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Open-Source Reporting Software Goes Commercial

Startup JasperSoft will challenge established vendors such as Business Objects and Cognos.

By Larry Greenemeier, InformationWeek
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While open-source software isn't ready to supplant large software applications well-known for their three-letter acronyms--ERP, CRM, SCM, etc.--vendors continue to look for ways to apply the open-source model to smaller and more modular applications. The latest is from startup JasperSoft Inc., which formally launches Monday as a provider of open-source report-writing software for data analysis.

JasperSoft's two products are JasperReports, which had been an open-source project until the company last year bought its trademark and copyrights, and JasperDecisions, proprietary report-aggregation portal software that JasperSoft developed over the past four years under the name Panscopic.

The market for reporting tools is driven by the need to transform the massive amounts of data collected from customer-relationship-management, enterprise-resource-planning, and other systems into meaningful reports. But reporting tools in the past have been too expensive and this opened a back door for the JasperReports open-source project, says Paul Doscher, JasperSoft's CEO and former general manager for the Americas at Business Objects SA. Doscher sees JasperSoft as part of the emerging trend of software vendors offering a combination of open-source and proprietary products in a bid to lower the overall cost of software.

JasperSoft aims to challenge market leaders such as Business Objects, which in 2003 acquired Crystal Decisions, and Cognos Inc. Business Objects has integrated Crystal Reports into its BusinessObjects XI, which debuted in early January. Microsoft also offers reporting services, which it builds into its SQL Server database.

JasperSoft will continue to work with the open-source community to develop JasperReports, which works with any Java-based application, says Barry Klawans, the company's chief technical officer. The company also hired JasperReports creator Teodor Danciu to be its chief architect.

As an open-source application, JasperReports is well suited to work with other open-source apps. MySQL AB Monday unveiled a partnership with JasperSoft to offer JasperReports as a reporting tool with the open-source MySQL database. Doscher says his company will soon announce a partnership with Informatica Corp. to provide JasperDecisions portal software for users of Informatica's data-

integration software.

JasperSoft is backed by venture-capital firms Discovery Ventures, Doll Capital Management, and Morgenthaler Ventures.