**Chapter 9 Discussion Questions and Answers**

1. Take a position on whether you feel user interfaces for work will remain isolated or if they will become more collaborative. Present evidence to support your argument.

Clearly user interfaces will evolve as we move into our more “connected” society in a global economy. Workplaces have changed using the tools discussed in this chapter. Examples include distributed development teams using the tools and techniques described in this chapter, and organization Wikis and file sharing tools to people not co-located can work whether co-designers are across the hall or across the planet. Logical next steps include connecting our devices (cell phones, PDA, computers, etc.) into a seamless, connected, wireless environment so business travelers remain connected to the office computing systems.

1. Describe your opinion of why collaborative interfaces, such as email, are much more popular than others, such as video-conferencing.

Email has become mainstream for users, whether expert or novice. Video conferencing still has some technology limitations such as throughput (bandwidth) and quality of both video and voice. This all depends on the capacity of the computer, the tools used, and its Internet broadband connection. The limitation will soon only be user community and individual preferences of one media vs. another. Some still prefer email rather than Instant Messaging, for example, to not cause interruption --- others prefer that interruption and the more instantaneous response.

Again, similar to this author’s response for Question #1, one can envision a society where the formerly clear border among communications, entertainment, and computing devices begin to blend together. Present examples include: voice over internet protocol (VOIP), movie and music download web sites, television archives and excerpts from Internet-based sources, sports and musical performance simulcasts, personal photo and video sharing, etc.

1. Differentiate the roles of face-to-face encounters and collaborative interfaces. Explain the limitations and benefits of each type of communication.

For face-to-face encounters, there are still benefits to the human-human interface to gain attention, increase understanding, and to influence decision-making that falls short in a collaborative environment. Experts in organizational psychology often state the initial meetings need to be face-to-face when possible, with follow-up easily accomplished over teleconferenced and other collaborative means. However, this author has also done this in reverse, where one can establish a terrific work relationship over electronic means (phone calls, file sharing, emails, etc.) later meeting face-to-face to reach a conclusion. Again, the ideal answer is a combination of both.

In our complex, inter-dependent economies in a global business climate necessitate face-to-face encounters combined with collaborative interfaces and social media environments.

1. Explain how collaborative interfaces can improve or disrupt teamwork.

Effective communication is essential for collaborative interfaces to succeed. In addition, for the example in distributed product development teams, there requires an element of trust factored into this equation, where people deliver what they are supposed to deliver when they are supposed to deliver it, whether they are co-located or not. Most would agree that good human behaviors such as trust, team play, honesty and integrity apply to development teams whether co-located or not.

1. List an example of an Asynchronous Distributed Interface. Describe the pros and cons of such a system when compared to an interface that is Synchronous Distributed.

Examples of Asynchronous distributed interfaces are email, blogs, and Wiki’s. In this case, entries are developed but not instantly addressed. This gives the reader or recipient time to digest the input and formulate a response. Synchronous distributed interfaces can be a video conference or instant messaging, where people are not co-located, but interact in real time. See text figure 9.1.

1. Give examples of collaboration and social media participation tools, including crossover characteristics, so that one can be clear on the different tools and methods of each.

**Important Terms and Concepts**

1. Groupware
2. Collaboration vs. Social Media Participation and tools that cross over
3. Synchronous Distributed Interface
4. Asynchronous Distributed Interface