionality and applicability of the solutions.

A presentation describing the process and the demonstration may be found at:

<http://www.calconnect.org/presentations/freebusydemo.pdf> or

<http://www.opengroup.org/messaging/public/jul-2006/freebusydemo.pdf>

The Calendaring and Scheduling Consortium (www.calconnect.org)

The Consortium focuses on the interoperable exchange of calendaring and scheduling information between dissimilar programs, platforms, and technologies. The mission is to provide mechanisms to allow calendaring and scheduling methodologies to interoperate to promote understanding of these methodologies, and to enable calendaring and scheduling tools and applications to enter the mainstream of computing. Organizational members include Boeing, Carnegie Mellon, Dartmouth, Duke University, EVDB, Fresno State, Harvard ASCS, IBM, Jet Propulsion Lab, MIT, Mozilla Foundation, New York University, Novell, Open Source Applications Foundation, Oracle Corporation, PeopleCube, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Stanford University, Symbian, TimeBridge, Trumba, UC Berkeley, University of Chicago, University of Washington, University of Wisconsin, Yahoo! Inc.

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, founded in 1824, is the oldest technological university in the U.S. See <http://www.rpi.edu> for more information about Rensselaer.

Bedework is an open source, standards-based, calendaring system. For more information about Bedework, see <http://www.bedework.org>

TimeBridge is a venture-backed start up that is building an innovative meeting scheduling and collaboration service for busy professionals. Based in San Francisco, the company is currently in stealth mode and expects to launch its services later this year. TimeBridge is currently recruiting select users for its private beta program at www.timebridge.com. PR Contact: John Stormer, 510-589-8353, pr@timebridge.com.

About The Open Group's IT Architecture Practitioners Conference

The Open Group's IT Architecture Practitioners Conference, now in its third year, is a globally recognized event created by and for IT Architecture professionals to engage in interactive discussions about a wide variety of topics impacting the profession, such as SOA, architecture disciplines, architecture team development, and setting up an architecture practice. The conference examines the evolving disciplines of IT Architecture with a focus on further defining a common set of core competencies for individuals involved with professional enterprise architecture. Additional information is available at: <http://www.opengroup.org/events/>

About The Open Group

The Open Group is a vendor-neutral and technology-neutral consortium, which drives the creation of Boundaryless Information Flow™ that will enable access to integrated information within and between enterprises based on open standards and global interoperability. The Open Group works with customers, suppliers, consortia and other standard bodies. Its role is to capture, understand and address current and emerging requirements, establish policies and share best practices; to facilitate interoperability, develop consensus, and evolve and integrate specifications and open source technologies, to offer a comprehensive set of services to enhance the operational efficiency of consortia; and to operate the industry's premier certification service. Further information on The Open Group can be found at <http://www.opengroup.org>.

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