



HILL



FLETCHER

The Business Executive

DAVID HILL *President and CEO, IDG International Publishing Services*

THE GREATEST IMPEDIMENT is a lack of communication among employees at all levels. An organization is a multiprocessor machine. Every employee is an individual processor of information whose value increases exponentially when he or she shares information with others in the company. It needs to be a two-way flow of information, in and out: Information needs to circulate, not just be distributed. Each employee who touches the information adds to, refines, expands, and improves it—and, along the way, gets smarter and makes the company smarter.

Any organization with a need-to-know attitude toward company information should reexamine its business process. The more people you have thinking about your business and its challenges, the more great ideas you will get. Sure, every company has confidential information, but probably not as much as the CEO thinks. If you spread more information around, some will leak, but the flow of new ideas in the organization will more than offset the leakage.

The Technology Executive

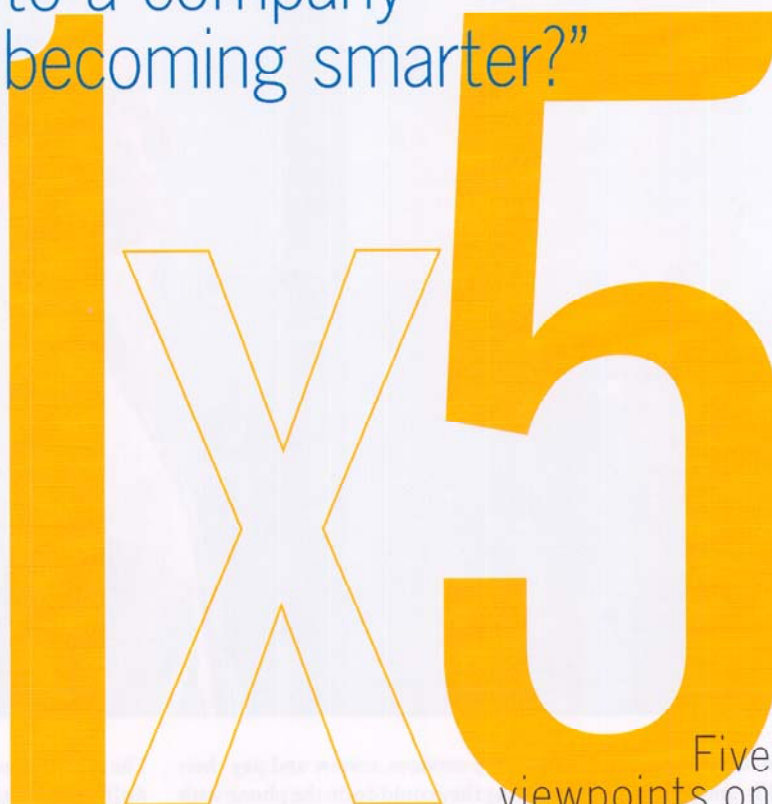
KEITH FLETCHER *Senior Vice President and Information Systems Officer, Lowe Enterprises*

WHAT IS STANDING IN the way of companies becoming smarter is not a lack of systems or even a lack of skills in the IT department; it is that our user community needs to be educated on how best to use the advanced tools we in IT have given them.

The education our users need is more than just how to underline, copy, and paste (although these skills are important). The education they need is on how to see the potential to use the systems in

The Question:

“What is the single greatest impediment to a company becoming smarter?”



Five viewpoints on one burning question



GOTTA



WARBY



BYRD

new ways—how to actively partner with IT and other users to solve business challenges, not just do the same old things a little faster. Today's new systems are full of potential that we could only dream of even three years ago, but IT has only the tools—it's the users who have the challenges that the tools can solve.

We in IT need to educate our user communities to see outside the box. They need to learn how to use the tools, but also how to apply them to new and different challenges.

The Analyst

MIKE GOTTA *Senior Vice President and Principal Analyst, Meta Group*

ORGANIZATIONS THAT avoid being adaptive leave their business and technology decision makers without the situational awareness required to rapidly align people, processes, information, and IT infrastructure as dictated by market needs. Instead, they are forced to react to events and circumstances. They suffer from not knowing which issues impact products, services, processes, projects, and productivity—and that ripples into customer, partner, and supplier relationships. They end up with higher costs as well as less flexibility. Being an adaptive organization is something any enterprise needs to master if it is to become a smarter company.

Collaboration strategies are a key human-capital aspect of the adaptive organization. Improving collaboration starts with changing behaviors. Companies must be able to integrate workforce management efforts with collaboration strategies to improve workplace per-

“... Companies are drowning in data, when what they really need is information. To turn data into information, you need connection and collaboration.”

MIKE GOTTA, META GROUP

formance and innovation. From a technology perspective, it's all about architecting a cohesive knowledge worker infrastructure that unifies portals, collaboration, and content management solutions. By adopting a services-based model, IT organizations can embed collaboration tools more flexibly within business applications. The payoff is “contextual collaboration”—connecting the right people to the right information at the right time.

The Microsoft Partner

ADAM WARBY *Senior Vice President Americas, Avanade Inc.*

DATA OVERLOAD. Many of today's companies are drowning in data, when what they really need is information. To turn data into information, you need two items: connection and collaboration. To think about it in Einstein's terms, $K=DC^2$: Knowledge equals Data times Connection and Collaboration.

In the enterprise, the connection needs to be among the systems that house the data, and the collaboration among users with access to those systems. With connected systems, companies are able to extract information from their data. And by fostering collaboration, they are able to harness the collective intelligence of their people to focus on the information and create knowledge. Ultimately, this knowledge is what drives business opportunity.

Ten years ago, a company like Avanade could not have existed. But with tools such as .NET, we can build systems that readily share data in a streamlined, secure way. And with today's collaborative

tools, our employees around the world can access that information and work together to build knowledge we can apply to the work we do for our customers. At the end of the day, it's our customers who win—they get the best of our collective thinking.

The Microsoft Executive

ALI BYRD *Product Manager*

ONE OF THE GREATEST challenges for organizations seeking to become smarter is to connect people with other people, information, and business processes to increase market responsiveness and eliminate inefficiencies. In a rapidly changing global marketplace, organizations that want to enhance their competitive advantages must face two major challenges. First, they must make it easier for people within organizations to connect to colleagues, customers, and business partners. Second, they must provide access to the right information at the right time to help employees make effective business decisions.

Several factors make these business dynamics complex. Organizations are more dispersed geographically, workers are under increased pressure to be more productive with fewer resources, and both business and IT leaders must find economical solutions that can quickly improve individual, team, and organizational productivity.

A communication and collaboration environment can help enhance individual, team, and organizational productivity with benefits such as reduced project cycle times, better-informed decisions, decreased travel expenses, and less time spent in meetings. Making the right choice among various communication and collaboration technologies is essential if businesses are to meet today's challenges and prepare a foundation for the future. ●