

# As the Bigger & Better Journey Continues... Changing Your Quality of Life

BY MELANIE CRAWFORD

It is safe to say that during challenging economic times, organizations will typically reduce discretionary spending. It can be difficult to get the best value for our limited budgets, particularly when we are all hungry for growth and sustainability. It's time to chart a new course and establish ways to make the most of what we've already invested in, including not only our staff, but all aspects of business. When each workplace is a complex blend of personalities and skill sets how do we maximize our resources without suffering from burnout or discouragement?

The answer lies in relationships. "Relationships???" you say. Yes, relationships. It's time to break through the conventional barriers of "standard business practice". A paradigm shift is in order. Why not assess each business prospect on a 'case by case' basis? Why not empower our staff and equip them to reach higher levels of performance?

Why not take the time to understand the BIG picture that surrounds each and every person we deal with every day? Why not put more emphasis on the value of long lasting relationships instead of immediate gain? It is said that, "we have to BE the change that we want to see." I believe the upside to difficult economic times is that it reminds us of the importance of being flexible and innovative to serve the needs of our clients. It humbles us to be honest and genuine with our staff and coworkers. It allows us the opportunity to prioritize and join forces to create an environment of reciprocal gain. ■



Melanie Crawford & her husband Warren own and operate Bigger & Better Journey Learning Centre with over 20 years of combined experience in educating & empowering others.

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# Collaboration

"Collaboration tools can propel your business to new heights and often for very little cost."

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...can discuss why computers slow down and how to fix it.

Over the years, the concept of an "Intranet" has grown to include collaborative features. If your business has a Windows server, one of the better intranet software packages is Windows SharePoint Services. WSS is free but Microsoft also develops a scaled-up version of WSS that, of course, cost money.


Among other things, WSS allows users to share documents and offers a really useful check-in/check-out process that takes collaboration to another level. A user can check a document out, edit it, and then check it back in. All of the changes are tracked and a "version number" is automatically generated. At any time someone can revert to an earlier version of the document and report on who made changes and when.

Then there's another twist in collaboration in the form of "Groupware". Groupware usually allows users to share calendars, contacts, email, documents, tasks, and often uses a special program and/or a web site. One of the most popular groupware applications today is Microsoft Exchange Server.

I like to describe Exchange Server as Outlook on steroids. Microsoft Outlook is the program you would use to access Exchange and with it you can share contacts, calendars, email, task, and documents. Exchange is also a full blown email server and offers "out of office" auto-replies and a full-featured webmail application. Exchange 2007 is a major improvement over Exchange 2003 and has been available since November 2007.

Collaboration tools can propel your business to new heights and often for very little cost. If you're not using one now and can see a need for one, I strongly encourage you to look at the options out there. ■

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