



BOOK REVIEW

Implementing Collaboration Technologies in Industry

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This book is part of an on-going Springer series on Computer Supported Co-operative Work (CSCW) and it is well placed in that context. Most of the content is the product of the designated author, Bjørn Erik Munkvold, who produced seven of the 12 chapters and shared another. Although there are 10 further contributors, this dominance minimises the fragmentation that often characterises multiple-author works.

The term 'collaboration technologies' means here simply what it says – any technology facilitating collaboration at any level, such as meeting support, e-mail, calendaring, video conferencing and workflow management systems. It also includes, in this book, e-learning, although it could be argued that that is more a product of *other* collaboration technologies. The declared focus is on how companies are implementing and using different types of collaboration technology. Essentially, 'it does what it says on the tin/cover', which is commendable when many books fail to fulfil their declared goals.

The book is primarily concerned with an information systems perspective in the CSCW domain. It is divided into three parts: the first provides the overview and frameworks, the second covers case studies and case study-based material (although case examples feature frequently elsewhere), and the third seeks to draw practical implications. The relative value of the individual sections of the text will depend on their specific use, for example, a case study could support teaching. It is not a book of theory but implementation.

The examples in Part II, unsurprisingly, have something of a Norwegian emphasis, for example, Statoil, but also include Boeing, Sun and Microsoft. However, that illustrates a weakness of the book: the implication that collaboration technologies are only for big companies. Clearly, these technologies have much to contribute to the 'big business', with its diversity and dispersion, and large companies have the resources to more easily implement and experiment. However, it would have been valuable to have included some cases from SMEs, which are otherwise only mentioned in passing in the context of SME networks. Most businesses are SMEs.

The book does encompass problems and failures as well as successes, but it is generally (and understandably) upbeat. It could have added the reflection that video conferencing is a good example of commercial drive preceding adequate capability and reliability in the technology; hence beware!

The intended readership includes operational managers, project managers and IT staff, as well as researchers/educators. The general practical pitch is in keeping with that population. The list could also have included students!