



Virtual organizations support tools from an IT service perspective

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About me

Mario Gay

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USI and SUPSI are the TI-EDU “customer”

Represent USI at SWITCH foundation council, USI at ASIUS,
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Still appreciate carrying out some **technical** work

What are collaboration tools?

Anyone has a **different definition** of: collaboration tools, collaborative tools, groupware, virtual organization support tools

My definition: any ITC tool which enable cooperation between more than two people on a shared task

Past: file servers, e-mail lists, phone conferencing, ...

Now and **future:** traditional file servers ↓, Web enabled file repositories ↑, video conferencing ↑, e-mail lists, shared calendars, discussion forum, wikis ↑, voice-over-IP ↑, instant messaging, phone conferencing ↓, ...

Trend: anything that is **Web based**

Needs, opportunities, challenges

Situation 1

Research group at European level in the biomedicine field. Member submit partial results, group leader consolidates results.

Computer skills varied.

Group leader wants collaboration tools to streamline the process, and asks IT services for **help**.

IT services evaluates several tools.

Group leader judges that he can't **force** researchers to use **new tools**.

Outcome: research group **sticks to** FTP based repository and e-mail lists.

Needs, opportunities, challenges

Situation 2

Research group at Swiss level in the social sciences field.

Documents are **circulated** among the group members.

Researchers makes contributions to the documents and uniquely marks the changes. A designated person **consolidates** the documents. Several versions of the documents are present at the same time. Computer **skills** are average to low.

IT service is asked to **help** the research group finding tools for the collaboration. Several tools are evaluated.

Outcome: none. IT service **steps back** because there aren't **resources** available for **training** local and remote users.

Needs, opportunities, challenges

Situation 3

The administration of a **master program** in the field of economics needs a tool for communicating with the master's students. Computer skills are average.

A **fake course** is created on the same platform used for e-learning courses. All master's students are enrolled in the fake course. Integrated mailing list, shared calendars and document repository are used to communicate with master's students. No **training** is required because the **tool** is already **known**.

Outcome: users (administration and master's students) are **satisfied** with the tool.

Needs, opportunities, challenges

Situation 4

Service team spread on several location needs a tool for documenting a project and keeping track of progress. Computer skills are good.

A **fake course** is created on an **e-learning platform** already in use for courses. Objects belonging to the project documentation are **mapped** to e-learning objects.

Outcome: **acceptance** by team members is **low**. Mapping of objects is considered unnatural. Some **tools** are missing.

Needs, opportunities, challenges

Strong need for collaboration tools

Definite **opportunity** for IT services (or for SWITCH) to deliver good services to users

Human factors such as training, computer skills, and culture are the main issues

Tool **features** are important but less than human factors

The perfect tool

Web based (obvious)

Simple for the basic user and **fully featured** for the advanced user (different views)

Managed by a **trusted** organization (data protection, privacy)

Compatible with different **authentication** methods (especially SWITCHaai)

Open (from the data storage point of view)

Not **expensive** (although purchase cost is not the primary concern)

How to proceed?

Buy a tool of **good reputation** and let the user come (nobody will fire you for buying SharePoint Portal).

Find the **technically best tool**, prepare some documentation and give the users some introductory **training**

Evaluate several tools from the **technical** and the **usability** point of view; establish a training and **support** service

Evaluate a broad range of tools and build a **knowledge** base; make available **selected tools**; establish support and **consultancy** service

The end

Questions?