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*From the Nov. 2006 Issue*

This is a classic expectation gap question. They (in this case the “they” is clearly Microsoft in that “they” control the GroupWare of well over 95 percent of our profession) should have delivered the space shuttle when what we got is a moped that barely works!

Originally, I thought GroupWare was Nirvana. We discovered a little known product called Right Hand Man back in 1989. In those days, the idea of “networking” still meant a Rotary lunch, and the term Internet was reserved for geeky college types. But we had electronic calendars. We could plan. We could book appointments, set up recurring meetings, and block busy times. We’d arrived! But that moped maxed out at about 25 mph.

Artisoft came along, and we started an internal network. Soon we could see EACH OTHERS’ schedules and reserve conference rooms. The moped sped up to about 40 mph. A few years later (Right Hand Man had since become Office Logic), we started exchanging e-mail via CompuServe, and a few brave souls started thinking about the vCal standard. The moped continued to get speedier and more complex. And we started seeing chinks.

By the mid ’90s, the Internet had arrived, and Microsoft and Novell were battling in the networking space. Some went to GroupWise while the majority chose the path of least resistance and adopted Outlook. And the gap started — in earnest. The first PalmPilot was introduced (1996), and we now had portability. And synchronization became more than a concept. It became a problem.

Fast forward 10 years and my beloved moped, the one that made my life so good

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want it now!

And while I'm at it, here's my Top 10 list of the OTHER things

I want. Some are personal and some are picky. Some are professional and some are critical. All annoy me.

1. A standard vCal format so that an appointment request from ANY system will be read and interpreted the same by all other systems. Can you say XML?
2. A synchronization routine that doesn't duplicate appointments. Or split multiple day appointments. Or add extra days because of an early alarm. One that works perfectly. Every time. (No pun intended.)
3. A categorization system that follows the appointment, not the machine. If I tag an appointment as "Civic," that tag should follow the appointment and not read differently on different platforms.
4. The ability to publish, in real time, any or all of my free/busy information.
5. The ability to publish specific AVAILABLE times and allow others to (tentatively) book appointments against that space.
6. A standard time zone logic function that will allow me to book an appointment in one time zone before I travel to another, and then have my Treo sync account for the change when I physically arrive in that other time zone.
7. The ability to share my calendar, or any subset thereof, with anyone, anywhere, anytime. For a minute, a day, or forever. It's MY data, and I want it available to me AND to whomever else I so designate.
8. I want EVERY reservation or ticket I buy to come with an attached vCal so my calendar will carry all the information I need. (This is actually being done more, but it should be universal. It's very simple to deliver. Consider sending a tax appointment e-mail WITH an embedded vCal. Your client simply clicks and the appointment is auto-magically inserted in his calendar complete with appropriate reminders and alarms!)

9. I want the new Microsoft Vista Calendar to be completely interchangeable

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...and six different hotel beds. What moron accepted THOSE appointments? [smile]

As practitioners, our calendars are complicated. We have many constituencies — partners, staff, clients, family, civic, hobby, religious — and all have different needs for different levels of access. Maybe I want too much. I don't think so. I know my moped isn't the answer. Where's that space shuttle?

**Of Special Note:** www.YouTube.com was launched only 18 months ago, literally from a garage. Today, it is the fastest-growing website in history. Period. I've tried for several months to think of SOME connection for the practice of public accounting. There simply isn't one. But no self-respecting technologist could possibly NOT mention a phenomenon this large. So here's the mention. Pop over and take a look. After all, you're a technologist, and people EXPECT you to be up on these things! ☐

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Technology

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