



# QUARDEV

Integrated Software Solutions

## Quardev Monthly

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### Welcome!

Welcome to the Quardev Monthly !

We look forward to sharing insights and helpful information in the areas where we know a thing or two - testing, quality assurance, technical writing and documentation, project management, and consulting.

This month we look at how social networking can be used to enhance communication within a work project. The article

includes resources that are typically used in a personal setting but that can potentially streamline communications at work too.

Enjoy the newsletter with our compliments and please contact us with questions, comments, or article ideas.

-The Quardev Crew!!

### Can Social Networking Make Projects Better?

As we all have experienced, working on software development projects can present many communication challenges - technology and project decisions are coming at us quickly and the need to be informed and respond in a timely manner is essential to keeping projects and budgets on schedule. These challenges can be multiplied when those involved are spread out between multiple locations, time zones, or even countries. Fortunately through social networking sites there are many new tools at our disposal that may be a good fit for your project and go a long way in making your project more successful and your life easier.

Here we are: you (the reader) and us here at Quardev.

Social? Yes.

Networking? Technically.

If you respond to this article then that exchange truly becomes "networking." Add a few others and it

becomes "social networking."

In 2009, Social Networking seems to be the theme of technology. Social networking has become main stream. In a second, you can reach millions of people and tell them what you just had for breakfast a second ago in 140 characters or less. In 10 seconds you can post a video and become world famous in two days.

This kind of real-time rapid discovery and communication might be useful on your project. Not only of the mechanics of real-time communication, but the spirit of a group of individuals with a common interest – that interest might be: "shipping this current piece of software, on time and on budget."

If you're not part of the crowd who goes home and logs into their electronic double-life on Twitter, Second Life, Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Plaxo, Ustream, YouTube, or blip.tv to see the viral clip of the day like the

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## July Article, Continued

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“JK Wedding Entrance” or “United Breaks Guitars,” then consider the phenomenon as a tool to use on your next project.

- Instant Messaging:** You may have a group of people on your project – perhaps differently located in offices around the country or globe. Windows Live Messenger, Google Talk, Skype, Chatzilla... these are all real-time messaging applications that are the “walkie-talkies” of project communication. It’s often overlooked as a technology because so many of us associate it with being online in a chat room. But that’s exactly what a project environment might resemble (and benefit from): ultra fast communication, which is especially useful if you have a quick question for the program manager or developer. If you’re confused as to what application to use, Meebo ([www.meebo.com](http://www.meebo.com)) allows you to manage the top 5 instant message applications through one easy-to-use interface.

**Wiki:** Why Web when you can Wiki? A wiki is a Web page you can freely edit. Imagine going to your favorite hobby site and being frustrated at a broken link on the page that points to an old file. Wouldn’t it be cool to just delete it and replace it with another one right then and there? Wikis allow you to do just that, as well as post all kinds of content that might be useful to other people on the project - another form of “real-time” communication. Another similar idea is using Facebook’s “Wall” that enables selected and approved “friends” to write you messages and have other friends comment on them. Voila, instant threads for issues that may be vital to your project’s success. There’s a short, excellent, fun, easy-to-understand video presentation produced by the cool folks at CommonCraft that can be seen on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-dnL00TdmLY>. To get started with your own wiki, go to [www.wetpaint.com](http://www.wetpaint.com), [www.pbwiki.com](http://www.pbwiki.com), or [www.wikispaces.com](http://www.wikispaces.com).

**Collaborative Documents:** Create, edit, and maintain documents together, right now. Typically a document is created and sent out for review, or received for your revisions. But what if you could save time by doing both at once? Known as “collaborative editors,” there are applications like Microsoft Office Live and Google Docs and Spreadsheets that aid in the creation of docu-

ments that have a higher likelihood of having the right information right off the bat. There is also CoWord (<http://cooffice.ntu.edu.sg/coword/>) a free application that creates this capability for your existing version of Microsoft Word.

All of these technologies and applications have one spirit behind them: to enable you to establish, cultivate, and take advantage of a “brain trust” in real time. The success of a software project is often about how to use resources (and how to use them NOW). You may find a new way of working outside of Email that actually cuts down on the amount of stuff in your inbox.

Social networking might have a few surprises as a technique for managing the drudgery that can be a heavy day of project To-dos. Working on a project is a social activity. Stay in your silo and you risk missing a key piece of information. We’re not suggesting that you need to be a radical extrovert, just tune into the channel that’s one layer deeper than your project responsibilities, and keep it open for awhile – long enough to try an experiment.

For example, if you’re working with a team from India, it may be useful to have each person create individual accounts on Facebook so you can see their profile or their “Wall” to know what responsibilities they have or what work items they have on their plate. It may also be useful to know who they are personally, if they’re willing to share some details. Outsourcing to countries like India is a reality that seems here to stay, and it may be hard for many to accept that. If you’re one of them, try to know just one thing about each team member for starters. Do they like cricket, are they a fan of Sachin Tendulkar? Give them a chance to know one thing about you too - a picture of one of your kids or the vacation trip to the Cascade Mountains. Try it as an experiment and see what happens – some experts are saying that it increases productivity to spend more time on social networking.

If you know your Star Trek lore, you know at the end of *Wrath of Khan*, a dying Spock logically noted that the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few (or the one)... but in *Search for Spock*, Kirk explained to the resurrected Spock that sometimes the needs of the one outweigh the needs of the many. We think it is that natural human duality that caused societies and networks to form, and why some of these social networking ideas may be worth trying. It ultimately comes down to project needs and who has the right knowledge at the right time, and how we can evolve ourselves and the project, quickly and naturally.