

The Life and Times of the New Virtual Team

Companies are dynamic. Projects come and go quickly. The economic landscape changes, core competencies shift and employees find themselves learning new skills, working with different groups and creating different products. The once stable “work group” has now become a virtual work group. Members come from many departments and the work relationships may be quick or long lasting. Information needs to be created, exchanged and subjected to team edits. Access to digital resources needs to be granted and withdrawn. Layers of company confidentiality must be maintained.

Customer Scenario

In order to maintain its leadership role in the widget industry, Excelsior Widgets has learned to do more with less. Diminishing margins have impacted everyone in the industry. Staff reductions have become an annual event. Excelsior needed to keep its talented people, but it needed to keep them busy and it needed the flexibility to rapidly assign, complete, reassign and mutate projects. Aggregate employee productivity was a direct product of a flexibility-focused company.

In long discussions in the executive suite, each major department of the company was expected to detail how it was contributing to the flexibility solution. The IT department had already established its contribution through the use of Novell® virtualization and orchestration technologies. The hardware was fluid and the services available to meet changing needs. But the company focus had shifted to the opportunities at the level of the individual staff members.

Fossa Project Today

With the Novell virtualization platform to build upon, the IT department looked “up the stack” to see what else Novell could contribute. IT discovered that the flexibility of the individual employee was very much a function of how fast a functional team could be created in the system, how fast data access could be granted, how easy it was for a team member to train on collaboration software and how fast identity privileges could be changed.

The IT department began to look at the broader Novell product offerings for a solution to its teaming problems. The solutions began with identity. Novell regards identity as a foundational fabric of its product line. Identity is in everything that comes from Novell. And with that pervasive fabric comes a way to hook different roles and policies onto the fundamental identity that all employees gained when they came into the company. The newest identity-based offerings make it extremely easy to attach

Key Customer Benefits

- Make it easier to create virtual teams for addressing business collaboration challenges
- Facilitate information sharing in a secure and auditable fashion
- Improve productivity by enabling employees to share without having to think or act with respect to any other specific person

The Fossa is the most agile animal on the planet. We're working to make IT just as agile. Join us on the journey. Together we can define a world where IT is truly agile and where people and technology work as one.

roles and other policies to an employee identity. Furthermore, the new offerings allow employees and managers to make changes without involving the IT department. Of course, such changes are made within parameters and policies that the IT department had initially set up so that it could prevent chaos.

One of the problems in creating teams has always been interoperability. Some employees favored software based on Microsoft* Windows*, others favored Apple*, and yet others favored Linux* and UNIX* systems. Although Excelsior had a policy to standardize systems, years of acquisitions had brought together a collection of services and data stores that were not easily removed. Data stores and employee knowledge of a service were quite sticky and proved to be an ongoing problem. Fortunately, Novell had long believed that open systems and interoperable systems were a fact of life in modern business. Novell solutions recognize the need for many systems to interoperate and exchange data. Novell supports many file access protocols, and the identity system can easily co-exist with and synchronize with systems from Microsoft, Red Hat*, Sun*, IBM*, Hewlett-Packard* and others. Our strategy is to help our customers open up, not to lock in.

Fossa Project Vision for 2012

In the Fossa Project architecture, virtual teams will be defined by the teams themselves without IT involvement. Access to data, collaboration tools and other team members will be initiated by the team leader without any additional assistance or guidance. Virtualized teams will even spread across corporate boundaries through advancements such as SAML and tokenized identity. Where possible, software will be presented as a Web service to foster participation and preserve access to legacy applications. Of course, a full audit record will be maintained to ensure accountability.

On top of the identity foundation, Novell has created both a data store and a set of

collaboration tools that could share that identity foundation. Access to the data and the tools will be equally fast and decentralized.

Employees will be able to immediately set up project data stores that reflect both file system and database attributes. They will have immediate and secure access to shared whiteboards and videoconferencing as well as integration with existing mail and messaging systems. New team members can be added on the fly and former team members can be removed, but their contribution will be preserved as part of the project, not lost in the employee's individual files.

Because of global business expansion, project team members can come from anywhere. Many of the individual contributors will work out of their homes. Because of time zone differences, the Fossa Project architecture will allow asynchronous contribution as well as the typical synchronous interaction. Data will flow in at participant-controlled intervals. And the data flows in securely because of the identity fabric attached to employees, to data and to services.

The Fossa Project represents our technical vision for the future of enterprise IT. The project is a key building block of our corporate positioning around Making IT Work As One™. It is also a key element in our strategy as an enterprise infrastructure software company. This strategy leverages the world's best-engineered Linux and IT management software. Our Fossa Project is about computing and collaborating with agility.

Novell invites you to join us on this journey. We offer applied technology that provides real solutions for today while bracing for, and in fact helping shape, the inevitable changes that are coming. Whether you are a customer, partner, Novell employee, a member of the open source community or just an interested observer, we welcome your input. Together we can define a world where IT is truly agile and where people and technology work as one.

