

## 'Mr. Mashup' becomes a CEO

By Rich Karpinski

**Thomas Howe joins telecom API vendor Jaduka while startup Twilio lands funding, proving there's still life in telco 2.0**

With incumbent telecom providers focused on recession-driven blocking and tackling, telecom application program interface (API) innovation will likely have to be driven by upstarts. Two moves this week – Jaduka landing a high-profile CEO and startup Twilio scoring funding – shows that bets are still being made on mashup-style telecom development.

Jaduka formally announced the addition of Thomas Howe as chief executive officer today. After leaving his post as chief technology officer of Comverse (after coming over in the NetCentrex acquisition), Howe spent the past two years not only evangelizing mashup-style telecom API development but also winning seemingly every mashup contest vendors could come up with (see: How I Judged the BroadSoft Apps Contest – And Almost Picked the Winner). We talked with Howe about his mashup ambitions early on in this Telephony podcast.

Jadaku, owned by network operator NetworkIP, was one of the first providers to offer Web services APIs that allow developers to build voice-enabled applications like voice notifications, event-triggered alerts and Web-initiated dialing. Jadaku offers access to its APIs on a pay-as-you-go basis and claims its APIs are accessed a million times daily. Jadaku reported details of its exponential growth last summer. Other voice API competitors include BT's Ribbit, ifbyPhone and BroadSoft.

Howe's contention is that the industry shouldn't focus on creating new voice applications but rather work to make voice a part of a wide array of enterprise applications. "Instead of concentrating on making better voice applications, let's make applications better with voice," Howe said in a blog post announcing his appointment. "The problem is that most applications aren't voice, and most engineers aren't voice engineers. Instead of making voice tools, and investing into voice technologies like VxML and ParlayX, let's make tools that non-voice engineers can use to add voice to their applications. And I'm not talking about visual tools, and I'm not talking about better IVRs. We need to get much, much simpler."

In other telecom API news today, startup Twilio announced initial funding by Founders Fund and PC pioneer Mitchell Kapor. Like its rivals, Twilio is an on-demand offering that lets developers integrate voice functionality into applications via a set of open APIs. As part of its funding announcement, Twilio also announced several customers, including Cheetos, Earth911 and Tumblr, the latter a micro-blogging service which used Twilio to launch its "audio-posting" feature earlier this month.