Hailstorm, another battle for controlling the standard
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Officially, Microsoft's Hailstorm strategy consists of storing in a centralised database all the information, including secure sites passwords, that an end user may need to surf the Internet from any computer or any place in the world. Probably, the system, which in fact behaves as a service integrator, would appeal to many mobile users who access the Net from different points and devices, be that the office, the home, the desktop computer or the mobile phone. The problem found by both competitors and usual allies of Microsoft is that there is a hidden strategy to set a standard. It's quite evident that in the case a user identification service like this were accepted, there wouldn't be any room in the market for many providers. Thus, the race for controlling the standard is assured. History teaches that Microsoft has been traditionally very clever at defining proprietary "standards" that ended up bringing succulent revenues. Office application formats, for instance, have become the de facto standard for the exchange of documents, so that to share information within the enterprise community it's compulsory to have an Office suite. The counterweight comes from companies such as Sun, Oracle and AOL-Time Warner, who defend an open standard to which all the companies offering authentication services may adhere to without having to use proprietary software from a certain company. Finally, the battle that is waging is not so much for the defence of privacy, which it also is in part, but for the control of a standard that could give its owner a continuous and long term flow of income.