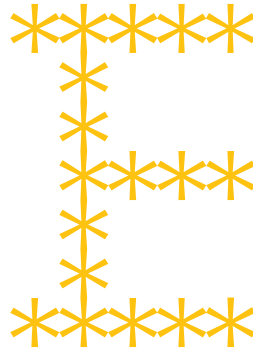


Surviving information overload

New software tools help organizations find, use and share information



Business decision makers today are dealing with enormous volumes of data, which makes it difficult to find,

use and share valuable information. The information explosion can lead to significant productivity drains, with workers spending far too much time looking for what they need rather than doing such tasks as developing new products, improving processes or better serving customers.

Fortunately, IT vendors are developing software solutions designed to help organizations gain control over the growing volumes of information and improve business performance.

INFORMATION OVERLOAD

The large and growing volume of information presents significant challenges for many organizations. Workers often struggle to find the information they need and filter out what



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they don't. They also have a hard time making sense of the information they gather, and sharing this information with coworkers, customers and business partners without adding to the information overload.

Massive volumes of new information are being produced every year. Every information worker is expected to generate three megabytes of new content per year, according to the University of California at Berkeley; this volume is forecast to increase more than twenty-fold between 2001 and 2008. E-mail alone generates about 400,000 terabytes of new information each year worldwide.

The number of sources of information continues to grow, too, and increased complexity often makes it harder to analyze data and convert it into useful, relevant information that can help people make important business decisions.

Searching for and analyzing information can take up to 15 to 30 percent of the typical information

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worker's time, according to the research firm IDC in Framingham, Mass.¹ That includes spending nine and a half hours per week searching for data and about the same amount of time analyzing information. That equates to thousands of dollars per worker each year in lost productivity. IDC says at least half of all online searches are not successful, adding to the productivity drain.

"Faced with the endless deluge of data that is generated every second of every day, how can we hope to keep up?" said Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates, speaking at the 2006 CEO Conference. "And in the struggle to keep up, how can we stay focused on the tasks that are most important and deliver the greatest value?"

The growing level of complexity and information overload is making it more difficult for workers to find, use and share information. In addition to the time spent searching for information, people have to contend with multiple systems that have different interfaces, requiring multiple, unrelated search tools.

Furthermore, there are differences between data management tools and data formats that hinder workers' ability to assimilate information. The information that is accumulating on individual computers is often disorganized and limits data availability. And the ability to share information is hindered by an inability to easily and smoothly exchange data.

Information overload is driving costly investments in information technology. AMR Research in Boston says better utilization of data was the single most important driver of IT investment among manufacturing companies in 2004, ahead of managing customers and channels of distribution, product innovation and development, and lean manufacturing.

SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS

Technology vendors are beginning to provide solutions that meet the challenge of finding, using and sharing information. For example, Microsoft is rolling out a range of new products designed to transform the way people leverage information in the workplace. These offerings include Windows Vista™ operating system, Microsoft® Office SharePoint® Server 2007 and Microsoft Office Outlook® 2007.

Microsoft's portfolio of products can help organizations better search for and leverage information throughout the enterprise. The emphasis of the company's technology strategy is on the need for a holistic, long-term approach to information management, as opposed to a search-only approach.

While search is a hot topic today, it's just the beginning, the company says. Microsoft offers a platform that includes enterprise search solutions complemented with tools for using and sharing information easily

and with enhanced security features. The potential benefits include more relevant information, increased productivity, better collaboration and integrated data management.

Windows Vista is Microsoft's most robust and secure operating system to date. The product features a new user interface and easier ways to find, search, share and organize information.

For example, a sales rep at an accounting firm working on a project for a financial services client must deliver a proposal within hours. Using Windows Vista search technologies, she finds on her firm's intranet a proposal template tailored to financial services from a SharePoint document repository, a directory of industry experts within her firm, a list of clients in the financial sector, and analyst reports.

From the Internet, the rep finds the latest news and financial information about the client. From her desktop, she finds previous proposals that she created for



Windows Vista Home Premier, Windows Vista Business and Windows Vista Ultimate offer an enhanced desktop experience, including "glass" borders on dynamic windows and Windows Flip, which shows live thumbnails of open windows instead of generic windows icons.

Consultancy
mines its
intellectual
property for
customer value

A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

AVANADE, a Seattle-based technology consulting firm, recently deployed the Windows Vista™ operating system, Microsoft® Exchange Server 2007 and the 2007 Microsoft Office system to take advantage of increased collaboration capabilities, among other benefits. The new search capabilities let Avanade employees find, use and share information more quickly and easily-enabling them to be more responsive to customers.

The company wanted to make it easier for its consultants to access documents, regardless of the consultant's or the document's location. "Effectively mining the considerable depth of Avanade intellectual property is key to the efficiency of our consultants and the value we can deliver to our customers," says Ryan Sokolowski, Microsoft Early Adopter manager for Avanade, a joint venture between Accenture and Microsoft.

But the consultants might work on multiple customer engagements simultaneously, Sokolowski says, and as they move back and forth between locations "they need to be able to find and share information with each other, collaborating to provide better service to those customers."

The firm upgraded from Windows® XP to the Windows Vista operating

system, from Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 to the Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 communication and collaboration server, and from Microsoft Office Professional Edition 2003 to the 2007 Microsoft Office system.

Avanade piloted the Windows Vista and Microsoft Office system upgrades on an opt-in basis, and estimates that more than 500 employees have adopted the new solutions. The firm began its Exchange Server 2007 migration in June 2006 with a group of 131 people, representing a cross-section of its workforce. Avanade is also conducting a pilot implementation of Microsoft Office SharePoint® Server 2007, which its employees use to share business information through team sites, document work spaces and blogs.

The software upgrades have boosted efficiency in all areas of the company. "For us, using Windows Vista, Exchange Server 2007 and the 2007 Microsoft Office system is about working better together to deliver higher levels of service and functionality to meet the 'always-on' demands of our customers," says Sokolowski.

The operating system and messaging upgrades give Avanade consultants on the road improved

wireless networking, synchronization and management of mobility settings. They're no longer limited to e-mail updates when working together on project materials. Consultants can use Microsoft Office Outlook® Web Access to gain direct access to Office SharePoint Server 2007 sites, where they can download shared documents.

"Easier access to information from virtually anywhere, improved search capabilities for quickly finding specific information, and an effective means for sharing that information are uniting our distributed workforce," Sokolowski says.

Other benefits of the software upgrades include decreased user dependence on IT, which allows the IT department to accomplish more, thanks to easier deployments, enhanced security management and more flexibility for data backups.

Avanade anticipates improved operational efficiency and significant overall savings from the combination of enhanced access and search capabilities. Office SharePoint Server 2007 search capabilities, in particular, allow us to more effectively access communications, expertise, and line-of-business information," Sokolowski says.

other clients. From a customer relationship management (CRM) system, the rep locates a history of all past projects, proposals and outcomes.

In the past, the rep would have had to rely on her own previous proposals, so there was little or no sharing of best practices. Locating industry experts would have required making several phone calls or e-mails over a period of several days. She would have spent several hours sorting through information on her desktop computer, and likely would not have found useful material or been able to get CRM data without a lengthy request to the IT department.

After a quick review of the retrieved information, the rep can easily populate the Microsoft Word proposal template with industry background, client information and requirements. She could then retrieve a preconfigured Excel® template from the document repository and calculate a fee quote based on the requirements in the RFQ. Using Microsoft Office Outlook Workflow, she could easily trigger an urgent

approval process. Within minutes, the rep could start receiving replies, and the proposal could be reviewed and approved in less than three hours. Previously, the approval process might have taken days.

Windows Vista* includes the new Windows Aero™ user experience, which features a transparent glass look; dynamic windows that are easy to find even when closed; live taskbar thumbnails that reveal the contents of current windows; Windows Flip, which shows live thumbnails of open windows instead of generic window icons; and Windows Flip 3D, which dynamically displays all open windows in a stacked format and shows live processes such as a playing video.

Windows Vista offers several new and enhanced search tools. The Instant Search tool, accessible from almost anywhere in Windows Vista, enables searching by file name, properties or text within a file, and ranks results based on current activity. The Search Pane in all Windows Vista Explorers enables users to design a search with multiple criteria (such as location, content

* Windows Aero and Windows Flip are available in Windows Vista Home Premier, Windows Vista Business and Windows Vista Ultimate.

type, keyword or date). Users can save searches and re-run them at any time.

Windows Vista is designed to make it easier to use mobile PCs and Windows Mobile®-enabled devices, helping workers connect to information, customers and coworkers in the office, at home or on the road.

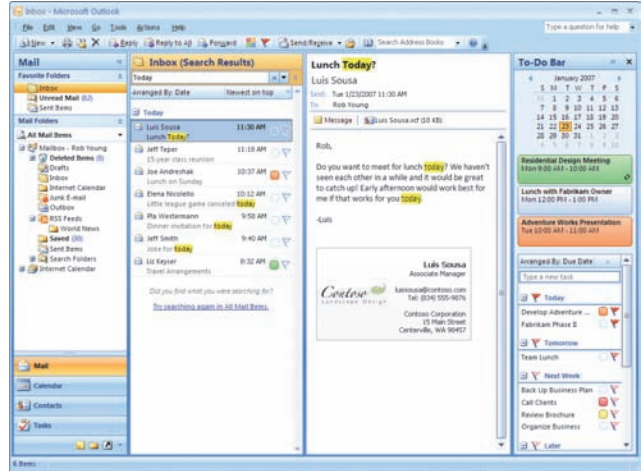
Microsoft Office Outlook 2007 helps users manage time and information. With Office Outlook 2007, workers can quickly search communications, organize projects and better share information.

With integrated Instant Search, users can locate information from within the Office Outlook 2007 interface. They can search by keyword within messages, as well as through keywords within e-mail attachments. A To-Do bar lets users organize schedules and manage priorities, providing a snapshot view of their calendars, upcoming appointments, tasks and flagged mail.

Workers can also use Office Outlook 2007 to interact with information stored in Windows SharePoint Services technology, connecting Windows SharePoint Services calendars, documents, contacts or tasks with Office Outlook 2007.

Another product offering, Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007, is an integrated suite of server capabilities that provides content management and enterprise search, enabling shared business processes and information sharing. Office SharePoint Server 2007 supports all intranet, extranet and Web applications across an enterprise within one platform, rather than separate systems.

Using the server, organizations can store and organize all business documents and content in a central location, giving users a consistent way to navigate and find relevant information. Companies can also create live, interactive business intelligence portals



Office Outlook 2007 enables easy management of time and information through features like integrated Instant Search, a To-Do bar and seamless integration with Windows SharePoint Server.

that assemble and display information from disparate sources by using integrated business intelligence capabilities such as dashboards, Web Parts, key performance indicators (KPIs), and business data connectivity technologies.

Each of these solutions empowers managers and staffers to make better business decisions, be more productive and achieve greater business success. Several of the key benefits that can result from using these types of software products—business process improvement, greater competitiveness and using intelligence in products and services—were among the top CIO priorities in 2006, as cited by the research firm Gartner in Stamford, Conn.²

SUMMARY

Clearly there is a growing need for software and solutions that help companies improve the way workers find, use and share information. According to October 2005 Microsoft estimates, the enterprise portals and content access tools (enterprise search) market segments were projected to have a total compound annual growth rate of more than 9 percent from fiscal year 2006 through 2009, and overall sales of \$1.8 billion by 2009.

The enterprise portals market segment is expected to reach \$818 million in sales by 2009. The enterprise content access tools market segment is forecast to be even larger, at \$993

million by 2009, representing a compound annual growth rate of 10.5 percent.

Products such as those offered by Microsoft are designed to help organizations find, use and share information more effectively and efficiently. The Microsoft product portfolio provides a single indexing and search infrastructure that effectively scales from the desktop through group and divisional portal sites to the largest corporate intranets, extranets and Internet Web sites.

These products enable users to search across the desktop, corporate network and the Internet, to quickly find multiple

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1. IDC, The Hidden Cost of Information Work, #202334, April 1, 2006.

2. "Growing IT's Contribution: The 2006 CIO Agenda", Gartner Executive Programs.