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Enhancing Collaboration on the Web

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Even before the Internet "boom," the people of Facilitate.com realized the speed at which businesses were evolving, and the need for tools and

techniques that would strengthen the way that people worked together. In an age influenced by technology and speed, more employees work off-site and client meetings take place between different time zones and across international boundaries. The Facilitate.com team knew that companies and organizations would benefit drastically from meetings and interactions that could take place over the Internet, and they began their search for a development environment that would best enable them to create a strong set of Web collaboration tools.

STAYING AHEAD OF THE TECHNOLOGY GAME

In response to this need for ultimate connectivity, they wanted to create a variety of collaboration tools, including virtual meeting rooms, forums, chat rooms, and online surveys and assessments. In order to keep up with the speed of their competitors and bolster their company's vast array of online collaboration tools, Facilitate.com needed a fast, easy-to-use development environment to implement their applications as well as a reliable, integrated Web solution. "We originally chose to go with 4D since it gave us a data repository that also provided low-cost

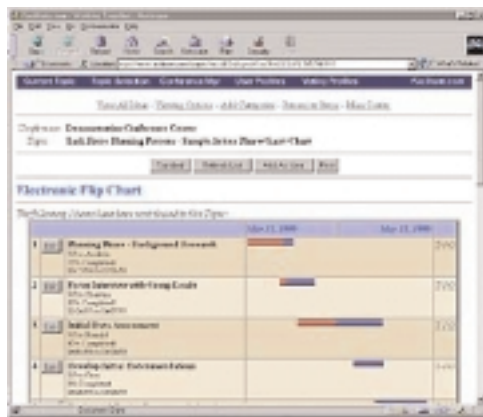
network implementation. We needed a tool that would allow for Rapid Application Development (RAD) so that we could quickly get to market and stay ahead of some formidable competition," said Mike McCall, President of Facilitate.com.

4D PROVIDES A SOLID FOUNDATION FOR VIRTUAL MEETING ROOMS

Since 1992, 4D has helped Facilitate.com implement their most influential collaboration tools and applications. The most recent result is Facilitate.com v7.0, a cross-platform application that would transform any Web browser into a virtual meeting room on the Internet or on a company's Intranet. This application is an electronic center for conferences where numerous discussions and meetings occur simultaneously, enabling people to work together on a larger scale, and in a more efficient and organized manner.

The numerous benefits of working with 4D products became clear for Facilitate.com, particularly in terms of cost and efficiency. 4D provided the company with the tools necessary to transform their products into multi-platform solutions, a move that allowed Facilitate.com to outpace any of their competition. "Using 4D to go from a single platform solution to a multi-platform Win/Mac solution was virtually seamless," said McCall. "When 4D provided a Windows version of their application, our code

The Rapid Application Development (RAD) capabilities of 4D helped Facilitate.com get their collaboration tools online quickly and cost-effectively.



In Focus

- 4D integrated Web server for creating a stand-alone application
- 4D Write word-processing plug-in creates downloadable RTF-formatted documents
- 4D Draw object-oriented drawing plug-in helps to produce quadrant maps

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instantly converted with almost no additional coding on our part. Our competitors used another vendor's software environment that did not provide them with a multi-platform option. They were then required to rewrite their application from scratch and in the end, abandoned the effort. Our support costs are also a fraction of our competitors due to the straightforward implementation of 4D."

When it came to deploying a Web-based product, Facilitate.com took advantage of the 4D and 3rd-party plug-ins for use within the 4D environment, as well as the integrated Web serving available. According to McCall, "4D and the robust 3rd-party plug-in environment that supported it gave us a way to utilize the bulk of our existing code while simply writing some new interface objects. 4D gave us even greater capabilities via their integrated Web server to create a stand-alone application that no longer required a 3rd-party Web server. We were able to offer a complete Web solution." In addition, Facilitate.com used the features of 4D Write, a cross-platform, word-processing plug-in, to create downloadable, RTF-formatted reports. They also used 4D Draw, an object-oriented drawing plug-in, for producing quadrant maps.

One of McCall's main attractions to the products also resulted from 4D's constantly evolving product line and subsequent ability to match the ever-changing needs of a

technology firm. 4D products have evolved reliably alongside the needs of Facilitate.com. Said McCall, "At each step along the way, they have given us a seamless and efficient way to rapidly deploy new products with significant, new capabilities."

Facilitate.com continues to strengthen its set of collaboration tools with the help of 4D's latest Web application development environment. Fueled by 4D technology, the company has embraced the power of the Internet, transforming Web browsers into virtual meeting rooms, and taking workplace collaboration to an entirely new level.

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