

Keep in touch with clever thinking

Inspired Connections, the new newsletter from LAN2LAN, will help you keep up-to-date with news, opinions and analysis on wherever the network reaches within your organisation. Each edition will feature trends and technologies that will help you solve today's business issues and prepare for the challenges of tomorrow.

In this edition we look at how the latest developments in collaboration let you achieve business advantage from social networking techniques. We profile LAN2LAN's unique new Congrego solution, a revolutionary approach to disaster recovery, and showcase examples of how LAN2LAN is enabling businesses like yours to extend the possibilities of networked technology.

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The search is over for better collaboration

Have you ever felt that you have spent much of your day just searching for 'stuff' – trying to find the latest forecasts, marketing campaign results, CSR* policy or the best expert to join your project team? **You're not alone.**

"It's generally accepted that people spend two hours a day, on average, just searching," says Peter Hampton, Messaging and Collaboration Leader, Lotus Software, IBM (UK and Ireland). "Imagine the benefits of cutting that down to minutes, providing the information necessary for staff to do their job – and do it better – just at the moment they need it. That's true collaboration.

"We aim to provide the technologies that enable people to work together and be more effective and productive without having to learn whole new skills."

The clever thinking behind IBM's collaboration technologies is to create tools that work the way we do. They are focused on people and activities rather than being tied down to technologies.

"Within most organisations there is a huge amount of valuable information, the problem is getting to it. Our collaborative tools are designed to cut through these silos of data to enable anyone, anywhere, on virtually any device, to share tacit knowledge in their enterprise," says Peter.

In doing so, IBM's focus on open standards and open source technologies means that their collaborative tools will fit into your existing environment. You can share information from different line-of-business applications and platforms, so you can collaborate more effectively, while making the most of your existing investments.

Social networking that's more than social

Social networking is increasingly being woven into the fabric of everyday business life. It will become more so as a younger generation who have known nothing but the Web get more involved in the workplace. Are you ready for the changes that it will bring?



"It allows people in the organisation, wherever they are in the world, or in whatever time zone, to collect information and share it."

IBM is. It is using similar technologies to those that power popular social networks like Facebook, to create informal communities of business users who can share information, wherever in a particular organisation they may work.

'Connections' is the smart collaboration technology which lies behind IBM's social networking for business.

"This creates an informal knowledge management system," says Brendan Tutt, Portals and Social Networking Business Leader IBM (UK and Ireland). "It allows people in the organisation, wherever they are in the world, or in whatever time zone, to collect information and share it."

So when you're looking for a presentation on a new product line, for example, you don't need to start from scratch – you can identify other presentations, re-use all or part of them and most importantly establish the expertise of the person that's created them, by looking at their profile.

"Knowing who has supplied the information is important. It provides credibility among people who don't necessarily know each other but are nevertheless willing to share," says Brendan.

"We may think we are in a very connected world now, but it will become even more so and social networking will be the tool that connects people," believes Brendan.

Social networking is already being used by online stores to create related customer communities. So, for example, an outdoor clothing manufacturer has a community for walkers – where their customers can share information with each other about the best walks, hiking equipment etc. It increases loyalty, the ultimate goal for ecommerce sites, and can bring in new business from friends introduced to the community.

While the IBM technology is designed to be effective out-of-the-box, business partners like LAN2LAN are essential for realising the full potential of knowledge sharing. We can provide the clever thinking that establishes the best way to implement and manage the power of social networking for business.

*Corporate Social Responsibility

The economic downturn has seen businesses scrutinise the value of their IT investment like never before. Projects that won't add genuine business value aren't sanctioned and the ROI of existing investment is under permanent examination.

A new era in network expertise

Despite belt-tightening throughout the economy, the last two years have been the most successful in LAN2LAN's 15 year history. We wanted to understand why, at a time when clients' budgets and their businesses faced acute pressure, new and existing customers were entrusting their critical projects to LAN2LAN. This insight would ensure we continued to improve our performance and the value we provide to customers.

Change with the times

We looked at ourselves, spoke to our clients, and uncovered a handful of recurrent themes: as network experts, our heritage, knowledge and ingenuity enables our customers to achieve greater business value from networked technologies.

Our new proposition – Clever Networks. No Limits – encapsulates the new LAN2LAN. We're still infrastructure, mobility, collaboration and security specialists, but we've evolved into trusted advisors who

transform the network from an obstacle to an enabler of business advantage.

Clever together

Clever networks start with clever people. With 15 years heritage as network experts, we have the depth and breadth of experience to deliver enterprise-class networks without the usual enterprise drawbacks.

We get right to the heart of each customer's business and technology challenge with clever thinking, and have the range of expertise to deliver the optimum solution. So when it's time to capitalise on a new opportunity in the market, we'll make sure your systems have the flexibility to keep pace with your ambitions.

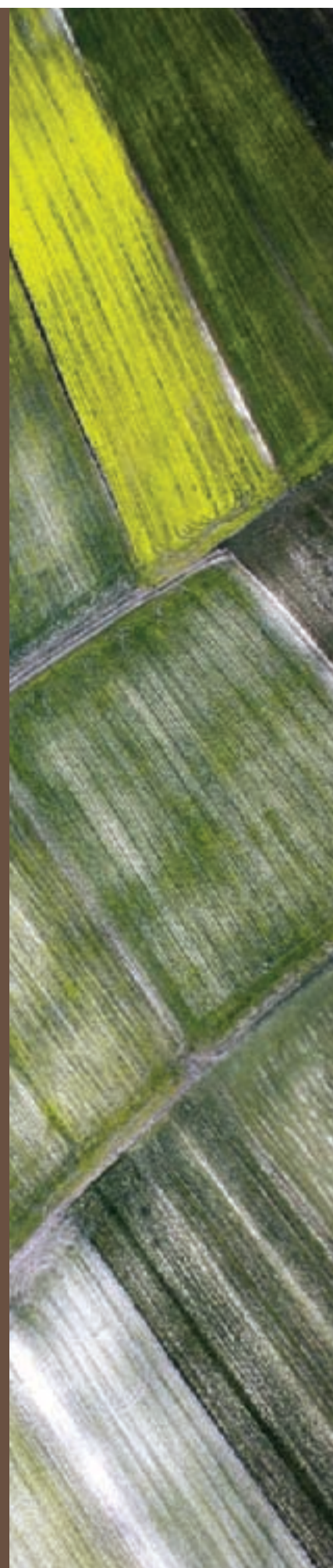
Our networks are clever with your money. Your people can work more productively using our collaboration and mobility solutions, giving you a measurable return on your investment. We identify the best value in the market thanks to our broad and up-to-date product knowledge, so you're assured a cost effective solution.

Unlimited possibilities

With our clever networks, we believe there's no limit to what you can achieve. Whether it's breaking down the physical limits of the network so your people can work wherever they choose, or developing an infrastructure that will scale with your business growth, we'll help you release your business' latent potential.

Our standards-based security solutions protect your data without limiting your people's access to the information they need, so productivity won't be constrained. With collaboration solutions which let your people connect across physical and organisational boundaries, we'll help make sure that physical location never limits productivity.

If you'd like to know more about how clever networks from LAN2LAN can help you achieve unlimited results, please visit www.LAN2LAN.com or contact our Sales Specialists on 0870 787 4001.



Advanced collaboration applications from RIM offer business advantages to corporate BlackBerry® smartphone users

The pace of mobile technology innovation is accelerating and the industry is moving beyond using smartphones just to deliver baseline access to email, voicemail and text messaging. Spurred by the demand for ubiquitous connectivity, businesses are eagerly embracing a Unified Communications (UC) model that melds mobility with a new class of collaborative applications, enabling remote, travelling and telecommuting workers to have their desktops at their fingertips – literally.

Research In Motion's (RIM) BlackBerry® smartphone, the undisputed market leader in the smartphone device arena, is partnering with IBM® Lotus®, the top developer of enterprise collaborative applications to deliver a series of collaborative applications and tools that run

on BlackBerry smartphones and address the needs of an increasingly nomadic and demanding corporate user populace.

"Bringing together the BlackBerry solution and IBM Lotus Domino, Sametime and other collaboration tools enables enterprises to unleash an unlimited amount of productivity from their employees," says Vanessa Alvarez, an industry analyst in Frost & Sullivan's Unified Communications Information, Communications & Technologies Group.

The RIM/IBM Lotus collaboration, Alvarez says, means that corporations are no longer limited by geographic or connectivity constraints. The result, she adds, is they "can accomplish so much more." A large organisation suddenly becomes small; employees can reach specific contacts in a matter of minutes. She continues, "when you meld mobility and collaboration, it opens up a whole slew of opportunities for cost efficiencies and effectiveness. RIM and IBM are a powerful combination."

Visit www.blackberry.com/go/ibm to learn more about the collaboration tools available to your corporate BlackBerry smartphone users.

Mobility solution boosts productivity in global insurer



Mobile working can improve a company's bottom line and the work-life balance of its people. But to achieve the full benefit of a mobility solution, businesses should consider the needs of individual users as well as corporate objectives.



Allianz, a top five commercial insurer with 3,500 UK employees across 14 offices, needed their Risk Control Advisors (RCAs) to be more time efficient when completing risk survey reports on commercial premises.

Operationally, the Risk Control Unit depends on processing a consistently high volume of risk reports. Historically, RCAs made hard copy notes during an inspection, then compiled and filed their report on a laptop-based application. Labour was duplicated and the time between an inspection and a report reaching the underwriter was extended.

Allianz wanted to increase RCAs' productivity by enabling them to complete reports in real time and make use of any downtime whilst working in the field. This would free up time for more risk reports to be undertaken.

Recommended as mobility experts

Allianz asked a number of IT providers to examine their requirement. Already trusted by Allianz's IT Department for its management of their IBM infrastructure, LAN2LAN was chosen to develop a solution that ported the risk report application to the BlackBerry®.

"Ideally, we wanted a provider with both Lotus and BlackBerry expertise" says Allianz's Property Risk Control Manager, Andy Miller. "LAN2LAN were recommended as wireless experts by the application developer whose solution we wanted to mobilise, and we were reassured that they already understood our IBM infrastructure."

LAN2LAN hosted the solution in a test environment to establish proof of concept, enabling them to respond quickly to user feedback prior to the full production rollout.

LAN2LAN adjusted the application's interface to offset the BlackBerry's small keyboard, using tick boxes and drop-down menus wherever possible. Although data can be entered in real time during a site assessment, a completed report doesn't leave the BlackBerry until signed off by the RCA, giving them time to consider a decision or make amendments.

User and business benefits

Both RCAs and the Allianz business unit expect to see immediate benefits. Rather than carry a camera, laptop and phone to an assessment, RCAs just need one device. Their work-life balance should improve, as they can work much more efficiently, taking advantage of any downtime between inspections.

For the Allianz business unit, the sooner a risk report is received from the field, the quicker it can be acted upon, reducing the company's risk exposure.

Andy is confident the solution will show an ROI within 9 months and will improve team productivity by at least 10 percent – equivalent to an extra team member.

LAN2LAN's expert yet honest approach to meeting his business goals impressed Andy. "They won our trust through their attentiveness and determination to push the limits of the Lotus platform to ensure we achieved what we needed" says Andy. "Flagging redundant features helped drive down the solution's cost too."

Congrego: *to congregate, share, unite and collaborate*

A new perspective on disaster recovery

This decade, high-profile natural and man-made disasters have hit the UK with unwelcome frequency. Each terrorist attack, flood or outbreak of disease leaves behind victims struggling to recover from bereavement, injury or trauma. The organisations responsible for survivors' care can face an equally momentous task in providing adequate information and support to victims and their families.

The concept for LAN2LAN's new Congrego solution dates back to the aftermath of the 7/7 London bombings, when Jasper Warren was asked by the Metropolitan Police to help create a website to provide information for survivors.

Jasper saw how LAN2LAN could leverage the IBM collaboration platform to support a rich online environment for disaster victims and their families. It would serve as a conduit between victims and the authorities, and more importantly, enable victims to support each other by using this online community.

"New thinking in trauma theory recognises self-empowerment as more effective than individual therapy in the recovery process" says Jasper. "Congrego gives victims a secure online space, accessed via the browser, where they can share experiences and build supportive relationships – whether they live on the doorstep of the disaster or on the other side of the world."

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Congrego: a new perspective on disaster recovery

A network of support

Congrego has many benefits for organisations responsible for supporting disaster victims. A police force, local authority or airline can activate Congrego within a few hours of an incident.

Its appearance and content are easily customised, and once a victim's details have been captured at the event scene, they are provided with access details for a dedicated Congrego space. It's a self-contained means for authorities to provide regular news updates, upload essential resources like advisory guidebooks, and maintain an all-important sense of ongoing communication.

The popularity of social networking means many people are now comfortable with online collaboration spaces, and are increasingly forming their own action groups. However, in the aftermath of a disaster, survivors need rapid and authoritative information in a secure environment.

In effect, Congrego provides an immediate community group. "In fact, most of Congrego's development time was devoted to researching the needs of trauma survivors" says Jasper. "We spoke with victims of 9/11 and 7/7, and of the recent floods in Gloucestershire and East Yorkshire."

Accordingly, Congrego offers a deep range of features that enable victims to collaborate in the way they prefer. With persistent chat, individuals can track back over the full history of group discussions. People can chat publicly or privately, maintain personal blogs, join in discussion forums, upload information and participate in virtual meetings using a standard webcam.

Access is limited to people directly affected by a disaster, and new members – for example survivors' family members – must be approved by the responsible authority before they can access Congrego.

Technology you can depend on

Jasper is confident Congrego will have a wide range of uses in both the public and private sectors. Valuable as an integral part of disaster recovery strategy, Congrego can also be used as a more straightforward information sharing resource, for example, to develop an increased sense of community among midwives or families in the armed forces.

Uniquely, IBM's collaboration platform can scale to support hundreds of thousands of simultaneous Congrego users if required. The underlying IBM technology is thoroughly proven, so availability is assured. Customers need only activate Congrego when an incident demands, either via cloud computing or as an onsite solution.

"The response to Congrego has been tremendous" says Jasper. "Congrego had total support from LAN2LAN's Board of Directors from day one, and over 85 percent of local authorities we've spoken to have been enthusiastic: people feel Congrego really is the right solution at the right time."

For more information please go to www.LAN2LAN.com/congrego or contact Jasper Warren on jasper.warren@LAN2LAN.com.

Congrego's unique suite of benefits

- Provides a single channel for communication between trauma victims and the organisation responsible for their support
- Enables victims to connect and support each other regardless of location
- Protects participants from prying or exploitation, using robust security and authentication procedures
- Accelerates the speed with which businesses and central or local government can roll out victim support
- Proven IBM collaboration technology ensures unrivalled scalability and availability

Expert Q&A

Dr. Melissa Snell,
LAN2LAN Solutions Specialist

“I believe you should only ever have to type something once,,”

Each edition of **Inspired Connections** talks to a LAN2LAN expert. Discover how LAN2LAN gets hands-on with IBM solutions to help extend your business horizons.

Apart from lots of coding, tell us about your role at LAN2LAN.

Actually, I love coding – the more the better! Joking apart, my biggest reward is enabling clients to achieve more, whether it's improving an existing process or letting them accomplish something completely new. I manage a team of developers, and our challenge is always to come up with the smartest solution to the client's business problem. At the end of a project, when a client says 'I wasn't sure at first but now we can't live without it' – that's what makes my job so satisfying.

LAN2LAN's new proposition is Clever Networks. No Limits.

How do you apply this in practice?

For me, the most important elements of a network are people and data, and clever networks are about bringing those elements together. A clever network lets data get wherever the user wants. A business or project team should be able to create new networks spontaneously and work how they choose, rather than having processes imposed on them. IBM's collaboration platform makes this possible.

So you're helping people extend the limits of their productivity?

Exactly. When I used to train developers, you could always tell the Lotus people apart: I'd set a really tough assignment, and the Lotus guys were always utterly determined to solve it. That's how we work at LAN2LAN – we love pushing the boundaries of what's achievable, and our clients get the benefit.

How does IBM technology help you connect people?

I believe you should only ever have to type something once. Once the data is in the system you should be able to share it however and with whomever you want. The Lotus platform lets you embed smart connections throughout an enterprise network: this dramatically improves the way knowledge is shared throughout the business. We were one of the first UK Business Partners to deploy Connections and Quickr, for example, which lets people seamlessly share work they create in everyday applications.

Tell us about an achievement you're especially proud of.

Our work for one of the World's leading PR firms has involved helping them create and maintain a huge variety of applications based on the Lotus platform. These range from handling their HR Appraisals to helping them be more creative in strategy meetings. They've been very positive about the improvements we've enabled them to achieve, in terms of both our ability to understand their needs and the way we've delivered solutions that are in tune with their corporate culture. That gives me a terrific sense of achievement. And of course I'm a nice manager. I'm proud of that too.

Follow Melissa on
LAN2LAN's blog
www.LAN2LAN.com/technobabble



Like to know more about how clever thinking from LAN2LAN can help you transcend the limits of your business? Then we'd love to hear from you.

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