

Thought transfer

with
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The science behind business technology

The amount of financial and business information has exploded over the past decade. Advances in online data storage, transmission and processing have transformed the internet into a supporting pillar of the 21st century commercial finance industry. But while the last 10 years have been about your ability to access information, I suspect that the next 10 will be dominated by how you can make sense of it all.

The semantic web – ready for take-off?

Worldwide web inventor Tim Berners-Lee has gone on record saying that, "Leading-edge providers of financial information are now developing services that allow users easily to integrate the data they have themselves – about their own portfolios or from their in-house market models – with the data delivered by the information service. The unique value creation lies in the integration service itself, not in the raw data on its own or even in the software tools..."

He is, in fact, hinting at the evolution of the internet – the semantic web – whereby data in various locations and formats can be integrated in one, seamless application for effective decision-support and where applications learn intelligently and employ contextual reasoning.

Riding the wave – the end of e-mail?

What if e-mail could be given a makeover? That was the question Lars Rasmussen and his brother Jens, two engineers at Google, asked themselves in 2004. Their answer, called Google Wave, was unveiled in May 2009 and is now being tested by thousands of users worldwide. It lets people collaborate in shared discussions, or waves, which can encompass many forms of interaction: messaging, notes, comments, collaboration on shared documents and so on. Users can move a slider to replay a wave, to see how it reached its current form. It could mean a move towards more collaborative working, possibly even the end of the road for e-mail as we know it. Some bosses regard social networking as the epitome of online time-wasting. But the science behind Wave or Facebook, could be the future of a new, more collaborative workplace.

SixthSense – a new information interface?

Right now, information is confined traditionally to paper or digitally on a screen. SixthSense, from MIT Media Lab, is a wearable gestural interface that augments the physical world around us with digital information and lets us use natural hand gestures to interact with that information. This frees information from its confines by seamlessly integrating it with reality, and thus making the entire world your computer! Conceptually, this technology could be extended to a physical inventory audit or provide you with data related to asset valuation.

Whatever the future holds, one thing is clear: accurate, usable, intelligible information is the ultimate purpose that unites science and business technology.

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