The Expert’s Opinion

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Synchronizing Information and Establishing Communications to Compete in a Global Economy

Over the ages we’ve had organizations, governments and societies competing. And I would like to explore the synchronization of information, especially world-wide, in establishing communication in terms of this competition and vying for power.

There are conflicts between various societies where there are attempts to curtail communication. Where there is not an open communication, or there is a fear of allowing freedom, you have people that are trying to regulate the network of communication, keeping people in ignorance and not allowing them to expand their knowledge.

When we look at computer operating environments, we have a similar situation. If you have open recourse and the ability to share and have a choice of communication paths and channels, it tends to create an open and free environment where everyone can prosper and do well. If on the other hand, you have a very restrained or a dictated environment that is tightly controlled, then that stifles the communication.

Barriers to communication can be overcome. Like barriers between languages and different cultures, people need to learn the languages as well as meet face to face to better understand and bridge the cultural differences. It is the same principle in operating systems where gateways, network communication protocols and communication capabilities overcome some of these barriers.

Computers are really threatening the countries and the societies in the world that are trying to limit communication and information. Computers can be networked together so easily now that you have communication between computers that goes all around the world. Some of this communication is through telephone connections and others over satellite. This allows the synchronization of information because it occurs at a very fast, electronic speed of information transfer. You don’t have to wait for a courier to come and you don’t have to wait for a scripted version of a presentation that might be done in a television program. The information can be sent directly.

Then you have the synchronization of time. Beside the different time zones and being able to communicate over them, the storage and forwarding capabilities must be noticed. If you’re in Europe and we’re sending a message to you, the message will be sent and then stored on a computer, until the time that is easy for you to pick up that information. You then act on the information, put it back via electronic mail or to another type of transfer where it can be stored on the computer and then picked up on the other end at a convenient time. So you have synchronization of information and time that allows people to work together.

People are able to work together when there is a good communication structure and a good messaging structure. So how can we synchronize activities among various groups of people, especially as these people work in different places all around the world?

There are a number of areas in the electronic messaging industry, and each of these areas has a great potential for growth: electronic mail, calendaring and scheduling, task management, electronic forms, groupware, workflow. What’s happening in these areas? Are they exploding like the big bang where they are all getting farther apart where the communications are going to be more and more difficult.

What’s ideal? What is the future? E-mail has been around for a long time. If we look into the future and somebody asks if you want another e-mail package the answer is a resounding no because we already have enough electronic mail packages, there are too many as it is. You need to have something that goes beyond just electronic mail.

Electronic Mail With Scheduling and Calendaring Capabilities

At WordPerfect, we sent out a survey to thousands of our customers and accumulated the information coming back. We were told very, very clearly that e-mail was not enough—people wanted to have additional capabilities, namely the calendaring and scheduling capabilities. IBM has put together some very large mainframes and has allowed global communication, calendaring and scheduling capabilities, and e-mail capabilities. Now, people are coming down now from the mainframe to the networked per-
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