

Chapter 3 - Networking and Group Computing

Conclusion

During the proliferation of computers in the 80's, it became apparent that the "sneaker" method (putting on your sneakers and hand carrying floppies with files to another computer) of sharing files and moving expensive printers from location to location was wasted time. Networking evolved into allowing information to be accessed and exchanged by anyone inside or outside the office without exchanging floppy disks. The value to networking is sharing information or hardware resources, which enables you to be productive in your work. The capability to share data, printers, fax modems, CD-ROM towers, and other hardware resources is cost effective. Working together using different application programs is more difficult to quantify in terms of cost savings, but it can have a significant impact upon the sharing of work information and productivity. In the law firm, e-mail, work product sharing, and common docketing databases are a few of the benefits of a network. However, connectivity has increased beyond the law firm and has moved to connections with clients and others. It is not unusual to see frequent e-mail exchanges with clients and direct connections with court and other databases. It is not as important if people and businesses are physically together, since they can all be connected together using networking.

Networking provides the foundation to store, access, and share information with co-employees, clients, courts, businesses or government agencies instantaneously. It appears that peer-to-peer networks will continue to be a force in the network market as long as complexity and cost are factors in client/server systems. They may end up existing side by side with messaging and communication handled by peer-to-peer and servers handling the critical computing functioning. The distinction between the two is beginning to disappear as the features of each blend together in new products. These systems will be linked messaging personal digital assistants (PDA) to enable users without their laptops or desktops to acquire information instantaneously. Wireless networks are being followed closely to determine if the cost and performance justify their installation. Network performance will transport data in the gigabyte per second range. Video conferencing will start to be used as the bandwidth for transmission of data increases. Networking is the foundation for the growth of group computing. The unpredicted emergence of the Internet will form the backbone of the group computing and networking group-computing scenario. Business will become increasingly decentralized.

The Internet has now moved networking up to a new level. Besides communication within your organization, the Internet, Intranet, and Extranet provide the capability to network and collaborate with any person, company, court, or government agency anywhere in the world.