

The Times, They are a Changin'

Perspective from the Top



Change. What a scary thing. In our business, however, change is constant. Whether in the form of new technologies for us to master or new client IT strategies for us to implement, we're never sitting still. And while that sometimes brings uncertainty and discomfort, it also provides amazing opportunities. As we continue to grow and change based on the shifting business landscape, we're in a position to increase both our leadership and our revenue – now *that's* change to get excited about.

Let's look at a few companies that have embraced change to drive future growth. Through innovative thinking, unique vision and a whole lot of creativity and foresight, these businesses changed the paradigm; and benefited greatly from doing so.

While many viewed the video game market as something just for kids, Nintendo decided to change the game. When releasing the innovative Wii game console, Nintendo targeted a whole different audience – small

children, baby boomers and even geriatrics. Amid an industry that focused on hardcore gamers, Nintendo didn't settle for the ordinary.

The real magic behind the Wii is that it used a unique control system that captured actual motion and translated it into simple, easy-to-learn games. In fact, the system is so easy to use, many nursing homes have used the system to engage elderly people in physical activities such as Wii Bowling and Wii Tennis. Basically, Nintendo found a new way to use and market its technology and with it came a slew of profits.

Nintendo proved that by embracing change, businesses can essentially create new markets. Innovations in technology, however, can also bury those who fail to see the changes on the horizon. Smith Corona was once the world's top manufacturer of typewriters. In fact, they produced the best typewriters right up to the time they filed for bankruptcy. You see, while they made an excellent product, the personal computer came along and suddenly their superior product was obsolete.

At Epitec, we are never satisfied with the status quo. We are always looking at what can be improved, new services we can offer and how to work more efficiently. One small way we're enacting change is through our new online benefits program, which you'll learn more about in this newsletter. We think you'll find this a welcome change that will help streamline your benefits enrollment and make your life easier.

Each of us should go beyond simply embracing change and make it a priority to pursue innovation aggressively to improve business for our clients and us.

As we all look at our business through different eyes, we may uncover areas similar to those listed above where we could revolutionize our business.

So next time there is a discussion about change, whether it's at Epitec or our clients, we should look at it optimistically and enthusiastically. Because remember – the only thing consistent in life is change.

Use It or Lose It

You wait an extra 10 minutes at the gym for your favorite treadmill, splurge for the organic fruit at the grocery store and religiously slather SPF 80 sunblock on your face – even on cloudy days – all to maintain your health. But what have you done for your brain lately?

Consumers are taking note of evidence that suggests our brains contain more plasticity than previously thought. Many are taking matters into their own hands, not only seeking supplements, but computer-based, fitter-brain products as well, doing brain fitness exercises with the same intensity they attack an elliptical machine.

Designed for people of all ages, computer-based brain products work to minimize the natural effects of brain aging by maximizing its capacity to learn and ability to adapt to new information. These products use tactics from simple math and memory exercises to “cognitive brain training,” which combines cognitive assessment of more than a dozen different skills with a personalized training regimen based on that assessment.

A significant awareness is growing that challenging your brain can have positive effects. And it is becoming a booming business. In fact, in the United States, consumers are expected to spend \$80 million this year on brain exercise products, up from \$2 million in 2005.

Turns out video games don't always rot your brain.

“The thing about innovation is that a lot of people think it's just about coming up with the next ‘big idea.’ In reality, a lot of innovation is about making incremental changes. Innovation is anything that makes things better.”

Chris McMurry,
CEO of Phoenix-based,
McMurry Inc.

Content

Microsoft Heads for the Clouds	pg 2
Everything's Better Online – Including Benefits Enrollment.....	pg 2
Industry Insight	pg 3
iSpots	pg 4
Project iSpot	pg 4
Milestones	pg 4

Microsoft Heads for the Clouds

Our lives are becoming increasingly digital and difficult, thanks in large part to a proliferation of electronic devices. Yet Microsoft thinks it has the answer in its new service, Live Mesh. The new Live Mesh service, launched as an invite only “technology preview,” is Microsoft’s attempt to tie data together – across multiple devices. Live Mesh synchronizes and shares data across multiple devices (currently just Windows computers but theoretically it will extend to mobile and other devices in the future) as well as a Web desktop. Live Mesh offers one-click sharing for desktop folders, remote desktop connections, Web-based file access and a news feed to keep track of it all. On the surface, Mesh is a lot like competing file sync services such as Dropbox, SugarSync and even Microsoft’s own FolderShare product, but what sets Live Mesh apart is its approach.

How it works

Essentially, Live Mesh is a collection of feeds (which can be expressed as ATOM, JSON, FeedSync, RSS, WB-XML, or POX). Each piece of data is entered into a users mesh, be it a file, a folder, a message, a user permission, or a new device. This information is then rendered as a piece of information in a feed. The feeds are then synced with other devices that are part of the Mesh following rules for how to sync each particular piece of information.

Live Mesh is a combination of Web-based services that sync files and information across a cloud environment, and client software that allows individual devices to sync with the mesh. This is a continuation of Microsoft’s “software plus service” strategy, in which client software is augmented by Web services.

The news feed

While Live Mesh does not yet have version control capabilities, a must for a service that syncs data between multiple users, it borrows a popular feature from the Web for keeping users up-to-date on what’s going on across a system: the news feed. The Live Mesh Notifier is a news feed of all the activity on a user’s Mesh. Right now this means

Everything’s Better Online – Including Benefits Enrollment

Epitec is pleased to announce that we will be implementing Online Benefits Enrollment to our team members this August during Open Enrollment. All current team members will need to enroll at this time, whether they are changing their plans or not.

The introduction of Online Enrollment will provide a more efficient and expedited enrollment process for team members, providing easily accessible information regarding:

- Benefits
- Human Resources
- Health & Wellness
- Personal Information



“Live Mesh puts you at the center of your digital world, seamlessly connecting you to the people, devices and information that you care about.”

changes made to files, folders, devices, user permissions and comments left on files and folders.

However, because Live Mesh is a platform that seeks to interact with third party services, it is easy to envision how much more could be pushed through the news feed.

The platform

What makes Live Mesh potentially so special is that Microsoft has turned synchronizing into a platform.

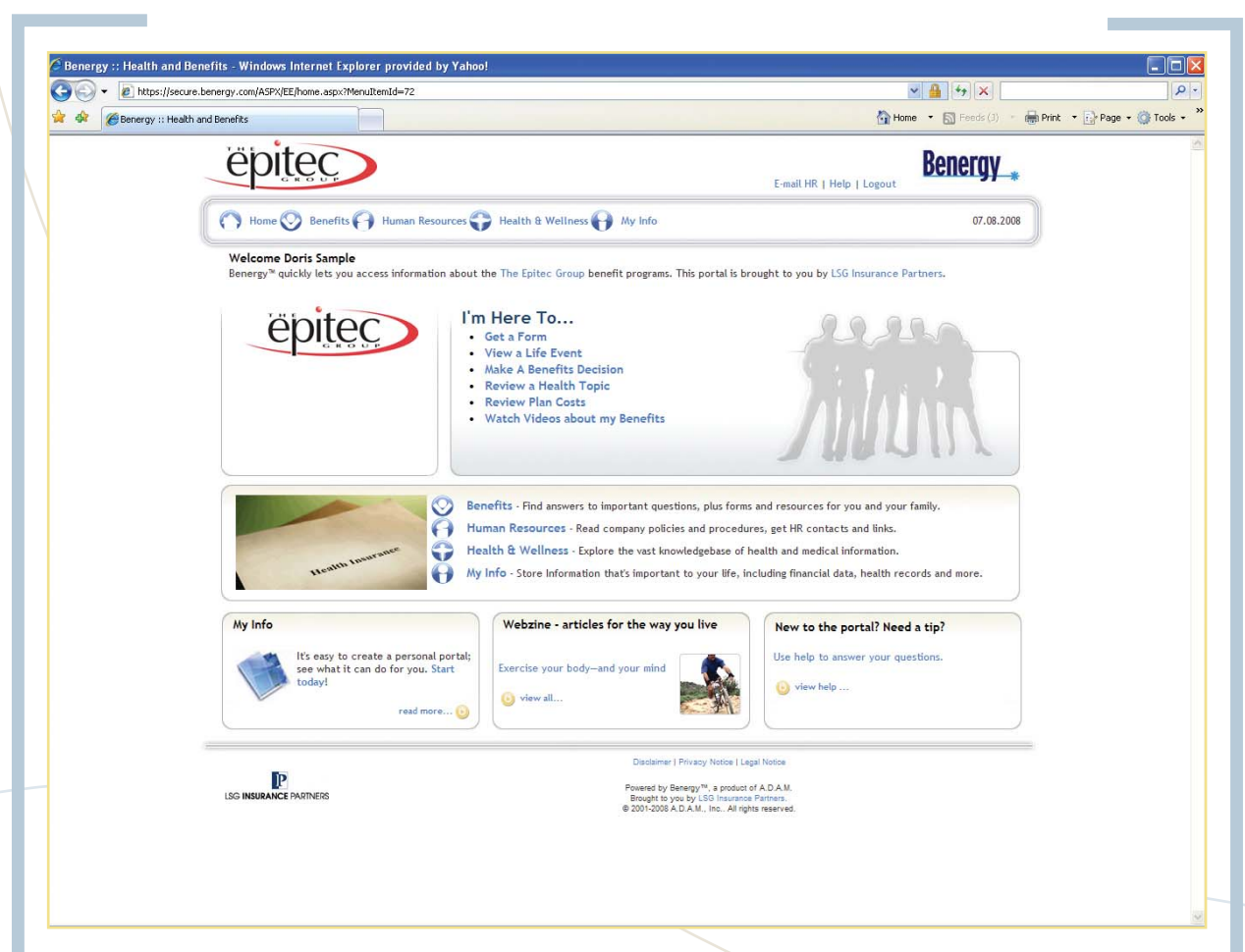
Eventually, services as well as devices will be able to hook into Mesh. Microsoft envisions Mesh as a platform for data synchronizing for any service we use and for any type of data.

Microsoft’s Live Mesh, in its current preview form, represents an effort to define the Windows operating system as a platform

that spans PCs, the Internet, and Windows-capable devices. At its heart, it is a data synchronization service, but it is also a bid to define Microsoft as the primary source in cloud computing.

Will it work?

It is still very early for Live Mesh. Microsoft intends to invite key development partners to try out the system over the coming months, and will roll out support for other devices over the next year. One thing that could hinder Live Mesh, though, is Microsoft’s confusing suite of online services. Between Live Mesh, SkyDrive, Live Spaces and Foldershare there is significant overlap in Microsoft’s services. One other problem: users will need 5GB of personal online storage and unlimited peer-to-peer data for synchronizing information between devices.



Extreme Home Makeover Continuing the Improvements

Epitec would like to thank those who participated in this year's Extreme Home Makeover for the Boys Hope Girls Hope of Detroit. The annual event was a huge success due to the generosity and help of Epitec team members and their families, who worked to give Boys Hope Girls Hope of Detroit a face lift.

Epitec proudly supports this organization's mission to help academically capable and motivated children in need to meet their full potential and continually strives to make a difference in the lives of these scholars.

For more information on Boys Hope Girls Hope of Detroit, please visit www.boyshopegirlshope.org.



And, the Scholarship Goes to

In an effort to give back to our valued team members and our commitment to furthering education, The Epitec Group has established a scholarship fund to provide financial assistance to the son or daughter of a full-time employee.



With numerous applications it was difficult for the selection committee to select a recipient, however The Epitec Group is proud to announce the \$500 scholarship will go to Robert E. L. Greening IV, the son of Pamela Greening. Robert was selected based upon his prior academic success and leadership in extra curricular activities.

Robert is currently attending Michigan Technological University where he is majoring in Civil Engineering. He is currently a student intern with the Boeing Services Group in Seattle, Washington. Robert's responsibilities range from producing technical requirements for structural systems to incorporating relevant technological advances into customer requirements. The highly competitive internship is providing Robert with real world experience in structural engineering design and analysis.

The \$500 scholarship award can be used towards tuition, books or living expenses.

Congratulations Robert.



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

Industry Insight

Mike Brennan, Michigan Technology News

Mike Brennan is founder of Michigan News Network, and serves as editor and publisher of Mitechnews.com. Brennan has worked since 1980 as a technology and business writer at newspapers in New York City (*Technology Buyers News*), San Jose, Calif. (*San Jose Business Journal*), Seattle, Wash. (*Herald*), Memphis, Tenn. (*Commercial Appeal*), and Detroit (*Detroit Free Press*). He co-founded and served as managing editor of Pacific Rim News Service, which developed a network of more than 100 freelance journalists in 17 Asia-Pacific countries. He has won numerous international, national and regional journalism awards.



Brennan launched Mitechnews.com in April 2000. Video and audio webcasting capabilities were added in 2001, a statewide radio show and eNewsletters were added in 2003. In January 2007, audio podcasts were added, followed by video podcasts in September 2007.

Q: What do you see happening in today's technology industry that excites you most? How might this affect Michigan's economic state?

A: The rise of GreenTech and GreenTech products, services and manufacturing. I've been slow to come around to the global warming issue, but now I believe everyone on Earth needs to cut back on their use of hydrocarbons and become more energy efficient – if for nothing else than to leave a livable world for our children. I see a lot of other business people in Michigan jumping on this bandwagon by developing green friendly products and services.

I also see, with Gov. Jennifer Granholm's encouragement, a lot of effort by the state government to recruit and nurture GreenTech businesses to move into those shuttered manufacturing plants around the state. GreenTech has the potential to replace all those auto jobs that have gone to other states, and countries. And it's only logical that Michigan, an outdoor enthusiasts' destination, should go green to preserve our tourism industry.

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

A: Absolutely. Technology is in everything we use. That is a trend that will only accelerate. The bigger issue is not creating technology jobs, it is filling them. Everywhere I travel in Michigan I hear of technology job openings. Tens of thousands of technology jobs have gone unfilled in this state because people with the skills needed can't be found.

And one of the reasons why is the state's young people, who are trained in our high schools, community colleges and universities, run off to the bright lights and better job opportunities found in Chicago, New York, Seattle, San Francisco, Atlanta, Denver, and Austin. We need to keep these professionals in Michigan for the state to survive and thrive.

Q: What significant changes have you seen in Michigan's technology economy over the last 15 years?

A: The biggest change in the past 15 years in the Michigan technology economy is the growth of the private equity finance sector. A score of venture capital companies provide hundreds of millions of dollars to promising Michigan technology companies. More than a half dozen angel investing groups fund the farm teams that grow into venture capital prospects.

The State of Michigan also has stepped up by creating the 21st century jobs fund. It's a good start, but much more cash, and smarter business incentives are needed, to make Michigan much friendlier to entrepreneurs.

Q: Where do you think Michigan's technology economy is heading in the next 15 years?

A: If I knew that, I'd make a lot of money. But if you're asking me to guess, I'd say I can see this state becoming a GreenTech cluster . . . and Green tourist destination as well.

I can see a revitalized auto industry leading the way in fuel-cell, zero emission powered vehicles. I can see Michigan factories building most of these zero emission powertrains for the world.

I see a thriving biotechnology corridor from Detroit, to Ann Arbor, to Lansing, to Grand Rapids, to Kalamazoo churning out thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, of gold collar jobs.

I see all three sectors becoming the engines of change that again makes Michigan's economy the envy of the world.

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

A: Funding is always the biggest obstacle for an entrepreneur. It's that trade off between boot strapping your company, which takes a long time, or selling a chunk to investors and losing control over time. While great strides have been made in Michigan to build the private equity finance sector to fuel technology entrepreneurial growth, Michigan still has a long ways to go to catch up with many other Midwest states.

Entrepreneurs aren't looking for hand outs, but a hand up. Early stage entrepreneurs need more money from the 21st Century Jobs Fund, which needs to be expanded, not absorbed by the state budget shortfalls. Michigan tax policy needs to provide more incentives for entrepreneurs to succeed, such as working with the private sector to create more business incubators to nurture very early stage companies.

Finally, the various economic development groups that play zero-sum games by disparaging one part of the state for the betterment of another need to realize we're all in this economic boat together. What's good for Detroit is also good for Grand Rapids.

Consultant



Tim LeBlanc

STATS

Title: eBusiness Manager

Hire Date: December 2007

Responsibilities: Tim oversees concept identification and development, iterative requirements and design, key dependencies and interrelationships, system workflows and user interfaces. He leads a team of four information architects and three eBusiness analysts, developing client relationships and defining business requirements.

Successes: One of Tim's greatest successes at Epittec was being nominated as an Epittec Employee of the Month in February, for his contributions in building a more collaborative team. Tim has instituted several communication tools to build stronger relationships among team members, leading to a more cohesive team.

iSpot Exclusive: Tim has been married for 18 years and is the father of three children. He enjoys sports, fishing, golf and coaching both T-ball and soccer.

Corporate Employee



Maria Sitarski

STATS

Title: Coverage Concierge

Hire Date: March 1999

Responsibilities: Negotiating insurance plans, administering insurance benefits, 401(k) plans, maintaining legal compliance with the Department of Labor, event planning and charity work.

Successes: Maria's greatest successes within Epittec have been becoming more tech-savvy and assisting employees with any issues they might have with insurance companies.

Quote: "I believe that I can have ownership of my responsibilities at Epittec. If I own my position, I do everything I can to do my very best. I consider myself self-employed; the more effort I put out the more I receive in return, both financially and emotionally."

iSpot Exclusive: Maria is the grandmother of two boys, with another grandchild expected in October. She enjoys traveling, cooking and gardening, and is very passionate about volunteering, especially with children at Boys Hope Girls Hope (www.boyshopegirlshope.org).

April

Sharon Swope (5 years)
Christopher Hood (9 years)
Michael Foley (10 years)
Thomas Csatari (11 years)

May

Norman Qureshi (4 years)
Brenda Johnson (7 years)
Charisse Smith (10 years)

June

Sudhir Srinivasan (3 years)
John Mikkola (5 years)
James Moran (7 years)
Darryl Gay (13 years)



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

24700 Northwestern Hwy.
Suite 350
Southfield, MI 48075