INTRODUCTION

There are now significant numbers of software houses supplying services and solutions for community collaboration. In this article we briefly review the requirements for virtual support and the current offerings. This is not intended as a comprehensive survey, but rather an overview of what might be available.

BACKGROUND

In 2004 the Directorate of Science and Technology Policy (DSTP) in Canada produced a report reviewing portal technology. In particular, DSTP reviewed a specific subset or portals for community support. They looked at four specific program offerings, operating under portals, across eight areas of functionality. These eight areas were:

1. Ongoing interactions
2. Work
3. Social structures
4. Conversation
5. Fleeting interactions
6. Instruction
7. Knowledge exchange
8. Documents.

These program suites—Tomoye, community Zero, iCohere, and Communispace—were all strongly oriented towards Fleeting interactions and Instruction (apart from iCohere), but weakly supportive of social structures, knowledge exchange, and documents. In addition, all software suites contained taxonomy, a local search, an experts database, discussion, and an events notification facility. None provided audio- or video-supported meetings or webinars, and only Communispace provided a (limited) virtual meeting space. All, except for Tomoye, provided community governance and polls.

Other Software Offerings

Enable2 was not considered by DSTP. It is provided by Fount Solutions, who claims that it provides the essential capabilities required for CoP sup-
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