The Real Digital Convergence, or why Monster.com Might Own the World

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Technology has given us unprecedented access to content. The range of content, coupled with choice of representations, give rise to talk of a digital convergence – our televisions, phones, libraries and computer will all become a single appliance in the living room, capable of displaying all types of content.

This content-centric view misses the real digital convergence. When viewed from a socio-anthropological standpoint, the more profound convergence is that of content, context, and collaboration, which will result in the integration of individuals and their society, processes, goals and content into on-line communities. Members are typically exposed to a greater range of ideas, viewpoints and tools than would otherwise be the case, resulting in unforeseen opportunities for innovation through synthesis of diverse views. This talk will explore this theme, showing several environments used in industry that accomplish this convergence.

CV: Scott Dynes is deeply interested in How Things Work. This has led him to spend time researching things as diverse as molecular clouds in galactic centers, interactive learning environments, the response of auditory nerve fibers to electrical impulses, how to recreate key aspects of stand-up corporate training online, and cesium vapor lasers. Dynes believes that computers offer two great advantages for conveying knowledge: first, the computer enables users to have access to multiple representations of ideas and content, and secondly, the computer lowers the barriers to accessing relevant information.

These ideas are at the core of the knowledge interfaces of the interactive learning environments he developed: Animated Algorithms (Gloor, Dynes, Lee; MIT Press 1993, and the internet-based environments that allow for natural interactions amongst small groups of people developed as part of his postdoctoral research at MIT’s Center for Educational Computing Initiatives.

Following this he co-founded a start-up developing what would now be called a knowledge management environment.

Each of these endeavors play a part in his present role at Communispace, where he tests the hypotheses that 1) training is not learning, 2) that content is not king - interactions are, and 3) communities are necessary but not sufficient for truly productive on-line interactions. This is not done deductively, but proactively - by designing and developing prototypes of communities that integrate many elements to support the needs and goals of the community.