

# Novell Brings Messaging to the Deskless Work Force

**A**t BrainShare 2001 in Salt Lake City, Novell announced a new initiative for GroupWise 6—connecting deskless workers to their company's collaboration system. In this interview, Paul Turner, director of Product Management for Novell's Collaboration Services, explains how Novell is helping companies improve productivity, retain their best employees, and increase responsiveness to customers and market changes.

**Q: Why is Novell providing a deskless solution rather than simply a wireless solution?**

**A:** We are providing a deskless solution instead of a wireless solution because we are addressing the customer problem instead of the technology. With a deskless solution, users can connect to their e-mail program via a wireless device or a web browser, or both.

For example, we have a customer that is a large store chain. This company is creating mailboxes for each of their salesclerks and managers. The company will then set up a web kiosk in each break room. Salesclerks and managers can then just walk in to the break room to get their e-mail messages. It's technically not wireless, but it is deskless. Eventually, some of those employees will be equipped with wireless devices so they can access their collaboration services throughout the stores, but they will still use the web kiosks as well.

We believe that people use wireless devices for certain types of operations. If you try to compose and reply to 100 e-mails a day on your wireless device, you're going to get frustrated. It's impossible. We see wireless devices serving purposes based on the type of applications you are using, the tasks that you are doing, or the places you are going.

For example, I may take my WAP phone on a golf course. I'm not going to compose e-mail with that WAP phone because I would have to use a 10-key pad. But I can easily use the phone to confirm a meeting. I may need to know if I have to attend a meeting at 4 p.m. If I get a response that says the meeting is actually at 3 p.m., I am going to throw my golf clubs in the back of my car and run to work. If I get a message back that says the meeting starts at 5 p.m., however, I can still get in nine holes. Those are the kinds of communications that I can do easily on a WAP phone.

If I move to the next functional devices such as a RIM,

Palm, or iPAQ device, I've got more functionality, but I am still probably not going to compose and reply to 100 e-mail messages a day. With these types of devices, however, I will probably start responding to and sending around 20 messages because I have a keyboard or stylus and can start to get pretty fast at that. But we expect that even deskless workers who are equipped with these wireless devices will still use web-based access to do their work.

I was recently talking to one of the vice presidents at Cambridge Technologies who gave a great example of mixing wireless and web access: A construction firm in Europe has set up their network so that customers and employees can access their site via wireless devices. To actually set up a new order or to register as a new account, however, people use their web browser—specifying this many 2x4s, this many yards of concrete, and so on.

Suppose when customers or employees get on site, they find that they didn't order enough boards. In this instance, it's very quick and easy to use a wireless device to order more boards. So people are going to use their web browser to do their industrial-strength e-mail production and work collaboration, but they're going to use their wireless device to do some of the more incidental tasks.



**Q: How do companies expect to improve productivity by connecting deskless workers to their collaboration system?**

**A:** First, connecting deskless workers will break down the organizational and hierarchical boundaries that exist within their organization. For example, Human Resources will now be able to reliably communicate with all employees—whether those employees are at the corporate office or in a field office. For example, if Human Resources must ensure that all employees read a particular OSHA regulation, they can send out an e-mail message and monitor which employees open that e-mail message or send a response.

Deskless workers can also use e-mail to send purchasing information back into the corporate office. They can coordinate better with the corporate office.

More importantly, deskless workers can coordinate with each other. For example, suppose Bob at the St. Louis store knows all about merchandising, placement, and displays in the store. Bob can share his expertise on an ongoing basis

with all of the other stores. He can say, "We've put the soda in this particular place, or we've put the Pokémon merchandise in this particular place." Because employees can exchange ideas and information, the stores compete on a local scale with global information.

The other thing that is really critical is that because companies are having a hard time finding good knowledge workers, they can actually grow those people from their deskless work force to their knowledge work force. When companies give deskless workers access to technology, the employees who take to the technology and contribute their knowledge and ideas will "float up." These are the workers companies will leverage as key resources and promote.

Until now, these deskless workers haven't been able to contribute in a significant way because this two-way communication hasn't been available. In most cases, deskless workers understand their jobs better than anyone else and have a lot of ideas about how the organization can improve. They simply haven't had the tools to share their knowledge. With GroupWise 6, we give them the tools they need.

**Q: Are there other benefits that companies see by enabling their deskless workers to collaborate?**

A: Absolutely. The value proposition that we are delivering with GroupWise 6 is to accelerate organizational productivity and responsiveness—responsiveness to market changes, to customers, and to work challenges. The speed with which companies deal with day-to-day challenges in the workplace directly affects their bottom line.

Suppose I run a factory where I need to install a new piece of equipment into the production line. To do this, I have to stop the production line for two weeks for the installation.

However, when the maintenance crew begins to install the new equipment, they find that the supplier sent the wrong part. The maintenance supervisor on the production floor is a deskless worker. Using a wireless device, he can access GroupWise 6 thinking, "To get this resolved, I'm going to need the production manager, someone from purchasing, and someone from marketing." He opens the address book, finds

the appropriate people, and schedules a meeting for that day.

They have the meeting with all of the right people involved. The maintenance supervisor is there. The production manager is there. Someone from purchasing is there to say that a new part won't arrive for another week. The marketing person is there to explain how a delay will affect sales and recommend that the line be restarted with the old equipment and the new equipment be installed next month. In this meeting, they can quickly come to a consensus and agree on a course of action.

Then the maintenance supervisor and other team members can follow up with e-mail messages and action items, explaining to their management how the problem is being resolved. Can you imagine trying to call all those people to coordinate the meeting over the phone, making multiple calls to multiple people? Without the address book, the production guy probably wouldn't even have the right phone numbers, let alone be able to send one message to set up the meeting.

**Q: What kind of opportunity do you think Novell has in what is essentially a new market?**

A: The opportunity for the collaboration industry is incredible. The exciting thing is that we're leading in this new market. We've looked at some government data to determine the ratio of deskless workers to desk-based workers. In the United States alone, the deskless market is about twice the size of the desk-based market.

We think the United States has the smallest ratio because we have a lot of white-collar workers proportionately. In other countries, especially developing countries, companies rely more on wireless connectivity because they do not have good wired networks. Also, these countries have more factory workers and other deskless workers. In fact, we think that some countries may have up to seven times as many deskless workers as desk-based workers.

There is a huge potential. We can go into existing GroupWise accounts—there are 26 million users currently—and market to them to enable their deskless workers. We've already met with some airlines about enabling their deskless workers.

The other piece we see is that because we've got the best wireless functionality for collaboration, we can use our Exchange or Notes gateways to offer solutions to Exchange or Notes customers. Messages, scheduling appointments, and the address book are passed back and forth between the gateways so companies effectively have one collaboration system.

They don't have to rip out their existing collaboration system, which is a relatively expensive thing to do. But we can say, "We'll enable your deskless workers and integrate them seamlessly with the rest of your work force." Because these companies can simply add GroupWise deskless connectivity to their existing system, it's a no-brainer for a company—especially since most companies already have NDS eDirectory.

**Q: What competitive advantages does GroupWise 6 have?**

A: We're the only integrated collaborative environment that includes wireless in the box. When somebody buys a standard GroupWise license for a user, that user can use the GroupWise client, WebAccess, one or more wireless devices, or POP and IMAP. There is no additional charge. You pay one client-access license.

In addition, we offer a deskless license that is one-fourth the cost of a regular license. With the deskless license, a user can use WebAccess and wireless access with multiple devices.

With Exchange, you have to buy a separate client license for each access method you use. They're [U.S.] \$67 a piece. It adds up very quickly. Plus, to get wireless access, you have to add third-party products and other Microsoft add-ons.

With Notes, you have to purchase a wireless add-on. You pay approximately [U.S.] \$4,000 for the server, [U.S.] \$20 per user additionally.

Novell also has the broadest support for devices out of the box. Novell supports RIM devices, Palm devices, Windows CE devices, and WAP devices. Novell has also included Palm Web Clipping for the 13 million Palm users out there. We're the only system with Web Clipping support. In fact, Palm recently highlighted us in one of their announcements because of that support. ●