Chapter 18

Application of Information Management with Meeting Automation Tool

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INTRODUCTION

Presented work describes technologically supported solution that helps people in a workgroup to deal with information related to their common projects. The solution supports different scenarios of group organizations including the case of geographically distributed workgroups. It positions workgroup meetings as a key concept within a project framework. The paper will explain its foundations and show the positive value that it brings to everyday group work.

Diagrams 2-7 use UML (Object Management Group, 1997).

ORIGINS

We present current results of "Meeting Automation Tool" (M.A.T.) research project that was initiated by Swisscom, the biggest Internet provider in Switzerland. They needed a solution to improve their regular project meetings automating standard processes such as production of meeting minutes document.

According to the client requirements, several constraints were established from the outset of the project. In particular:

- To use the tool, each of the meeting participants should have a PC or a laptop;
- The tool should support local and remote participations;

- M.A.T. should be easily used in combination with popular office software products;
- The tool should be designed to provide different levels of access to project-related information (see later in the Section 3.1). It was planned as a WWW based solution allowing functional integration with Personal Desktop Assistant (PDA) systems.

SOLUTION

M.A.T. provides a computer-supported framework for the meeting process that concentrates on capturing the content of meetings and its future use. We implemented strong points that were found in other solutions and proposed functionalities that we didn't find in existing products. For example, Ventana Groupsystems concentrates on meeting process and has nice utilities to support it, but it doesn't consider the evolution of the meeting-related information from one meeting to another. We can view meetings as milestones within projects, and the information discussed during a meeting can very well represent the current state of the project. So the evolution of this information has a value since it gives a continuous representation of the project. In our solution we have tried to provide a means to work with meeting-related information not only during a meeting but also before and after.

Information Management foundations of the tool

Model shown in Figure 1 was built to demonstrate theoretical foundations of the tool; it represents the domain of Information Management from the perspective of activities that can be performed in it.

The model shows a cycle of activities that are performed by collaborators in information-driven workgroups. Information itself is a central point of the model. People in everyday life are surrounded by numerous factors and events that offer an *Access* to information related to their ideas and activities. Every event, as soon as it can be considered relevant with regard to particular interests of a person or group, carries certain informational potential, that is to be consumed. Once a relevant piece of information has been obtained it needs to be combined with other pieces that are coherent with each other. *Gathering* of pieces combines together their informational potentials. It continues until the overall potential becomes significant enough to be realized by the person or group, in other words, for the idea that was behind the informational poten-

Figure 1: Information Management
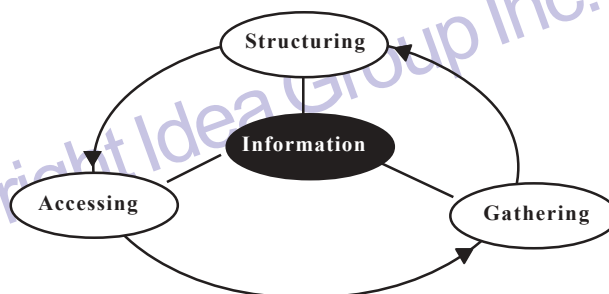
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