

en-terpret.co SPECIAL REPORT:
Technology Trends
“ Collaboration ”

Being an interactive society, we rub “virtual” elbows with a variety of individuals on a daily basis. This meeting style is not a passing trend in the work environment. On the contrary, it is one that will continue to grow and become more integrated into the way we do business. With this trend comes increasing movement towards a collaborative work environment. In a report put out by Forrester Research in the spring of 2006, based on their findings at the Gardener / ItExpo symposium, within 10 years, 80 percent of the work performed by employees will be collaborative in nature. That being said, this trend is already building momentum, with the average employee participating in at least 10 virtual communities.

Additionally, employees just entering the workforce are highly collaborative, having “blogged,” “Wikied,” “podcasted” and “Chatted” for years. However, these young and innovative workers are finding that many of their employers don’t recognize investments in collaborative software such as Lotus Notes, Domino and Sametime, Microsoft Sharepoint, Web 2.0, etc. to be mandatory investments. This type of thinking could leave these employers in the technology dark ages. The Forrester report goes on to say, while employers are not currently seeing the value, that this type of service-oriented architecture will extend the scope, scale and potential for collaborative communities. Furthermore, the next generation of these programs will go beyond the meager innovative features now offered to support new collaborative approaches in software development and will integrate consumer class technologies into corporate environments. These new software developments will provide employees, as well as customers, a more interactive real-time environment in which to conduct business.

It is important to note that another technology tool, “Email” could be viewed as “anti-collaborative.” Although often used, it is a poor choice for sharing and jointly working

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on projects. A scenario to really illustrate this weakness: What if someone joins a project “in the middle?” Will everyone else forward all of the previous Emails that have been exchanged to “get them up to speed?” How would you like to be the new person, having to sort out all the emails you receive into some semblance of context? If using Notes or Sharepoint, all of the history and context will be easily available and online for a “newbie.” Saavy managers are reducing their Email usage in favor of the various better tools for group effectiveness.

Given this surge in on-line collaborative efforts, system and data security is of vital importance. It is important to fully educate employees on safe computing methods with regard to password protection and information sharing. Additionally it is important to make sure that your system has the latest security technology. Ask yourself these questions – how often do I (or my employees) change passwords? Does anyone else know the password? Is information ever shared via peer sharing programs such as Kazaa? Is information encrypted when it is sent out via the Internet? If you are unsure of the answers to any of these questions, your system may not be as secure as you might think – you might be unknowingly “collaborating” with the world!

The benefits of collaboration are many. Starting with the idea that it allows employees to work together to problem solve in an efficient manner and from wherever they are. And it allows your vendors, customers and other important parties to be involved. Collaboration taps into everyone’s knowledge base. When done in a secure environment, the collaborative trends of blogging, podcasts and gathering news through RSS feeds allow for greater idea sharing and information gathering, thereby helping to create the best, most cost-effective, customer friendly ideas and solutions.

If you would like to know more about how collaboration technologies can help your firm, please don’t hesitate to contact us at 773-868-4381 or email at info@enterpret.com.