

COLLABORATING

Thanks to advances in mobile and distributed communication, the "office" is no longer what it used to be. Technology lets today's professionals work on the move while staying in close contact with colleagues, customers, and suppliers. These technologies are also redefining the very nature of some companies, as they replace traditional hierarchies with highly adaptable, virtual networks.

Powerful Tools for Communicating Effectively

The tools of business communication evolve with every advance in digital technology. The 20 technologies highlighted on the next four pages help businesses redefine the office, collaborate and share information, connect with stakeholders, and build communities of people with shared interests and needs.

Web-Based Meetings



Web-based meetings allow team members from all over the world to interact in real time. Meetings can also be recorded for later playback and review. Various systems support instant messaging, video, collaborative editing tools, and more.

Videoconferencing and Telepresence



Videoconferencing provides many of the benefits of in-person meetings at a fraction of the cost. Advanced systems feature *telepresence*, in which the video images of meeting participants are life-sized and extremely realistic.



Shared Online Workspaces



Online workspaces help teams work productively, even if they are on the move or spread out across the country. In addition to providing controlled access to shared files and other digital resources, some systems include such features as project management tools and real-time document sharing (letting two or more team members view and edit a document on screen at the same time).

Voice Technologies



Speech recognition (converting human speech to computer commands) and *speech synthesis* (converting computer commands to human speech) can enhance communication in many ways, including simplifying mobile computing, assisting workers who are unwilling or unable to use keyboards, and allowing "one-sided" conversations with information systems. *Speech analytics software* can evaluate conversations to improve customer service and other interactions. *Mobile VoIP* lets people make voice calls on WiFi networks to save connection and roaming charges.

Mobile Business Apps

As the range of business software applications on smartphones and tablet computers continues to expand, almost anything that can be accomplished on a regular computer can be done on a mobile device (although not always as efficiently or with the same feature sets).

Instant Messaging



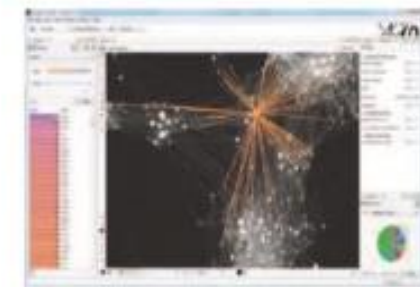
Instant messaging (IM) is one of the most widely used digital communication tools in the business world, replacing many conversations and exchanges that once took place via email or phone calls. *Enterprise IM systems* are similar to consumer IM systems in many respects but have additional security and collaboration features.

Wikis



Wikis promote collaboration by simplifying the process of creating and editing online content. Anyone with access (some wikis are private; some are public) can add and modify pages as new information becomes available.

Data Visualization



Data visualization is a powerful tool for presenting and exploring sets of data that are very large, complex, or dynamic. As more companies rely on "big data" to identify and capitalize on market opportunities, the ability to extract insights from these large data sets can be an important competitive advantage.

Interactive Websites



Interactivity can make online communication much more engaging and effective, such as by personalizing the presentation of information or allowing website visitors to isolate and focus on specific topics.

COLLABORATING AND SHARING INFORMATION

The need to work with and share information quickly and easily is a constant in business. A wide variety of tools have been developed to facilitate collaboration and sharing, from general purpose systems such as instant messaging to more specialized capabilities such as data visualization.

Crowdsourcing and Collaboration Platforms



Crowdsourcing, inviting input from groups of people inside or outside the organization, can give companies access to a much wider range of ideas, solutions to problems, and insights into market trends.