



IT Strategy: Workforce Collaborative Software

Blair Johnson/Ron Winterrowd, here is my review and recommendation.

The [ODOT Information Technology Strategic Plan for 2006 - 2010](#) identifies a Community of Interest (COI) business need of **Workforce Collaboration Software**. In essence, ODOT's customers have stated they have a business need for tools that will improve collaboration among our workforce, partners and suppliers. To answer this call, the IS strategy is to provide a suite of standard collaboration tools and services that is supportable, easy to access and produces business results.

IS Strategic Plan - S2: Collaboration Tools

Long Term Vision: ODOT staff and business partners easily collaborate on projects and work regardless of their physical location. ODOT staff is comfortable and productive using interactive audio and visual collaboration tools. ODOT-IS provides a reliable, high-performance IT infrastructure and software tools to support collaboration.

Sponsor: Ron Winterrowd, Central Services

COI Needs Assessment Overview. A suite of tools and services that meet 80% of needs, as determined by an initial needs assessment and is available to ODOT staff.

Transportation COI -- Collaboration Tools: Transportation works extensively with others to deliver and manage Oregon's transportation systems. A suite of collaboration tools will help the division work effectively and efficiently with its partners and contractors, and will enable teams to easily collaborate on projects and work regardless of their physical location.

Central Services COI -- Collaboration Tools: Central Services serves many customers inside and outside of ODOT and can use collaboration tools to improve customer service. Central Services employees will be able to work effectively and productively with these customers and with other team members. In particular, Human Resources has a need for "Distance Learning and collaboration" tools.

Key External Factors -- Statewide Initiatives. The number of statewide projects is increasing, requiring more collaboration across agencies, communication and coordination.

Target Dates:
January 2006 thru
March 2007

ODOT has a growing demand for real-time and team-based collaboration technologies. Over the next four years, the organizational need for desktop-base Web conferencing and team-based collaboration will grow. While both are still in an early phase of adoption, they are converging and transitioning in the marketplace while end users expectations are growing. End users are asking ISB to provide a more integrated collaboration functionality spanning a variety of content, communication and collaboration technologies. Overall adoption of collaboration tools will increase as these technologies become more integrated with business needs and processes.

As a collaboration toolset, desktop video conferencing with embedded instant messaging (IM) will experience increasing demand. In particular, ODOT IS plans to expand video conferencing at the desktop in order to support cross-regional ad hoc conversations and teaming while becoming better integrated with Web conferencing and white boarding. Demand for this service integration is from ODOT managers needing to stay in touch with ODOT teams spread across the State and to make collaboration tools as easy to use as the telephone.

Where applicable for ODOT business units, Web conferencing and team collaboration technologies will be provided as part of a service on-demand to end users and as part of the Microsoft Office Suite desktop configurations. It is believed that adoption of collaboration technologies will be more common for live meetings and other forms of

interpersonal communication supported by collaboration tools. For ODOT, e-mail is used as the current primary mode of collaboration communication in lieu of widely distributed horizontal collaboration technologies. Concurrently, these tools should not be seen as a substitute for preferred face-to-face meetings when possible, but can substitute for the expense of business travel for the purpose of meetings.

Web conferencing collaboration products support interaction between participants in real-time, in a meeting or presentation format. They include file, screen and application sharing, chatting and electronic white boarding. Team-based products provide shared folders and workspaces, threaded discussions and document-based collaboration and primarily through asynchronous behavior. Team-based technologies provide a persistent, easy-to-access archive of discussions and stored content. On the other hand, ODOT's BlackBerry mobile messaging service also plays a key part in ODOT's collaboration toolset for faster information flow and decision-making. See the draft [ODOT Blackberry Mobile Messaging Policy](#) by Peter van den Berg delivered to the May 12 ODOT IT Executive Steering Committee.

Collaborative Software Product Reviews. ODOT-IS is currently undergoing a collaborative software product review. For example, [WebEx](#) is currently being piloted in an ODOT-hosted environment to look at the functionality a web conferencing tool could provide and to see how users would react to using such a tool. ISB has been working with the pilot team regarding their needs to ensure they understand what is available and what we need from them at the end of the pilot. To date, we have completed our initial set of meetings with the ODOT WebEx hosts. They have understood the purpose of the proof-of-concept pilot exercise and know that we will set up meetings with them in June to discuss their experiences and possible future uses and savings associated with this type of tool. We have started to set up meetings with vendor representatives for several of the identified products and have requested a meeting and demonstration with DHS to discuss iLinc.

Additionally, ISB is gathering information from various sources related to products currently already available at ODOT (Breeze, LearnLinc/MeetingLinc/TestLinc, Microsoft SharePoint, WebEx, AT&T) as well as learning about what else is available in the marketplace. ISB also plans to set up some meetings with ODOT Human Resources to discuss LearnLinc and Motor Carrier to better understand the Breeze product. Per the Central Services COI project priority; LearnLinc is tentatively scheduled for review and implementation in September 2006. This will depend on the priority given to it by the COI.

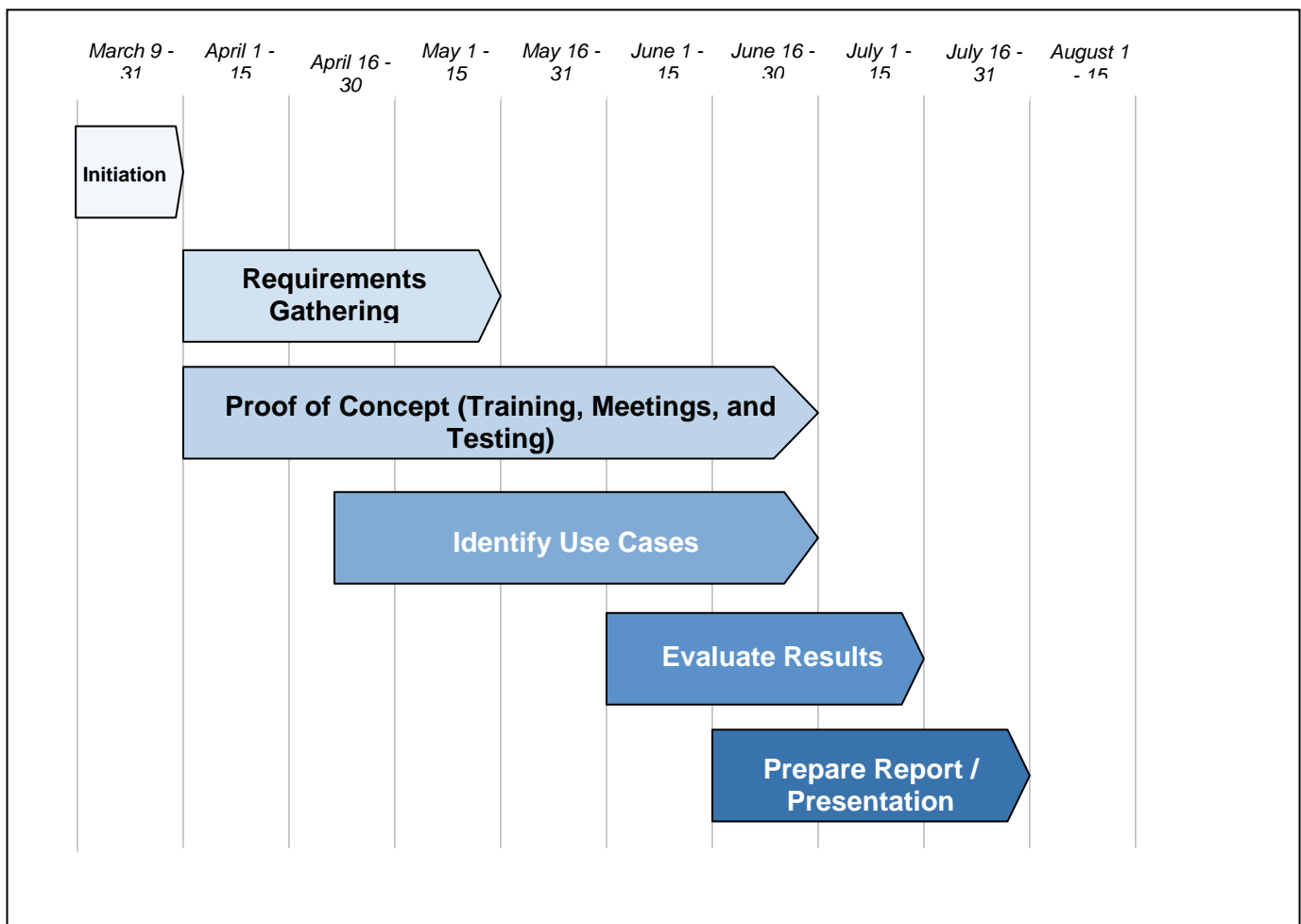
Based on results thus far, there are a lot of products that would do an adequate job of meeting the vast majority of ODOT's collaborative interactive conferencing needs. It would be great if one product did it all but based on the research we have done so far that is not likely to be a reality for an organization as large and diverse as ODOT. Assuming we are correct, the key to a truly successful enterprise wide collaborative software implementation then becomes a single portal from which anyone can find and access the tool appropriate for their needs. We will keep this in mind as we explore alternatives. Two big differentiators may end up being initial and operational cost and strategic positioning for the future. Some products may lend themselves to meeting niche business requirements versus one product satisfying all business needs. We suspect that is what we will find once we finalize the results of the following reviews:

Product Functional Review by [Transportation Applications Development \(TAD\)](#)

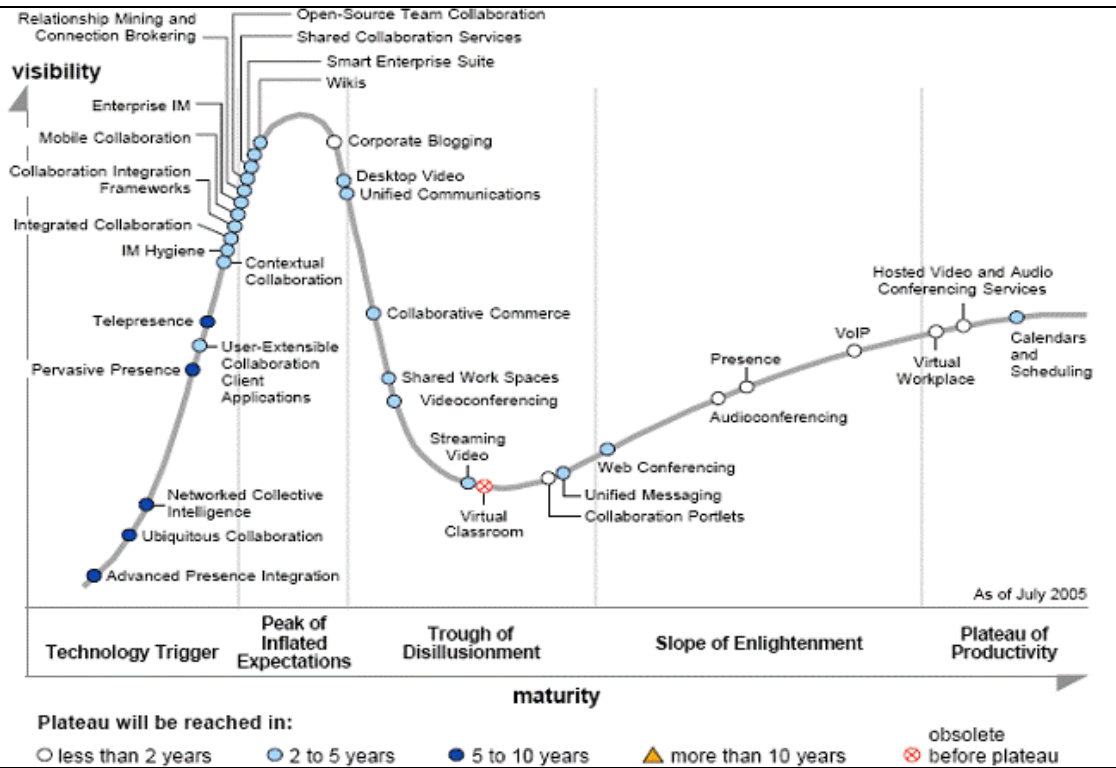
Products Identified To-Date	Comments	Planned Level of Research
e/pop Web Conferencing	newer / lower-priced solution	trade reviews, internet research
Genesys Meeting Center	excellent PSTN/Web conferencing integration	trade reviews, internet research
Citrix GoToMeeting	focuses on sharing applications and presentations	trade reviews, internet research
Microsoft SharePoint	powerful toolset Note: NetMeeting is now considered part of SharePoint. NetMeeting is on many ODOT PCs although it is "hidden" from the user in most cases. ISB plans to hold vendor discussions with Microsoft to learn more about the SharePoint collaboration tool.	trade reviews, internet research
SightSpeed	can't match a high-end, hardware-based system	trade reviews, internet research, vendor presentations

WebEx	according to trade reviews leads in areas of functionality and ease of use	trade reviews, internet research, three month Meeting Center proof of concept
AT&T Reservation-less Conference Calls	already available to all State agencies	trade reviews, internet research, use to conduct small number of meetings
iLinc Products including Virtual Classroom, MeetingLinc and TestLinc	LearnLinc module purchased by ODOT <i>Note: If the meeting component is available, it should be made available to TAD for review.</i>	trade reviews, internet research, DHS demo, vendor discussion
Raindance Meeting Edition	very good product for small, impromptu meetings	trade reviews, internet research

TAD's Collaborative Interactive Conferencing Software Review Schedule



GARTNER'S
*Collaboration
 and
 Communications
 Hype Cycle, 2005*



Recommendation. In the charts discussed above, it is interesting to note that Gartner says training-specific Web tools will be obsolete. This is something to consider as we review the LearnLinc virtual classroom. The second chart contains a high level schedule and it shows an early August completion. The first chart lists the products identified for the review process. These will provide ODOT with an understanding of the types of functionality that is available.

The intent, related specifically to LearnLinc, is to understand the high level functionality provided not only by that module but the entire iLinc suite of tools. In addition, ISB will meet with DHS staff as they are currently using this tool. We will discuss the pros, cons, and requirements of each. We will compare iLinc functionality and costs to that offered by other products under review.

In addition, TAD along with various business users are conducting a review of the [WebEx](#) system for collaborative software and we have entered and trained WebEx meeting hosts. Our research into specific products such as iLinc will begin in May.

There are three levels of collaboration software and categories depending on the level of collaboration—communication tools, conferencing tools and collaborative management (coordination) tools.

- Electronic communication tools send messages, files, data, or documents between people and hence facilitate the sharing of information. Examples include:
 - e-mail
 - faxing
 - voice mail
 - Web publishing
- Electronic conferencing tools also facilitate the sharing of information, but in a more interactive way. Examples include:
 - data conferencing — networked PCs share a common "whiteboard" that each user can modify
 - voice conferencing — telephones allow users to interact
 - video conferencing (and audio conferencing) — networked PCs share video or audio signals
 - Internet forums (also known as message boards or discussion boards) — a virtual discussion platform to facilitate and manage online text messages
 - Electronic meeting systems (EMS) — a conferencing system built into a room. The special purpose room will usually contain a large screen projector interlinked with numerous PCs.

- Collaborative management tools facilitate and manage group activities. Examples include:
 - electronic calendars (also called time management software) — schedule events and automatically notify and remind group members
 - project management systems — schedule, track, and chart the steps in a project as it is being completed
 - workflow systems — collaborative management of tasks and documents within a knowledge-based business process
 - knowledge management systems — collect, organize, manage, and share various forms of information
 - extranet systems (sometimes also known as 'project extranets') — collect, organize, manage and share information associated with the delivery of a project

Implementation. The TAD Applications Development Group will complete its review of the multiple collaboration tools and release detailed findings of which products meet the customer's expectations and criteria. The biggest hurdle in implementing collaborative software tools is convincing ODOT staff to use it. This will need to be sponsored by ODOT Executive Staff. Training is required to make staff comfortable using it, and if staff do not feel comfortable with the software, they won't use it. In some cases, use of electronic collaboration tools can be at odds with ODOT's culture so implementation must be well thought out, especially where niche opportunities exist. Shifting our organizational culture from being independent of using computerized tools to being software tool-enabled and collaborative is no small undertaking. It will require changes at all levels of the organization, including key management's use of the tools.

TAD's findings, including purchase and implementation recommendation actions, will be briefed to the Central Services COI and updated in the [IT Strategic Plan](#). These findings will influence/impact the scheduled implementation of LearnLinc in the Fall, but ISB will continue to keep Human Resources informed. One of the biggest hurdles is the typical organizational desire to standardize knowledge practices across the organization and to implement tools and processes which support that aim. Much greater value and quicker implementation can be achieved by avoidance of the "one size fits all" approach. ODOT can cultivate the practice of collaboration where it flourishes of its own volition and where it gains the quickest return to ODOT's staff and teams, depending on the end user's needs.