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**Just add Water: Clear Methods unveils Steam 3.10**

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* 07/16/2003

With this week's release of Version 3.10 of the Steam platform, Cambridge, Mass.-based Clear Methods says it has not only increased the flexibility of Web services, but extended XML from the Web realm to all levels of computing.

"There's a lot of hype around XML Web services, but not a lot of delivery," Michael Plusch, Clear Methods' co-founder, CEO and CTO, told eADT. "Web services were this inordinately complex thing even though people tried to put wrappers and front ends that would try to hide the complexity and provide a simple API, but they really didn't tackle the inherent complexity. So application development has not been very effective."

Part of the problem, Plusch said, is the often-imprecise nature of XML.

"XML itself is sort of just a syntax, and it's actually not even a very good one because it's so verbose and ambiguous," he explained. "We've taken the approach of, 'Well what if it was? What if you could relax some of the constraints of XML, and make it so it's viable for handling everything, including processing data and logic?'"

Clear Methods' solution to the problem is Steam, with its open-source Water programming language that uses an XML-based syntax called ConciseXML. Plusch said ConciseXML is compatible with XML 1.0, but has the conciseness of Java or Visual Basic when used for logic.

"Java is for logic and XML is for data, and the two have been basically incompatible," said Plusch. "And so whenever you have two systems that are basically incompatible, there's a lot of workarounds and hacks to get them to talk. So what we've done is said, 'No, let's have a consistent way of representing and manipulating logic, content and data.' And then you minimize the differences between them."

Plusch added that Steam, which is available in five price levels -- from free to enterprise -- can be implemented on a small scale by those who are hesitant about committing to a single, monolithic platform.

"What we've done is to make it so that you could go into any organization and just pick out the one small, incremental thing that they need done -- something that immediately adds value -- and use our platform," said Plusch. "Not replace anything they have, just kind of do whatever needs to be done, so that at any point in that whole block you can add Water."

For more information, go to [www.clearmethods.com](http://www.clearmethods.com/) and [www.ConciseXML.org](http://www.concisexml.org/).