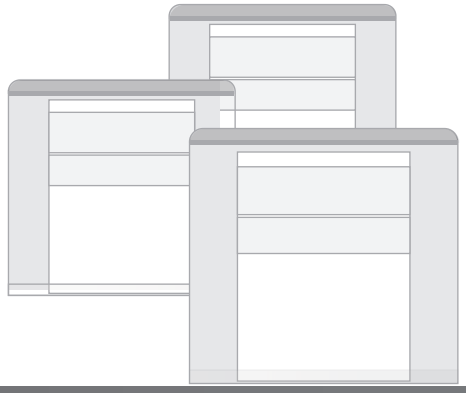
Web Collaboration

Enhancing the productivity of your business



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Minutes to the Solution Not Hours

At LG Networks, we offer a wide variety of affordable managed IT services to help small and mid-size businesses in Dallas save more time, ensure security of their valuable information, and improve productivity. By understanding and addressing the individual requirements of each customer, we provide personalized IT support, planning and management that results in improved technology infrastructure and ensures business continuity. Whether you want to outsource a majority of your tech support and management or improve the systems you currently have in place, our team of professionals will work with you to examine your needs and determine a managed IT services plan so you only pay for the expertise you actually need.

Small businesses that can work together effectively compete more aggressively with their competitors. Collaboration brings your employees and customers together, resulting in improved efficiency and stronger relationships with customers

In today's global business environment, the value of working together, or collaboration, can have a huge positive impact on your business. Your employees and teams need to work together, and share ideas and information across geographic boundaries. For a small business such as yours, effective collaboration is essential to improving productivity by empowering your employees to communicate and work more efficiently using the right communications tools. Small businesses that can work together effectively compete more aggressively with their competitors. Collaboration brings your employees and customers together, resulting in improved efficiency and stronger relationships with customers.

For example, if ten geographically dispersed employees want to work on a project jointly; they can simply dial into an audio conferencing bridge and can share ideas and exchange information without physically moving to a common place. If the company has web conferencing or whiteboard equipment and shared workspace, all these employees can even view the same presentation or worksheet, and can modify materials together in real time. Employees no longer need to travel to the same physical location to communicate and collaborate, and can work together everywhere. They can team up with internal colleagues or external partners through these real-time collaboration tools, attaining a wide variety of common goals, such as sharing customer information, designing, product development, marketing, building consensus, and gaining approval.

2 Types of Collaboration Tools Synchronous and Asynchronous

Collaboration tools generally fall into two categories

Synchronous Tools: Synchronous tools are presence-based, used when all parties are working at the same time but in different locations. These tools enable real-time communication similar to a face-to-face meeting, connecting people at a single point of time. This type of tool includes:

- Audio conferences
- Web conferences
- Video conferences
- Instant messages
- White boards
- Application sharing

Audio conferencing, a telephone connection between more than three people through audio connection, is useful for verbal discussions and dialogue. Web conferencing is the fastest growing collaboration tool–one that you could be using today. It connects people together from multiple locations and allows application and video sharing, and can include features such as content, polling, and white boarding. Presence-based instant messaging tools are useful for quick resolution of problems and issues.

Asynchronous Tools: Asynchronous tools enable communication over a period of time, allowing people to connect at each person's own convenience, and not necessarily at the same time. Some examples include:

- Messaging (e-mail)
- Discussion boards
- Web logs (Blogs)
- Shared Calendars

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The Impact of Collaboration on Business Performance

Increased productivity and reduced costs

Collaboration tools are enhancing business performance by increasing productivity and cutting costs. Collaboration solutions replace face-to-face meetings. Wainhouse Research1 has highlighted that collaboration solutions such as audio, video, and web conferencing are reducing the need for travel – eliminating airfare, taxi, and hotel expenses. Eliminating travel also eliminates many hours and days of downtime away from the office, and reduces stress levels and wear and tear on the business and personal lives of employees.

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Improved communications and enhanced coordination

Collaboration tools help facilitate faster and more effective communications. Presence-based instant messaging tools help employees access coworkers immediately, helping them to quickly resolve customers’ problems. This increased efficiency results in higher customer satisfaction. Frost & Sullivan[2], together with Verizon Business and Microsoft, conducted a research program to learn how collaboration impacts business performance. The results showed that high-quality collaboration has significant and positive impact on financial performance, labor productivity, customer satisfaction, and product quality, development, and innovation.

What collaboration technologies do small businesses use?

Collaboration technologies had their beginnings in telephone and e-mail, but these days they can include everything from intranet portals to videoconferencing. Instead of using separate sets of applications, companies are creating virtual workspaces by assembling these technologies together. While the trend is shifting toward real-time collaboration, asynchronous communications tools are still playing a vital role in organizational interaction. A survey conducted by independent market research firm Wainhouse Research[3] reveals that email clearly leads in daily usage, and web conferencing falls right behind audio conferencing as a daily or weekly tool. Wainhouse Research[4]

[1] Wainhouse Research “Competitive Advantage: The CEO’s Guide to the Connected Enterprise”,

[2] A Frost & Sullivan White Paper, “Meetings around the World: The Impact of Collaboration on Business Performance,”

[3]Wainhouse Research, “Collaboration with Teams and Partners: Achieving productivity Gains Inside and Outside Your Business,”

[4] Wainhouse Research, “The Vital Role of Web Conferencing in Small & Medium Enterprises Users Reveal Key Applications and Their Value”,

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> “...The results showed that high-quality collaboration has significant and positive impact on financial performance, labor productivity, customer satisfaction, and product quality, development, and innovation.”

has further shown that smaller organizations tend to be quicker in adopting new ways of working than their larger enterprise counterparts. Specifically, the survey data revealed that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have embraced the use of web conferencing to the point that it is now the medium of choice for conducting meetings, while large enterprises prefer to meet in person. About 75 percent of small enterprises reported solid to dramatic growth in using web conferencing tools. The study showed that the ability to include more people, save travel costs and time, and increase productivity are the major motivating factors for SMEs to use web conferencing.

Conclusion

As advanced collaboration tools are becoming more affordable, small businesses are embracing these tools in order to make decisions faster and provide better customer service by responding more quickly and efficiently.

Next Steps

1. Talk with your employees about how you can help them collaborate more effectively. You might be surprised by their ideas and input.
2. Work with your IT Consultant to determine which web collaboration tools will best accomplish your goals, and how to implement those tools effectively.

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