The new face of messaging is just around the corner

Are you thinking about it yet?

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About Andrew Pollack's Presentations

☐ **Designed to avoid "Slideware" issues**

- To the extent possible, I have tried to put as much real information in these slides, they are not bullet points

- As they contain more real information, they are likely to contain more errors. If you find any, please send me email – I want to hear about them

- The latest versions of all my presentations, updated to correct any reported errors, are always kept on my web site.

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Agenda

☐ **Who am I, Why are we here**
   ...and other big questions

☐ **Messaging isn't just email**

☐ **Where we are now**

☐ **Why messaging needs a new face**

☐ **Solving the messaging problems**

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Big Questions: Who am I? Why are we here?

■ Andrew Pollack -- Northern Collaborative Technologies

   ☐ 2003 IBM Lotus Beacon Award Winner
   ☐ Administrator & Developer since version 2.0
   ☐ Member of the Penumbra Group
   ☐ Firefighter - Engine 1 – Cumberland, Maine!
   ☐ In firefighting, just like Server Administration & Application
      Development, its all in the planning

■ Why We're Here

   ☐ To learn and grow as human beings
   ☐ We and our users are overloaded with messages
   ☐ The industry is about to change

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Messaging isn't just email

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Types of Messaging

☐ **We're here to talk about messages as it relates to people**

- Electronic Mail

- Instant Messaging

- Status Alerts

- Telephone Answering Systems

☐ **Messaging in general also includes system to system communications**

Where we are now

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The Home Office

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- [ ] Many of us work some or all of the time from a home office

- [ ] Virtually all communication is electronic in one form or another

- [ ] We are expected to be able to respond quickly

- [ ] A delayed response may be misconstrued as not working

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Project teams span offices and regions

- ☐ We work with people we know only through electronic messaging

  - ■ **Meaning and expression are lost, leaving room for misunderstanding**

- ☐ Work gets done in different time zones, virtually around clock

  - ■ **There is never a point to call the day "finished"**

  - ■ **There is nearly always some new electronic message**

  - ■ **Comments & Responses come in waves, often passing each other in transit**

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We are virtually never "unreachable"

- ☐ A cell phone or text messaging device is an expectation, and difficult to keep private

- ☐ Cross time zone project teams and poorly defined social rules lead to round the clock interruptions

- ☐ Even during working hours, intrusive messaging is interruptive and break concentration

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The meeting you can't miss

☐ **Social manipulation through email**

- ■ Electronic mail has become nearly instant

- ■ The "copying your manager" to pressure a faster response trick

- ■ The "copying peers" to build support for a point trick

- ■ The "blind copy the boss" to evoke sympathy trick

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Other forms of messaging overload

☐ **Messaging overload threatens to reduce the value of these technologies**

- ■ "Quick" Cell phone interruptions for unnecessary discussions

- ■ That friend who sends a different stupid joke to you three times a day

- ■ Unsolicited advertising

- ■ All those messages you've been "copied into" as part of social manipulation

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Why messaging needs a new face

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Current Management Techniques Failing

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☐ **Managing the Inbox**

- ■ Remove items from the Inbox as completed

- ■ Used to work well

- ■ Inbox volume has increased dramatically

- ■ Signal to noise ratio has become intolerable

- ■ A single message in the inbox cannot encapsulate the thread of a task or project to represent that task

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A "to do" flag to manage tasks doesn't work

- ☐ **Flagging a single message does not represent the task well**

- ☐ **The context of the task changes rapidly over the course of the day as more messages are transferred**

- ☐ **New messages related to a task must still be "managed out" of the inbox**

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Anti-spam software is inherently flawed

- ☐ **The very definition of spam is different from person to person**

- ☐ **The tighter you try to control spam, the more false positives result in missed messages**
  - ■ Totally unacceptable to most companies

- ☐ **Simply managing the anti-spam software becomes another task during the day**

- ☐ **For any technical anti-spam initiative to work, a large number of companies must stop accepting non-compliant messages – this is unlikely to happen quickly**

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Current Messaging is Interruptive

- ☐ **Our primary function at work is not to create and manage electronic messages**

- ☐ **Each "new message" alert, cell phone ring, or instant message alert takes us away from our primary focus**

- ☐ **It takes the average person about 5 minutes to return to a focused task after interruption**

- ☐ **Complex tasks can take up to 30 minutes for many people to build concentration**

Email is poorly suited to some messaging

- ☐ **If the content value is short lived**
  - ■ Recipients may not see the message in time
    - ☐ You've just wasted your time, and the reader's

- ☐ **If the subject matter is sensitive**
  - ■ It is difficult to know that your message will not be forwarded or saved for use out of context

- ☐ **If the required response is time sensitive**
  - ■ It can take more time to get the reply than is available
    - ☐ Again, a waste of time for both the sender and receiver

We have become "inbox" focused

☐ **The Inbox & New Mail notification are never closed**

■ Social Pressure to respond quickly

■ Fear of being made to look poorly or to loose an important argument

■ The "ringing phone" syndrome -- knowing new messages are waiting

☐ **We do our "Job" between managing messaging of one kind or another**

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Solving the messaging problems

Part 1 - Solutions start with social change

Part 2 – New technologies take advantage of the social evolution in messaging

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Solving the social aspect of the problem

☐ **Social solutions evolve over time**

- Electronic messaging is really only ten to fifteen years old, etiquette is still evolving

- Most companies are just beginning to define the ground rules formally

- Understand the nature of the content

  - Learn from the children – they're way ahead on this problem

- Let the nature of the content determine the means for communication

Define the ground rules clearly

☐ **Let people know if they're abusing the technology**

- Calling at inappropriate times
- Copying inappropriate people
- Responding inappropriately in haste

☐ **If you're the boss, do not allow yourself to be used in one of the copy or blind copy manipulation tricks**

☐ **Do not be trapped into responding poorly or wasting time through manipulation tricks**

Understand the nature of the message

- **Formality – Does the message content represent a formal position or statement?**

- **Sensitivity – Is the message content something you do not want repeated?**

- **Timeliness – How long will the content maintain relevance and value?**

- **Value – is the value of the content worth interrupting the recipient?**

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Deferent media are suited to different content

- **Email is good for informal, long duration, medium value communication and is a relatively low level of interruption**

- **Instant Messaging is good for informal, short duration communication but can be highly interruptive**

- **Prepared Documents are better for long duration, formal communication of policy and direction. Their format conveys added importance**

- **Telephone calls or meetings should be used for sensitive content as they are less likely to be inadvertently forwarded and are better able to convey a clear message without misunderstanding**

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Technologies to match the social needs of messaging

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Transient Messaging

☐ **Instant messaging tools are becoming pervasive**

☐ **Watch the kids – if their friends are not online, they frequently will not bother with email**

- When asked, they say that by the time the message has been received it will be irrelevant.

☐ **Some instant messaging technologies indicate your willingness to be interrupted**

- Lotus started this!

☐ **Be aware of local laws governing the logging and storage of instant messaging conversations**

Document Centric Messaging

- **A large amount of valuable email relates to a project team discussing and producing a document**

  - The document is the point, the emails about the document are at best "meta data"

- **New technologies attempt make the document the center of the context and tag the messaging as subordinate**

- **IBM Lotus Workplace and Microsoft Exchange are both moving toward this model**

  - Lotus Domino shops have built databases for this purpose, but are not using them fully

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Task Centric Messaging

- **Rather than a specific document, focus is on the context of a given project or conversation**

- **Similarities in subject, sender and recipient list, and non-dictionary words are used to group messages together**

- **Allows the user to see that there is new content within specific projects or conversations at a glance**

- **"Gmail" from Google attempts to do this**

- **To be successful, classification must happen before the user is notified of the new content**

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Ambient Awareness

How to create a general situational awareness without interruptive messaging

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The value point for ambient awareness

□ **Not all content is specific enough or high value enough to justify an interruptive message**

□ **Non specific data can still be valuable in determining priorities**

□ **Ambient Awareness technologies don't need to be actively checked**

□ **The human brain is good at turning general awareness into real data**

Our brain uses ambient awareness all the time

☐ **We don't pay attention to the temperature unless its too cold or too warm**

  ■ The further from ideal the temperature gets, the greater our attention to it becomes

☐ **Other examples of ambient awareness we use all the time include our sense of smell and need for food, water, and sleep**

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A low cost commercial example

☐ **A great example of low-cost ambient awareness technology**

☐ **Programmed by pointing it to a web page**

☐ **Changes color and intensity based on data from the page**

☐ **Examples:**
  ■ The stock market direction
  ■ Number of messages waiting
  ■ The size of a help desk queue
  ■ Number of mentions of you company name in the press

http://www.thinkgeek.com/gadgets/electronic/5da2/

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Instant Messaging Agents

☐ **Software agents monitor various conditions**

- Stock price
- Help desk queue
- Voice mail count
- Urgent message queue

☐ **Under specific conditions, the software agents "log on" to the instant messaging system with specific user id and passwords**

☐ **A glace at the buddy list on his mobile device tells the executive that "Urgent Message Queue" agent is logged in**

- The executive can query the agent through the instant messenger interface for more detail, or call in and collect the message

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Ambient Awareness Benefits

☐ **Not interruptive for low priority issues**

☐ **Can convey a general sense of situation at a single glance**

☐ **Can increase in intensity and become more interruptive based on changing conditions**

☐ **Allow the user to work steadily and with focus through a task, yet notice that something needs attention as the need for intense focus declines**

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Fixing the queue process

**Filtering out won't work, its time to filter
up to awareness from a pool of information**

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Current Filtering Problems

☐ **Filtering occurs after the interruption**

- Sorting the inbox
- Listening to, then discarding voicemail
- Unsolicited advertisement removal

☐ **Even once filtered, volume is too high**

- Reliance on electronic messaging for day to day work on several projects generates dozens or hundreds of valid messages

☐ **Messaging content is spread over several systems and not filtered together**

The new approach – filtering UP value

- **Content from multiple sources gets placed in a general pool**

- **Sorting and classification agents match new messaging content with existing content**

- **Content that matches existing projects or documents is placed in context**

- **Remaining content is indexed on likely importance – from likely spam to possible new customer**

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Filtered content triggers different notifications

- **New content in active projects or high priority contexts activates notifications**

- **Notification of new content in long term or medium priority contexts is done through "ambient awareness"**

- **Unclassified content or content classified as likely spam generates no interruptive notifications, and is queued for attention when convenient**

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Summary – Things to consider

- ☐ **Messaging is more than just email**

- ☐ **Part of the problem is social, but still must be addressed**

- ☐ **Instant messaging will begin to remove the low value content from the inbox**

- ☐ **The formal Memo will make a comeback**

- ☐ **Contextual Messaging will allow more sensible notification and management of tasks**

- ☐ **Ambient Awareness can be effective without interruption – the next big thing**

- ☐ **Filtering out is less effective than filtering up**

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Thank you for playing!

- ☐ **We're all trying to figure this stuff out together-- please ask your questions so others can here the answers**

- ☐ **We might even get some IBM people from the audience here to speak up with answers**

- ☐ **You may also contact me directly if you like**

- ☐ **Please fill out your evaluations**

- ☐ **The latest copy of this presentation will also be available at my website: http://www.thenorth.com**

- ☐ **For those playing the home game, direct questions & comments to:**

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