2.1.6.3: Collaborative Systems

Collaborative Systems

As organizations began to implement networking technologies, information systems emerged that allowed employees to begin collaborating in different ways. These systems allowed users to brainstorm ideas together without the necessity of physical, face-to-face meetings. Utilizing tools such as discussion boards, document sharing, and video, these systems made it possible for ideas to be shared in new ways and the thought processes behind these ideas to be documented.

Broadly speaking, any software that allows multiple users to interact on a document or topic could be considered collaborative. Electronic mail, a shared Word document, social networks, and discussion boards would fall into this broad definition. However, many software tools have been created that are designed specifically for collaborative purposes. These tools offer a broad spectrum of collaborative functions. Here is just a short list of some collaborative tools available for businesses today:

- **Google Drive**. Google Drive offers a suite of office applications (such as a word processor, spreadsheet, drawing, presentation) that can be shared between individuals. Multiple users can edit the documents at the same time and threaded comments are available.
- **Microsoft SharePoint**. SharePoint integrates with Microsoft Office and allows for collaboration using tools most office workers are familiar with. SharePoint was covered in more detail in chapter 5.
- **Cisco WebEx**. WebEx is a business communications platform that combines video and audio communications and allows participants to interact with each other’s computer desktops. WebEx also provides a shared whiteboard and the capability for text-based chat to be going on during the sessions, along with many other features. Mobile editions of WebEx allow for full participation using smartphones and tablets.
- **Atlassian Confluence**. Confluence provides an all-in-one project-management application that allows users to collaborate on documents and communicate progress. The mobile edition of Confluence allows the project members to stay connected throughout the project.
IBM Lotus Notes/Domino. One of the first true “groupware” collaboration tools, Lotus Notes (and its web-based cousin, Domino) provides a full suite of collaboration software, including integrated e-mail.