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Credit Union Foe Nominated to Fed

WASHINGTON—President Bush nominated two bankers to the seven-member Federal Reserve Board of Governors, including Betsy Duke, the former chairman of the American Bankers Association and an ardent credit

TECHNOLOGY

Portal Tools Bring 'Common Bond' Back In Style At Continental

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By **Kevin Jepson**, *Technology Correspondent*

EL SEGUNDO, Calif.—Continental FCU here just moved away from the "Microsoft monopoly" and into the 21st century of electronic communications with an intranet and web community platform that allows employees coast to coast to share files, schedule meetings and post updates to a homepage—all at a bargain-basement cost.

"You're going to laugh at this, but previously we shared files by e-mailing them back and forth," a process that was cumbersome and risky, said Don Nora, vice president, technology, at the \$180-million CU.

"And we had no calendaring software," he continued. "We would plan meetings via an e-mail service and then wonder why a certain person didn't show up."

In addition, the CU relied on e-mail to disseminate critical company updates down the chain of command. That process was inherently weak because only select employees were given e-mail accounts, said Nora.

"We always had issues with communication throughout our branches on the East Coast and the West Coast,"

Nora said. "We relied on certain individuals to communicate to the staff, and some things slipped through the cracks."

Nora said he considered launching Microsoft's Exchange Server to cure Continental's communication woes—but that e-mail and calendaring product was "extremely costly."

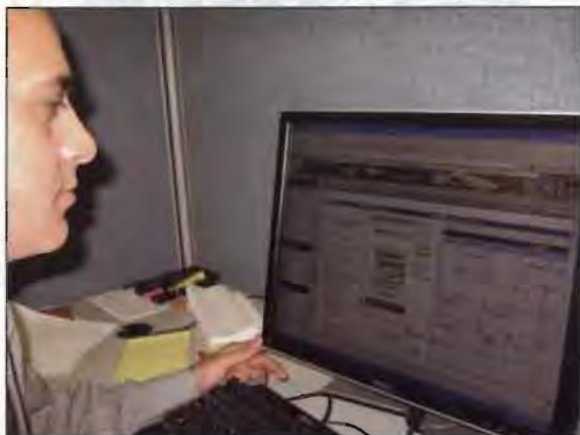
In December, Continental turned to StreetSmart, a suite of groupware, information technology and productivity software, offered by InfoStreet Inc. of Tarzana, Calif.

"StreetSmart performs the same functions

and a little bit more than the Microsoft product," Nora said.

And the costs? "I think I robbed StreetSmart," he said. "It's not at all expensive."

Nora estimates that the StreetSmart imple-



Ali Roshan, Continental FCU webmaster, views portal.

mentation saved the CU up to \$60,000 in the first year compared to what Exchange Server would have cost.

Costs typically run \$3 per month per user, depending on the number of users and support model, according to Siamak Farah, CEO, InfoStreet.

"The joke is that we're cheaper than a company's coffee and water," said Farah. "We feel that the biggest nemesis to any company is change. People just end up going back

to their old Microsoft system. Instead, we want people to see the strength of StreetSmart. We decided to take price out of the equation, yet we still make money off of economies of scale."

File sharing is one of StreetSmart's strengths, Nora continued. "It's wonderful to be able to upload and download files while on the road just by logging on to the Intranet through a Web browser. And access can be set by permission levels."

With StreetSmart calendaring, attendees can keep track of who has accepted or declined meeting invitations so that there are no more surprise absences.

And calendaring just got better, Farah said. "You can receive automated e-mails that will remind you of upcoming meetings and tasks for each day, week, or month."

Employees are now able to keep up with all the breaking news at the CU, too. "With the StreetSmart portal, the first thing employees do every morning is log in to the homepage to make sure they are up to speed on all the information that is presented there.

"Our communication is getting so much better," said Nora.

StreetSmart is bringing Continental FCU employers closer to technology and closer to each other, he added.

"We're going to have fun with this system," said Nora. "We're designing a template where employees can easily create a website of themselves that includes a profile and a photo to share with other employees they've talked to across the country for years. I want all of my employees to understand Web technology, because that's where we're going in this organization. Everything will be on the web."

FOR MORE RESOURCES

Read more about other portal products at cujournal.com and search the following bolded terms in the archive:

NuUnion CU Saves \$50K Annually Replacing Clunky Intranet With Streamlined Web Portal, for a story on portal best practices.

Strategy With Employees: Boosting Portal Usage, for a story describing the challenges of getting employees to adeptly use Passageways.

For info on this story:

* Continental FCU, www.continentalfcu.org

* InfoStreet, www.infostreet.com

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