Chapter XXIII

A Virtual Ecosystem

Just as e-business began as a specialized and separate operating and delivery model in companies and has since become a standard way of doing business, virtual teams, organizations, and business models will be the way that things are done. Once we reach a fully virtual business ecosystem, we see two major roles emerging: (1) highly specialized, efficient, and optimized content providers, and (2) customer focused, value-added integrators.

In an optimal virtual team model, each participant brings specialized and unique knowledge, perspectives, and skill sets. The diversity of the group creates a richness in idea generation and a tendency to avoid group think since the team comes together for a fixed period of time for a specific project or objective—there is not enough time for people to homogenate.

Because team members are dependent on each other to contribute knowledge that they do not have, one of the most critical roles to be played on the team is that of the program manager or integrator. The integrator needs to focus on the overall solution, depending upon the team members to provide each component of the solution. The integrator also must identify those things to customize or add in order to optimize the final solution. Thus, in a virtual ecosystem, like a virtual team, the integrator has the most important part of pulling each of the individual parts together and forming the final solution.

In a business ecosystem, this virtualization is not limited to parts and products but also applies to services. Many companies have virtual human resources (HR) organizations where the company HR department no longer provides the
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