Networking: A new world of work

July 12 2005

A new world of work is emerging, as networks enable employees to collaborate in ad-hoc teams assembled for specific projects. New collaboration software, developed by Microsoft and others, enables information workers to read, edit and route documents as a team, not just as individuals, experts told UPI's Networking. The networking technology allows workers to "collaborate, securely on group tasks and projects, even while working outside of the corporate network, and with limited or no access to a server," said Jeff Raikes, group vice president of Microsoft's information worker business unit.

As soon as a specific project is over, team members can be detailed to another project, where they can work collaboratively with a different mix of colleagues.

This spring, Microsoft acquired Groove Networks Inc.in Beverly, Mass., a developer of collaboration software for ad-hoc workgroups. The company plans to incorporate Groove Networks products into its Office software. Other companies are eyeing the trend, too.

"This is a long-term trend that will determine what computing is all about," said Reid Conrad, chief executive officer of Near-Time Inc.in Chapel Hill, N.C., a software developer. "This is allowing workers to create repositories of knowledge, but have them available now."

The trend will allow more than document files to be shared across the corporate networks. Desktop video technologies are coming down in price, to about $1,500 per PC work station, and are enabling, for

example, stock-market research analysts, to send video e-mails to their colleagues, which can be stored for later use or viewed as standard e-mail messages.

"Maybe you're watching Alan Greenspan on C-SPAN, and you can take that video, record yourself making comments on what he is saying, and send it out over the network," said John Carlson, vice president of marketing at Avistar in Redwood Shores, Calif. "We have clients in the financial services market who are doing that already."

Collaborations can involve working together in real time over these networks as well as exchanging information, experts said. "This way of working is gaining traction in some corporations," said Colin Bodell, chief technology officer of VA Software in Fremont, Calif.The idea, he said, is to use technology -- audio, video or e-mail -- to allow workers to "communicate with each other in a way most relevant for them. You no longer have to force people to have a conversation in one media."

Bodell noted that employees at companies such as Goldman Sachs, Agilent and HP are working in this way through VA Software's collaborative networking project, called the SourceForge Enterprise Edition.

Workers are developing software remotely over the networks, in what Bodell called "iterative development cycles. "That is, the new products that emerge from the collaborations may not exhibit a lot of features, but they do demonstrate that a new concept is viable. "This is how peer-to-peer and some IM applications emerged," he said. Networking employees compare notes, share schedules and work together, accessing the results via Web browsers on their corporate intranets. Some experts think the collaboration trend allows employees to maintain a "presence" on the network all the time, making it easier for colleagues to get in touch with them.

A report by Research and Markets in Dublin, Ireland, released last week examined Microsoft's "presence-enabled real-time communications strategy" and described it as an "800 pound gorilla" for "voice, video and Web collaboration solutions."

Some are skeptical Microsoft will lead the way to the new world of work, however.Linux, the free, open-source software, also has a chance to dominate the new niche. "Most of the innovation in collaboration -- blogging, wikis (online editing tools), etc.-- is happening in the open community, not in the software vendor R&D labs," said Eric Olinger, chief executive officer of Akiva Corp.in San Diego, a networking developer.

Citation: Networking: A new world of work (2005, July 12) retrieved 25 April 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2005-07-networking-world.html