Droplets and Zaplets

The Red Eye first wrote about a cool new email tool called Zaplets in June. We knew the technology from the Redwood City, California-based company formerly known as Firedrop and now called Zaplet had enormous potential, and not just because the company was backed by Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers's Vinod Khosla, who said that it had a solution to "a real problem." When we interviewed Mr. Khosla in June, he said, "Where you spend your time is collaboration, coordination. This solves the group communication problem, across disparate systems, using the most common multiple, which is html email."

Since then, we've stumbled upon another company that is also moving interactivity off of the Web and onto the desktop. Droplets offers executable client applications that can be dragged and dropped from a Web browser. Both are blurring the distinction between Web, email, and client applications. And both could be part of the first wave of the so-called "X" Internet. Read on to find out more about this mysterious new opportunity.

THE 'X' INTERNET

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA -- Though its name may sound like something from a red-light district, the "X" Internet is not about porn. X stands for "executable," and the X Internet is a potential rival to the Web. Essentially, the X Internet is an idea built on a software model that will use executables, also known simply as programs. Forrester Research chairman and CEO George Colony goes as far as to predict that the X Internet will displace the Web as we know it. "Another software technology will come along and kill off the Web," he writes. "An executable-powered Internet is like a two-way conversation [as opposed to the download-centric current Web]."

The Red Eye thinks Zaplet and Droplets are pioneering the X Internet takeover. Both companies have essentially the same goal with slightly different approaches. They both aim to bring the advantages of the

Web to other programs. Zaplet enhances email by making it dynamic; Droplets brings the real-time nature of the Web to client applications on the desktop.

DYNAMIC DUO
You might use Droplets for things like stock trading and inventory monitoring. The fact that Droplets can operate in real time is ultimately why the X Internet has the potential to affect the Web. Bill Power, the company's director of marketing communications, says Droplets is more secure than the Web since the user has a direct connection to the company's servers. This means the user has all the advantages of being online with fewer of the risks. It is especially suited for functions that require up-to-the-minute updates, like stock trading.

As further evidence that the X Internet shouldn't be ignored, consider the high-profile executives giving it attention. Zaplet wooed Valley veteran Alan Baratz, formerly with Sun Microsystems and Delphi Forums, to its CEO post. Mr. Baratz is credited with turning Java into a commercial enterprise, and he is now back for more. And Droplets just announced that former Philips Electronics CEO Robert Minkhorst will be the newest member of its advisory board. The company also says it is close to a deal with one of the Big Five consulting firms. Furthermore, Lotus Notes creator Ray Ozzie has launched Groove Networks, which makes a new platform for peer-to-peer collaborative applications.

The Red Eye thinks the X Internet has a solid functionality that is going to be hard for Web-centric companies to ignore. The dynamic communication Zaplet and Droplets offers just might be the next killer app. Or, as Forrester's Mr. Colony thinks, just plain Web killer.

-Tony Perkins

About the Author
Anthony B. Perkins is founder, chairman and editor-in-chief of Red Herring Communications, Inc. In 1999, Mr. Perkins co-authored the international best-selling book, The Internet Bubble: Inside the overvalued world of high-tech stocks.