



## Virtual Collaboration for G & G Professionals

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### **Abstract**

#### Introduction

Today's competitive landscape demands that oil and gas organizations strive for greater productivity and increased efficiency. Organizations that provide its employees with an effective collaboration environment achieve greater productivity.

Organizations seeking to empower their employees, boost global work teams, and offer more work options to their employees will find value in virtual collaboration solutions that are more than just enablers of distributed meetings.

Virtual collaboration solutions provide the foundation for enterprise-wide collaboration. These solutions facilitate teamwork and co-operation between previously isolated resources and geographically dispersed employees.

Advances in Information Technology are producing ever-more capable technology to enable virtual collaboration. This presentation describes virtual collaboration for G & G Professionals and a technology update.

#### Virtual collaboration defined

To collaborate is to work jointly within a team or with other teams. "Collaboration is not a synonym for communication. E-mail and even the telephone can support collaboration, but communication alone does not constitute collaboration"<sup>1</sup>. By the same token, collaboration is not just technology. Virtual collaboration refers to collaborations in which the people working together are interdependent in their tasks, share responsibility for outcomes, are geographically dispersed, and rely on mediated, rather than face-to-face, communication to produce an outcome, such as a shared understanding, evaluation, strategy, recommendation, decision, action plan, or other product.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A Travel Guide to Collaboration Alice Dragoon, CIO

<sup>2</sup> Strategic Thinking, Challenges in Virtual Collaboration by Lynne Wainfan and Paul K. Davis



Virtual collaboration is composed of:

- Technology including video conferencing, web-enabled remote access and application sharing
- Emerging business processes that focus on more clearly defined deliverables, expanded use of standards and more formal work plans
- New skills including facilitation skills, conferencing etiquette, computer conversancy and G & G application expertise
- A new organization which requires less direct supervision, expects more collaborative work and accepts looser reporting relationships

### Work in the Future

Today G&G professionals work in silos with many handoffs between functions. G&G professionals rely on resources in their own work groups because there are barriers to access shared data and applications. These barriers cause G&G professionals to rely more on their own individual knowledge rather than a common shared knowledgebase. G&G professional interactions are more frequently face-to-face with few or no virtual components.

Future work environment mandates:

- Seamless integration between functions
- Team knowledge
- Cross-divisional access to resources
- Easy access to data and application
- Virtual collaboration among and between teams

The business drivers that are pushing G&G professionals to a more collaborative environment include:

- More complex E&P assets
  - Increasing data and knowledge intensity of G&G work
  - Work activity is more team-dependent
  - Effective work requires multi-disciplinary collaboration
- G&G talent is global and knowledge-based
  - Competition for E&P staff
  - Work locations are multiple
  - G&G desire for personal flexibility and choice
- Continuing demands for reduced cycle times
  - Formation of teams, data gathering, interpretation, hand-off to engineering
- Availability of capable, cost-effective technology

To respond to these business drivers, employees need access to tools that allow them to do their jobs effectively and efficiently. The typical work day can be divided into two distinct parts: the time spent attending meetings, and the time spent completing work assigned in those meetings. Since much of employees work depends on exchanging information with others, tools that enable and

enhance collaboration and teamwork are absolutely a vital component of an effective work environment.

### Enabling technologies for virtual collaboration

Not so long ago, email was considered a corporate nice-to-have for selected employees and distant workers. Now, email is practically in the same category as heating and lighting. Today's rich media solutions for conferencing, collaboration and enterprise communications are making the same transition. Similarly, G&G professionals expect instant connectivity as part of their work environment made practical by lower cost technologies and stronger business drivers.

Collaboration enabling technologies allow G&G professionals to conveniently collaborate from field, the office, or on the road and be virtually present. Having these tools in place is a prerequisite to effective and efficient collaboration.

Collaboration tools include but are not limited to:

- Virtual whiteboard
- Chat capabilities
- Screen sharing
- Application and/or document sharing
- Audio and/or videoconferencing

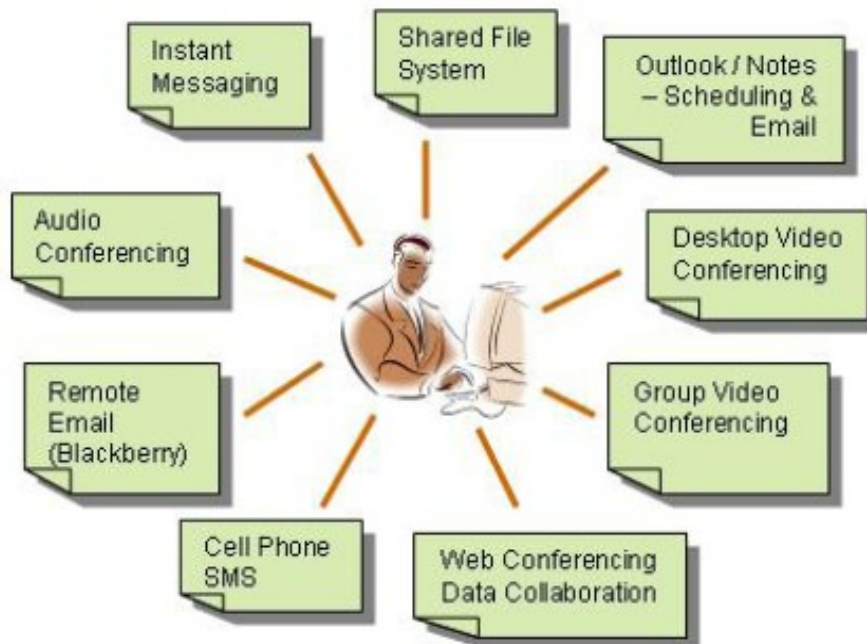


Figure 1. Collaboration Tools <sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The Arrival of The Virtual Office, Ira M. Weinstein, Wainhouse Research



G&G professionals can use these tools in their daily activities. Explained in more detail in the presentation, these are examples of G&G professionals collaborating virtually to solve business problems:

1. “Thin bed” Reservoir Reserves Estimation:

A deepwater reservoir, characterized by thin beds, in the North Sea looks like it could be promising. The head office is not sure how to assess the net pay zone and estimate the reserves in place in the multiple thin beds of the reservoir.

The scenario will describe how collective knowledge of the G&G Community is used to improve the reserves estimation process in an unusual situation, reducing the risk of developing a reservoir with inadequate reserves or abandoning a project that is in fact economically viable.

2. Effective use of the Direct Hydrocarbon Indicators technique:

There is considerable independent discussion about the use of Direct Hydrocarbon Indicators (DHI) in some exploration areas. DHI works well in some exploration areas but not others. The appropriate application of the DHI technique is important in assessing the proposed risk values during peer reviews.

The scenario will describe how collaboration is used to gain an enhanced understanding of the characteristics of exploration projects where the Direct Hydrocarbon Indicators technique can be effectively used.

Virtual collaboration benefits

Virtual collaboration offers hard and soft benefits for the employer, the employee and the society as a whole:

Benefits for employers

- Cost savings
- Increased productivity
- Improved employee motivation
- Skills retention within the organization
- Organization flexibility
- Ease of re-structuring as projects change over time
- Location independence
- Enhanced agility
- Flexible staffing
- Business continuity



### Benefits for employees

- Reduced travel time and costs
- Improved work opportunities
- Less disruption to family life
- Better balance of work and family life
- Improved ability to participate in the local community
- More flexible hours

### Social and economic benefits

- Reduced traffic congestion
- Reduced total travel and consequent pollution
- Wider employment/work opportunities
- Access to work for people with specific disabilities

### Virtual collaboration best practices

To achieve maximum value from virtual collaboration, oil and gas organizations need to overcome technical and culture challenges. To reach the future work environment, companies must at least:

- Understand the kinds of interactions that occur internally and externally
- Understand the different aspects of collaboration: process, skills, technology and organization
- Build a team-oriented environment where cooperation is the norm
- Focus on people
- Provide the right tools and support
- Sustain the change

### Corvelle management consultants

#### Areas of Focus

Corvelle Management Consultants is a Calgary, Alberta based firm of Information Technology consultants. Our particular areas of focus are:

1. Management consulting in an Information Technology context.
2. Project management of software package implementations, custom systems development and infrastructure upgrades.
3. Oil and gas data management.
4. Web strategy, web site architecture and design.
5. Acting in the roles of Interim CIO or IT management.

Corvelle was founded at the end of 1994. The majority of our clients are from the oil & gas industry and from utilities.

#### Picture

My picture can be downloaded from the Corvelle web site.