

IT DRILLDOWN » Applications

NEWS

Getting Meetings Right

Bad meetings kill efficiency and morale. TimeBridge's promise to transition from a meeting coordination service to helping "busy professionals run great meetings" might be a step in the right direction

By James E. Gaskin

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WED, SEPTEMBER 16, 2009 — **Network World** — Business gurus yap constantly about "upping your productivity" to which I say "up . . .," well, you get the idea. But my particular hot button for productivity wasting activity, the bad meeting, kills efficiency and morale. Whether it's a conference call or a physical sit down and fight-for-the-last-donut meeting, wasting time insults everyone involved. That's why I'm interested to see if the newly updated **TimeBridge** can make good on it's promise to transition from a meeting coordination service to helping "busy professionals run great meetings."

Save Time and Money with Online Meeting Tools

Most of us are still fighting the problem of coordinating meetings via the e-mail train wreck, as I discussed in **The Law of Meeting Coordination** and **Get More Work Done With Less E-mail**. Shared calendars, from vendors like **Google**, **HyperOffice** and **StreetSmart** address the calendar coordination issue pretty well. TimeBridge does the same thing, and it claims 400,000 users benefit from the service, which takes a more active role in herding attendees.

Putting IT Off

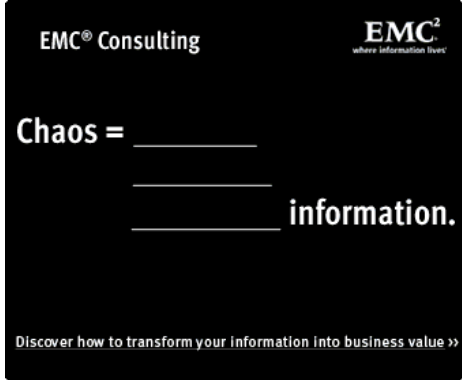
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TimeBridge cleverly uses peer pressure to force those last few reluctant attendees to commit to a meeting time. When using the service, you create a meeting page, add the names and contact info for attendees, and list several alternative times (invitees need not register on TimeBridge to participate). Each attendee clicks a link in the e-mail meeting invitation and picks all the suggested times they're available for your meeting.

Peer pressure comes in because everyone invited can see all the possible times as well as the responses from other invitees. That jerk who also answers meeting e-mails last, complaining none of the times work for him? He has to sign his name, where everyone can see, that he's being difficult yet again.

"Our experience has been that the fifth or sixth person coming to the meeting schedule page almost never blocks a meeting by refusing to accept one of the times that everyone else has already confirmed," said Yori Nelken, CEO of TimeBridge. "They try to be a good citizen, if possible, and make it easy."

Transparency in the workplace really goes a long way in taming jerks. Most feel free to deal grief one on one with the person trying to coordinate the meeting, but almost none want their jerkiness on display for the entire group. This single feature may be worth the price of the service, which is free for basic meeting coordination and \$8.95 per user per month for the Plus features of Web conferencing services. These include sharing a computer screen, a virtual whiteboard, and phone conferencing for up to 100 people.



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