

2006 Horizon Awards Winner: HyperOffice

This hosted office environment gives users collaboration software, without the back-office support costs.

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In IT, ideas never truly die. They tend to come back, but in a new form. Take, for example, Rockville, Md.-based HyperOffice, which began as a part of the services offered by WebOS, a dot-com that dissolved in 2001. But it wasn't dead yet. The next year, several investors, including Drew Morris, the initial architect and primary developer of HyperOffice at WebOS, resurrected the concept as its own company. The difference is that WebOS targeted individual users, while HyperOffice targets businesses of up to 500 employees.

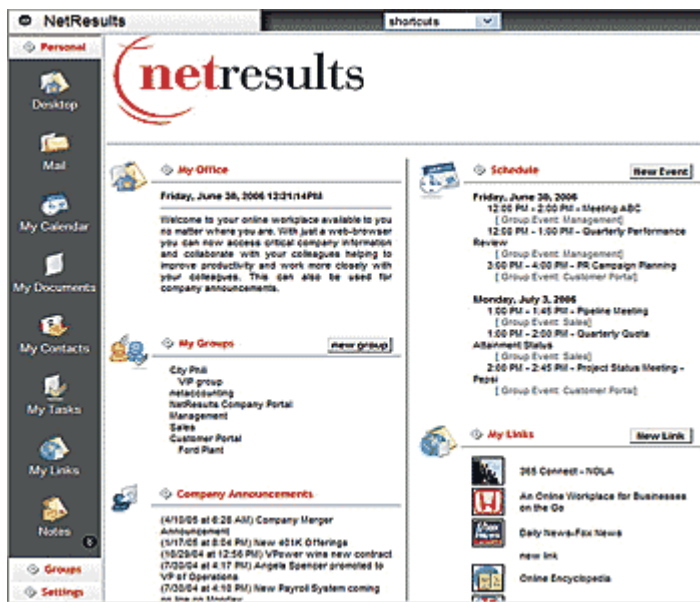
HyperOffice provides users with a hosted office environment, including e-mail, document management, calendar, project management and collaboration tools, at a cost of around \$7 per user per month.

End users still have their own desktop applications; the company doesn't have to purchase and support a server and collaboration software. It can be customized to incorporate links to other software.

"In the second inception of HyperOffice, the product was refined to allow corporate users to provide all the necessary collaboration and communication technologies they need for multiple types of stakeholders, including employees, customers, contractors and partners," says Morris, HyperOffice's chief technology officer.

"This is a good example of a rapidly growing area of technology, software as a service, which allows anyone to have the use of sophisticated software without the need to provide their own IT staff," says Amy D. Wohl, president of Wohl Associates, an office automation consultancy in Merion Station, Pa. "It doesn't mean we won't have IT; it means IT can focus on high-priority projects and leave commodity applications like e-mail to an outsourced service."

But one customer preferred the full features of Microsoft Outlook to HyperOffice's Web e-mail service. So HyperOffice created a tool that synchronizes data between Outlook and HyperOffice.



"The newest version, HyperShare for Outlook, allows customers to synchronize not just their personal information, but all of their groups as well," says Morris. "With HyperShare, customers using Outlook can share calendars, contacts, documents, tasks and more without the need for MS Exchange." The company is adding features to HyperOffice, but judiciously. The plan is to keep the product simple to install and use without extensive training.

HyperOffice synchronizes contacts, calendars and tasks in a secure extranet where users can collaborate with suppliers and contractors.

HyperOffice counts big companies like ConocoPhillips Co., Re/Max International Inc. and Toronto Hydro Corp. among its customers. These enterprises don't use HyperOffice as a replacement for collaboration software; they use HyperShare for Outlook to extend that collaboration off-site with suppliers, contractors and mobile workers.

HyperOffice wisely doesn't compete head-on with office software from IBM or Microsoft Corp. Instead, it targets customers who don't want the costs and headaches associated with hosting such software.

"It is unlikely to be the across-the-board choice in a large enterprise, but it could be in a smaller company," says Wohl. "Larger enterprises might like it for remote locations, telecommuters and projects that include both employees and outside contractors."

Robb is a Computerworld contributing writer.

HyperOffice
www.HyperOffice.com
301-255-0018