

## Cyber Slacking

### Perspective from the Top



Productivity is crucial to business success. At its most fundamental level, rising productivity is what allows businesses like Epittec to pay workers more, while keeping prices for our services at a reasonable level. And with today's advanced technology, the potential for an ultra high-efficient organization is upon us. There is one problem however, as access to the Internet gives us an unprecedented level of business processing power, it also opens the door to lost productivity. Enter the age of "cyber slacking."

As IT professionals, we aim to help our clients get the most out of their technology. As access to the Internet in the workplace reaches new highs, many studies show that employees are spending more time surfing the Web for personal reasons. In fact, a recent Harris Interactive survey found that half of those surveyed would rather give up

their morning coffee than give up their ability to use the Internet at work for personal use.

Whether it's personal e-mail, gaming, instant messaging, shopping or simply surfing the net, cyber slacking may be costing us and our clients a significant amount of money. We must be sure to remain diligent and not become part of the problem whether on-site at a client or in the Epittec offices.

Let's crunch the numbers and put this all into perspective. A mid-sized company, with 150 employees who each make \$20 an hour and spend one hour a day surfing the Internet will cost that business approximately \$150,000 a year. That's a huge number. One that obviously affects the businesses we serve.

So, what can be done? We all realize the benefits to Internet access. From researching a new client, process or technology to networking with business contacts, the Web is an essential tool of today's professional. Therefore, the idea of eliminating access is completely out of the question.

Because of this reality, we need to be disciplined – showing our clients they are truly getting their money's worth when they choose Epittec. We promise them the highest-quality workmanship and that means all our team members should focus on delivering their best work, all the time.

At Epittec, it's up to us to provide our clients the technological and development expertise needed to run a more efficient modern organization. Ensuring they're getting value for their money is paramount. And by staying focused 100 percent of the time and avoiding the pitfalls of cyber slacking, we can showcase our commitment to excellence and help our customers achieve their financial goals. Sounds like a deal to me.



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### Technology Eliminates Paper Cuts and Ink-Stained Fingers

At the turn of the century, electronic books were predicted to become the next big thing. Unfortunately, at the time, technology couldn't deliver what the hype had promised.

Early versions of e-book readers were originally based on the same sorts of display screens used in laptop computers. As a result, the devices tended to be heavy and difficult to read and featured low-battery life.

Today's generation electronic readers are breathing new life into e-books. Amazon's Kindle and Sony's Reader feature new high-resolution display technology providing a crisp black-and-white screen that resembles the appearance and readability of printed paper.

The screens work using ink particles encapsulated within millions of transparent, almost microscopic, liquid-filled spheres. These spheres are inserted between layers of plastic film and, when an electrical charge is applied to the plastic film, either black or white particles become visible on the display. Once an image is drawn on the screen, no power is needed to maintain the picture, allowing amazingly long battery life.

Although both readers contain similar displays, the Kindle has one advantage over the Sony Reader – the ability to download content via wireless connection on Sprint's high-speed data network with no monthly fees. The device also links directly to Amazon's e-book store, eliminating the need to connect to a computer.

Books aren't the only things available. Amazon also offers digital newspaper and magazine subscriptions that can be delivered as soon as they are published. Blogs can even be viewed on the device, for a small fee.

Although consumer demand for electronic readers today is relatively small, the technology to support mainstream appeal is ready and could change the way you read.

# A Look at Network Virtualization

Few technologies have entered the market with the excitement that virtualization has. Its promise of allowing more efficient and effective use of hardware and software has been viewed as a new era of infrastructure design and management.

Virtualization is an approach to deploying computing resources that isolates different hardware, software and data layers from one another. Traditionally, an operating system is installed directly onto a computer's hardware. Applications are then installed directly onto that operating system. The interface is presented through a display connected directly to the local machine. Altering one layer often affects the others, making widespread changes to a business' overall infrastructure difficult to implement.

By using software to isolate these layers from each other, virtualization makes it easier to implement changes. The result is simplified management, more efficient use of resources and the flexibility to deliver the right computing resources, when and where they are needed.

According to VMware, a business specializing in virtualization, customers who have adopted their virtual infrastructure solutions have reported significant improvements such as:

- 60-80 percent utilization rates for computer hardware (up from 5-15 percent in non-virtualized computers).
- Cost savings of more than \$3,000 annually for every physical server virtualized.
- 85 percent improvement in recovery time from unplanned system downtime.
- Ability to provision new applications in minutes instead of days or weeks.

There are different strategies for virtualization. Each focuses on streamlining a separate aspect of a computing system and delivering unique advantages.

## Server Virtualization

Server virtualization uses software to divide one physical server into multiple, isolated virtual servers. By providing a virtual imitation of a physical server, the software allows businesses to maximize the efficiency of the hardware in order to reduce energy costs and space requirements.

The technology also makes it easier to create or reallocate servers. Instead of having technicians manually set up a server, the virtualization software can set up a server using a pre-existing template and shift virtual servers from one physical server to another to improve efficiency and balance workload. Server downtime is also reduced by automatically restarting virtual machines on another physical server, if the present one fails.

## Desktop Virtualization

Desktop virtualization involves separating the physical location of the desktop environment from the user accessing it. Instead of the traditional set up, where each user's desktop is housed on their machine, this method uses software to centrally store desktops on servers that are accessed remotely by the user. This allows for extremely portable environments. For instance, with virtualization users can access their desktop environment from any computer with access to the network.

Running user desktops in a central location improves security by storing desktops in the secure data center. The technology also lowers management costs by allowing technicians to work directly out of the data center, eliminating the tedious process of working from computer to computer.

## Application Virtualization

Application virtualization aims to improve program compatibility and manageability by isolating applications from the underlying operating system on which they are used. This prevents most system conflicts since encapsulated programs are in protective software layers. Even though a virtualized application is not installed on a user's desktop, it operates as if it is.

Encapsulated copies of application programs are then stored centrally on server systems and quickly delivered to PCs, eliminating the need to dispatch a technician to install software on each computer within a company. The technology also makes it easier to upgrade or remove programs.

## Storage or Data Virtualization

Storage or data virtualization allows multiple independent storage devices, that may be scattered over a network, to appear as a single, larger storage unit, which can be managed centrally. The technology provides access to various sources of data without knowing or caring where the data is actually stored.

As storage devices reach capacity, new devices can be implemented maintaining a logical representation of the specific data. Migrating data from older storage devices also becomes easier.

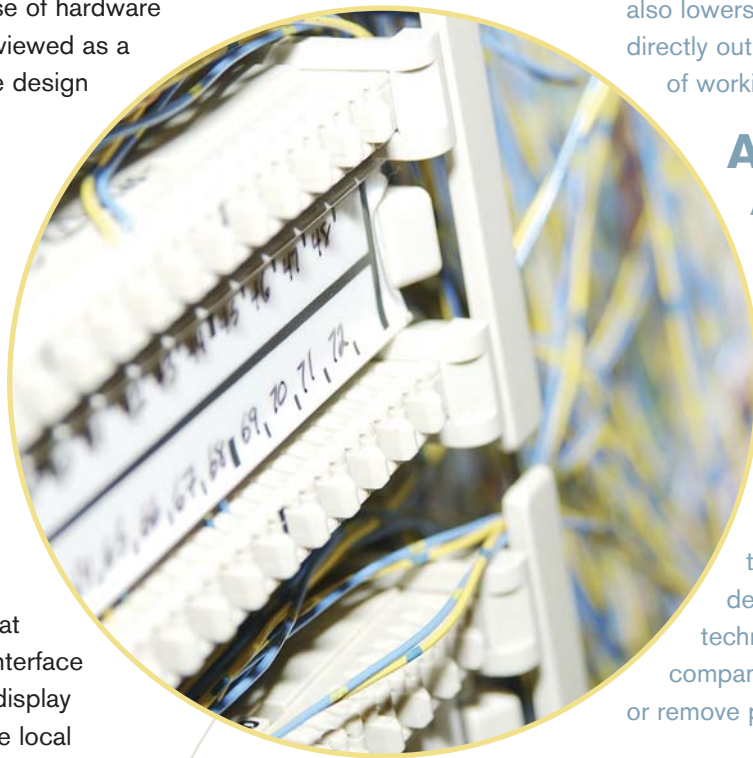
For businesses of all sizes, the complexity and cost of managing multiple physical systems is driving them toward infrastructure virtualization. This technology reduces operational costs while still ensuring that flexibility, service delivery levels and business efficiency continue to improve. By utilizing one or more of the strategies above, organizations can develop a virtualized infrastructure and begin to see tangible benefits for businesses.

## Case Study: Port of Seattle

**Overview:** The data center at the Port of Seattle was suffering from server sprawl, a condition in which multiple, under-utilized servers take up more space and consume more resources than can be justified by their workload.

**Challenge:** The Port of Seattle's software vendors each wanted at least one dedicated physical server for their specific applications, a fairly common setup, but one that leaves a majority of each server's capacity unused. With close to 100 machines running, the servers were taking over. The energy required to run and cool their servers was not sustainable. The Port needed a solution to their infrastructure crisis, while maintaining the same service delivery levels.

**Solution:** Utilizing server virtualization the Port was able to virtualize their physical servers, consolidating as many as 32 virtual servers into one physical server. The reduction in power consumption, thermal output and hardware costs saved the Port more than \$600,000 a year.



## Jerry Sheppard - 30 Year Spotlight

It's been 30 years since Jerry Sheppard founded Epitec. As we celebrate this milestone, it seemed only natural to highlight the man who started it all.



As founder and CEO of The Epitec Group, Jerry Sheppard has led the growth of the company, building the infrastructure from the ground up. Most of the growth, however, has come from a focus on building strong relationships between new and existing clients and paying attention to the needs of people who work at Epitec.

Jerry continues to grow The Epitec Group through strategic initiatives, maintaining a tight focus on vision and developing opportunities to make the company even more visible to those who will ultimately benefit from the services of Epitec employees.

**Q: You started Epitec 30 years ago, and we all know 1978 was a very different time. What do you see as the most significant change in the business between then and now?**

A: Technology, technology, technology. Thirty years ago, resumes were hand delivered, then faxed, now e-mailed. We were notified about Job Orders either in-person or via telephone, now they're broadcasted via e-mail. Communication between Epitec and our customers is enhanced by the ability to e-mail and text message in addition to face-to-face and telephone. Thirty years ago the IT staffing industry was but a mere pup, with little to no interest, let alone understanding the business potential. Today it is well known. We no longer need to explain what IT staffing is. The sales and marketing effort remain the same; maintaining a solid understanding of the client's needs (both current and future), their pain and what keeps them up at night is the primary objective. Our goal is to be a resource to our clients not a vendor or supplier, and I believe we have become a valued resource to our clients.

**Q: What was the largest obstacle you've had to overcome while at Epitec?**

A: Transitioning Epitec from an entrepreneurship to an organization; meaning growing the company from a one-person operation to an organization guided by a leadership team. An organization that is sustainable with or without me; an organization with documented policies, processes and clear procedures in order to consistently deliver the best, most cost effective solution to our clients and employees; an organization that is governed by a set of solid principals and core values. Truly the sum of all parts is greater than the individual parts.

**Q: How has your time at Epitec changed your perspective on life, business or friendship?**

A: I believe my perspective has broadened more than changed. The value of friendship is one of the greatest assets one can possess; friendship is infused in both business and personal life. Friendship is the basis in which we gain business opportunities. Therefore, to truly honor the trust extended through a business relationship will fuel the success of the enterprise. Just as honoring the trust of a loved one or friend, the relationship grows stronger over time. I believe Epitec is a relationship business; we attribute our success to our ability to forge strong and lasting partnerships with both our clients and employees.

**Q: What is your favorite memory from your 30 years with Epitec?**

A: In 1989 my mother and I attended a Mother's Day brunch at the Renaissance Club in downtown Detroit; she had never been on the 36th floor of the Renaissance Center. The hostess and all the servers greeted my mother and I as Mr. Sheppard and Mrs. Sheppard. During the brunch, servers would address me saying, "Mr. Sheppard, can we get you X", "would like Y" and so on. Additionally, I saw a few business associates and they too greeted me. As we were enjoying our meal, my mother turned to me and said, "boy you must be someone of importance because all these people address you as Mr. Sheppard." This is my favorite memory because I witnessed how proud she was of me, and she witnessed others who thought highly of me. She was my inspiration for starting the company and provided moral support during my early years. She subsequently passed in October of 1989, unable to witness our continued success.

Please send any questions or comments to [support@epitecgroup.com](mailto:support@epitecgroup.com). Your input may become a topic in future issues of *Epitalk*.

## Industry Insight

### Danielle DeLonge, ConnecTech

Danielle DeLonge joined ConnecTech in 2006 as network manager. In this position, she provides support for ConnecTech's eight chapters throughout Michigan. She is responsible for assisting chapters in creating technical, educational and networking events and increasing value to ConnecTech members and partners across the state.



Before joining ConnecTech, DeLonge worked in the marketing and relationship management areas of a Troy-based financial planning firm. She is also the previous owner of a company specializing in Web development and marketing materials and was the film and theater editor of *Current Magazine* in Ann Arbor, Mich.

ConnecTech is a network for Michigan's technology professionals, offering the opportunity to discover the latest technology trends, meet with other professionals, and advance their careers through various professional development initiatives. For more information or to join, visit [www.connectech.org](http://www.connectech.org).

**Q: Can you explain briefly what ConnecTech is all about and how it benefits IT professionals working in Michigan?**

A: No matter where you are, ConnecTech does exactly that – it connects you, the technology professional, to the opportunities, people and resources vital to your success. Whether you're in Traverse City or Troy, you get plugged in to a network that extends across the typical boundaries of our state. What does that mean? It means that on our Web site, you can quickly and easily share ideas and knowledge that highlight your expertise as an industry professional. For example, our Forum and Podcast pages allow members to upload data, which further engages professionals in their pursuit for the latest industry knowledge. Our chapters' live events create a local presence for knowledge-based workers to connect with their peers, and the Network as a whole shares expertise on a monthly basis via webinars.

**Q: Given Michigan's economic climate, where do you see technology jobs fitting in? Is there room for growth amid these circumstances? Where might that growth come from?**

A: Considering the conversation about Michigan these days, it's easy to imagine that there is no growth. However, the fact is, we get requests from people looking for qualified professionals on a weekly basis. To say there is a shortage of jobs in the IT field here is not accurate, and we're working on ways to help get the word out about the facts. We hear all the time that the knowledge-based economy is what's next for Michigan. Looking at all the talented professionals in our organization, hearing about the exciting products and services that entrepreneurs here are developing, and knowing about the shortage that exists for IT professionals, it's easy to see that there is a definite need for talent here.

**Q: What significant changes have you seen in Southeast Michigan's technology economy over the last 10 years?**

A: Certainly, these days there are more Web 2.0 technologies, e-discovery tools, GIS and cyber-security devices than ever before, but perhaps the biggest change has come in the area of consolidation. In government, for example, it's interesting to see what consolidation has done to enable the sharing of information and resources across county and regional boundaries. Most of us are only interested in technology for what it makes possible. The people working with these tools are in a position to make a difference for others, and they've done that time and time again. A good example of this is the way Oakland County has shared its information with Livingston County in the area of wireless technologies – this collaboration was credited for saving tens of thousands of dollars.

**Q: What new technologies coming down the pipeline the next 5 to 10 years will improve or revolutionize the way we do business today?**

A: Again, consolidation will hopefully continue to have a positive impact even on business in the private sector – technologies like Sharepoint, which consolidates information, enable the transparency of information within departments of the same organization, contributing to a better experience for the employee and the customer/client alike.

Webinar and podcasting tools are constantly being developed to include more features that make information accessible to rural areas, and mobile technologies are increasingly evolving to accommodate the learning styles and education inequalities in areas we never thought would have access to technology. It may not be so much about what the new technologies are, but who the existing technologies bring into the fold that were previously excluded.

**Q: What obstacles do you anticipate IT professionals in Southeast Michigan will face in the near future, and what suggestions do you offer to overcome these obstacles?**

A: The rate of technology growth in our area has been strong; it's why Automation Alley has continued to expand and why there's such a demand for both what the Alley and ConnecTech provide.

The challenges facing Southeast Michigan in the future, given its growing technology economy, include an aging workforce and the perception of Michigan in general. Replacing people who are close to retirement means we have to be able to attract and retain quality people who can easily adapt and rise quickly through the ranks. It also means we must work together to shift the paradigm of our collective conversation. In order to attract and retain the talent we need, we must all be on the same page when it comes to quality-of-life, existing resources and the benefits of living in a Great Lakes state.

## Consultant



### Kelly Nance

#### STATS

**Title:** Kelly is a corporate communication consultant.

**Hire Date:** March 2007.

**Responsibilities:** Kelly developed a comprehensive marketing and communication plan which integrates strategic marketing tactics with organizational change and IT communications to promote a new software project to City of Detroit employees.

**Education:** Bachelor of Business Administration in Public Relations from Wayne State University; Masters of Business Administration in Strategic Marketing from Baker Center for Graduate Studies.

**iSpot Exclusive:** She loves to travel and is a proud mother of two children. Her son, James, is a U.S. Marine Sergeant and her daughter, Verné, is a third-year medical student in Toledo, Ohio.

## Corporate Employee



### Sean Rossiter

#### STATS

**Title:** Sean is an Associate RainMaker.

**Hire Date:** Sean has been with Epitec for several years.

**Responsibilities:** Sean works in recruiting and sales, specifically with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan. He coordinates with hiring managers and oversees the qualification and screening process of candidates prior to submitting them to the customer. He also plays a key role in employee relations for consultants in the field.

**Education:** Bachelors in Business Administration from Western Michigan University.

**iSpot Exclusive:** Sean has been in sales related roles since graduating from college. He enjoys working with people and is always up for a challenge. He strives to continually meet or exceed employee and customer expectations.



(L-R) Back Row: *Ralph Gleba, Peter Miller, Robert Tokarczyk* Front Row: *Yahia Mawry, Thomas Moore, Eric Quinton* Not Pictured: *William McKee, James Emberton, David Rakowski*

Over the past five years, The Epitec Group has supplied the Ford Network Planning Team with a diverse group of Network planners who are responsible for setting the strategic direction of the North American Ford Network. This involves overseeing the design, development and logistical state of the network as well as developing and maintaining design standards for the various centers of excellence (COE), including the LAN COE, DNS COE, Extranet COE, and WAN COE.

Along with planning and managing the day-to-day changes on the Ford Network, the Epitec team is actively involved in several key projects and cost saving initiatives.

One of the major initiatives aims to successfully plan the implementation of the Next Generation AVS network upgrade by following the "Next Gen AVS Design Guide" as well as other standard network planning guidelines.

The Epitec team is also working on the Data Center Consolidation project, which Ford is currently undertaking globally. The team will utilize virtualization technologies such as storage and network management to accomplish the project.

## Milestones

### January

Venkat Kadali (3 years)  
 Jas Sokhal (3 years)  
 Jennifer Gentry Saulski (3 years)  
 Jake Covert (3 years)  
 Keith Hollie (6 years)  
 G.T. Madavan (8 years)  
 Fred Gordon (18 years)

### February

Maureen Regner (3 years)  
 Chung-Ing Chen (13 years)  
 Larry Crehan (15 years)  
 Josie Sheppard (24 years)

### March

Venkat Dannana (3 years)  
 Sandy Major (3 years)  
 Maria MacGregor (3 years)  
 Jon White (4 years)  
 Wendy Zheng (6 years)  
 Maria Sitarski (9 years)  
 Michele Rodeffer (9 years)  
 Rebecca Csatari (10 years)  
 Jerome Sheppard (30 years)



From Start To Finish, We're There For You.

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