



Note-taking Trial Assessment - DEMO VERSION

Transcript of audio track

Title: Introduction to Online Conferencing - PowerPoint Presentation

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Slide 1

Hello, and welcome to this presentation about online conferencing. My name is Geoff Minshull, and I work for an organisation called Direct Learn. We're educational consultants and work for various organisations mostly in the UK, but we have also begun to organise an increasing number of online conferences. So this presentation is to briefly run through some of the main features of online conferencing, to try to show you how it can benefit organisations, especially in areas such as staff development. There is a text transcription of the audio available in the notes view within PowerPoint.

Slide 2

So, these are some of the main points that I hope to cover within the presentation. We'll start off by looking at what online conferencing is and looking at different features within it; and then we'll look at some of the advantages and disadvantages of online conferencing, because it is not a universal panacea. It is very good in certain circumstances and has a lot of advantages, but there are also some disadvantages. And to illustrate those, we'll look at some of the situations where it is appropriate to use online conferencing. And finally, we will a look at the organisation that goes behind an online conference and the role of the moderators and facilitators that work on the online conference when it is actually running.

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So online conferencing is actually a very, very wide term, and covers a lots of similar technologies, and some of these are on the slide now. I'll perhaps just explain a little bit about one or two of these.

Web casting is a technology whereby you can produce a presentation over the internet, rather like this one, but live, and so the presenter will work through a PowerPoint presentation typically, but because it is live, there might be some video and almost certainly be audio, and the people attending the presentation can communicate with the presenter as though they are just in a room with them. They might be able to interact just through an audio, through a microphone, or they might be able to interact just through a text based medium through keying in questions and comments into a text box. They also, web casting software also offers facilities such as application sharing, white board facilities and so on.

Voice and tele conferencing is in some senses an old technology, whereby a number of people can use the telephone to talk together simultaneously, and so have a conference over the phone. This is becoming increasingly common now with Voice over IP technology, where rather than conventional telephone system being used for telephone conferencing, the internet and IP technology is used instead. This has, amongst other things, the major advantage that it is a lot, lot cheaper.

There is also video conferencing which has been around for a long time. This was, used to be and still is fairly expensive. There are different ways of running video conferencing and it is perhaps beyond the scope of this presentation to go into that. You can do video conferencing over the web, you can do it quite successfully, it depends on speed of your connection to the internet as to how effective it actually is.

Those are three examples of synchronous technologies and I will talk about those more in the next slide. There is also three other technologies we use quite a bit.

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Email lists are some of the most common forms of collaboration over the net. Whereby people subscribe to a list and they send messages to the list rather than the individual members of the list. And the email list takes care of distribution to all the members of the list. This means you don't have to maintain a list of email addresses yourself, you just have the one address of the email list. Very, very effective as a way of communication.

There are also bulletin boards, which are web based discussion groups really, and which in fact form the basis of the technology we are talking about. And there is general conferencing tools, so for example, tools which allow document sharing, live interaction, diaries, meeting scheduling, etc. I mean, in a sense these are more meeting tools, collaborative technologies. And, as in the physical world, in the virtual world there's a clear difference between a conference and a meeting.

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If I go onto next slide you'll see that those six examples of the technologies are split into two - synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous means real time, in the same way a phone conversation is real-time - it's actually live, it happens there and then. That does mean to participate in it you have to be there at the time it is happening. So if you want to participate in voice conferencing you have to be there at the time.

Asynchronous means it's not in real time. Examples of asynchronous tools are email lists, bulletin boards, and some conferencing tools. And, whilst not in real-time, these do have the advantage that they provide a permanent record of what's happened and it's... whilst they're not strictly real time, the time interval between, for example, posting a message on a bulletin board and getting reply can be one or two seconds it can be very, very quick indeed.

So the technology we are loosely concerned with here and which I'll will go into more in the next slide is a cross between a bulletin board and conference tools because

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the asynchronous conference tools we use have at their core a bulletin board and have lots of added functionality, which are described in the next slide.

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So, not all conferencing tools have these features, but the product we use, Web Crossing, does. The discussion forums, the asynchronous discussion forums, are the bulletin board really. There is a topic to do with... whatever, and people post messages and reply to messages about that topic. Very, very simple technology that's been around for a long time - but is very, very effective.

You also have the facility to do file upload, and downloads and have a file repository, in fact. If you want to use the Web Crossing product we use as a file server, to distribute certain files, you can do. The sorts of files you might have are papers, presentations, and so on.

Something that is very useful, because the conferencing tools are web based, it's useful to get email notification of new messages. So that in a forum which is perhaps not that busy you don't want to be constantly logging in, just on the off-chance to check that there are messages. With email notification you are automatically sent a notification when there are new messages. That notification automatically comes into your email inbox. So that's very, very useful.

So despite what I said about being asynchronous, you can mix match synchronous tools within in the forums, for example live chat. Which is precisely what it says, a live text-based chat.

You can also change the look and feel of the forum by including graphics, web pages and so on. And importantly you can set up different access rights for different people. So it is easy to set it up so that certain people can create new discussions, whereas other people can only post to exist discussions, or you can have rights so people can add web links or change look and feel of the screen and other people can't. The

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concept of access rights is fundamental to how our conference works. Generally you have two or three sets of people some with more access rights than others.

There's also other functionality you can include, for example, blogs, Wikis (which are not mentioned in the slides); polls, to quickly get feedback on certain things; instant messaging, which is a form of... which is roughly equivalent to text messaging, so you can send an instant private messages to any other individual within the conference, and no one else can see that, unlike the messages you post which can be seen by anybody - assuming they have access rights to see that discussion or folder.

And the chief advantage to us of Web Crossing is that it is totally configurable in functionality and look and feel so with a little bit of work and a little bit of programming knowledge you can change it and make it do precisely what you want, or precisely what your clients need.