

## **White Paper:**

### **Web Calendaring -- Next on the Internet Timeline?**

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Much has been made about the growth in usage of the World Wide Web over the past few years. But, more important is the growth in uses and utility of those uses., on a timetable none of us would have imagined possible as recently as a few years ago. Some people argue in light of the pace of change that the Web has changed all the rules. Granted, the Web has changed many rules, but not all -- even the Web space will still be driven by user benefits over time. We would submit that the Web's "killer applications" have been driven by three basic benefits -- information, communication and convenience.

Arguably, the first killer app -- the browser -- brought a step change in convenience to the Web. A browser is so commonplace nowadays that people tend to forget how difficult it was to access the Web before browsers. Only a few years ago, people had to download messages and graphics through FTP (file transfer protocol) and gopher sites, or through specially designed message boards. Today, browsers allow users to download HTML files in an easy to use, graphical format. It's tough to imagine life before browsers today!

Consumer marketers have learned time and time again that convenience is a weak benefit on which to build a long term market. Browsers are no exception. It didn't take long for browsers to "commoditize" -- heck, Microsoft started giving theirs away -- before browsers had to scramble to create the next killer app. As browsers morphed into portals, they offered more user-friendly access to the information overload unleashed by the Internet.

While the portals began to duke it out for dominance, the next killer app was beginning to take the world by storm. Email offered individualized communication in a fast, simple and efficient vehicle. Today, Email is becoming a medium in its own right as well as a staple offering of the key portals. For many of us, E-mail's asynchronous nature ("You send it at your convenience, I'll read it at mine") fits our busy days perfectly. But, the marketplace indicated synchronous communication was important, too, and we've seen the more recent advent of chats, instant messaging, etc.

The next killer app was the personal home page. When I first heard about personal pages, I thought "Now there's a useless idea. Technical narcissism". But, the fun of marketing is that it isn't cut-and-dry, and was I wrong. (Once in 25 years of marketing isn't bad...). What underestimated was the appeal of "publishing" your own information in a world where large media companies enjoy a stranglehold on publishing.

Much like the printing press liberated publishing to at least a select few in the 15th century, so did personal pages deliver information and communication freedom to the Web masses.

So, what's next in this race to information, communication and convenience Nirvana? I believe the next big area is Web calendaring and planning. Why? If you think about the consumer, we're all just plain busier --the lines between work and personal life increasingly are blurring, and there are an ever-increasing number of demands on our time.

What's the benefit of Web calendaring to the user? Well, as we've argued above, the long term payoff is not in the convenience of planning. (In fact, some would argue that they could track down a planned event faster on their paper planner than you ever would on your PIM, your Pilot or your Web planner.) Digging below the surface, the real benefit's in the other two areas -information and communication.

The more insightful companies are racing to filter and organize content concerning events relevant to you, and to bring those straight to your calendar. For instance, some Web calendars can tell you that the Broncos are playing tonight on Monday Night Football, that Les Mis is in town and that there's a forum on broadband communications at the University. You can then decide whether to drop those any of those events into your personal calendar or not. (And, while you're at it, why not buy the ticket and access a map online?) Looking ahead, why not make available key data that could influence your actions? Taking investors as an example, imagine your calendar alerting you to housing start or employment data, to quarterly financial results or to the next triple witching hour. That would probably cause me to make my calendar my home page.

The other breakthrough area for Web calendars is in communication. A Web calendar can be shared easily -- be it with others in your community (e.g., work group, interest group or family) or with other devices in your own communication network (i.e., synchronized with your Pilot or desktop software. Here's a way to simplify group scheduling, for Scout troop members to post all troop events on one community calendar, or to integrate data available from the Web into your personal plan. This community aspect is a unique advantage of the Web over other formats.

Some of the big players are noticing the potential of calendaring. Witness Yahoo/VVebCal, AOL/[when.com](http://when.com), Amazon/Planet All, and Lycos/Amplitude among others. Of course, it's early days so there's a wide range of features,

performance and utility today. One of the companies that are at the forefront actually comes from the old-fashioned paper planner world. That's Day-Timer. Peter Ponzio, Day-Timer's VP of Technology Development, says the following about their Web calendar program:

"We talked to a number of consumers about the types of things that they'd like to see in an online calendar. They indicated that they were interested in sporting events; cultural events like theater, music, opera and ballet; trade shows to help them in their career; movies; family information; television listings; and time management tips. Then we developed a killer UI that allows people to view their events side-by-side, not in some separate screen. Finally, we added the best content and e-commerce providers on the web. While we have 50 years of paper-based experience, listening to the consumer led us in some different directions for our online calendar. We think that the online calendar market will complement the traditional planner market place, offering public content that they can't get anywhere else."

Like other killer apps before it, Web calendaring is attempting to address real benefits. I think there's no doubt that this area will become a major opportunity in both the consumer and the business-to-business spaces. Watch for further developments as companies push the envelope on the trinity of information, communication and convenience. These have been driving the Web to new heights and will continue to be the same factors at play in calendaring.

What's lurking in the wings behind calendaring? Don't think technology, think real benefits. Think information, communication and convenience...

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