

For some 'live' action



Your boss wants some sales figures, pronto, and three of you in different geographical locations need to coordinate simultaneously.

'Thunder' could be your answer.

Gaurav Raghuvanshi

YOU are in Bangalore, your boss is in Singapore and his boss in San Jose. From San Jose, the Vice-President wants to conduct a global sales meet and asks for inputs from all the regional offices of your company, pronto. By the end of the hour, he needs a complete picture of the company's sales targets for the month and make a presentation before the Chairman.

Sending PowerPoint presentations and arranging a videoconference will not do. How do you compile information from the dozen regional offices into one power point? Plus, it has to be a live meeting where a lot of exchange has to occur backward and forward before the final picture emerges.

Enter 'Thunder', a product developed for PolyVision Corporation by Ahmedabad-based e-Infochips Ltd, that puts your humble flip-chart into the realm of 'soft copies' and adds your regular PowerPoint, Word and Excel to the flip-charts. It also allows you to get diverse inputs from different locations and even project them on a wall.

At the core of the application is a touch screen, the size of a newspaper, on which you can write or draw with a stylus. The touch screen is connected by a PC to a projector, and can be linked with multiple locations through the Internet protocol. So, as you

pull in your monthly sales charts from your laptop and underline or circle the key figures, your boss in Singapore and his boss in San Jose can see the details on the wall of their conference room.

In fact, your boss can even make changes in your chart and add his own views to it. The new slide can be saved and even used for your internal discussions when he comes back. Even in the same room, multiple projectors can be used to see several flip charts simultaneously.

Meanwhile, the Vice-President can seek clarifications from any of the regional offices and get facts and figures instantaneously. He too can add his own inputs and ideas that will come handy for your office.

An hour later, the Vice-President can make a presentation before the Chairman with the latest facts and figures.

The enterprise software behind the product, Thunder, was developed by e-Infochips after the concept came as a brainwave to PolyVision in March this year.

"Their problem was that they wanted to showcase Thunder at Infocomm 2005 in June. We were sounded out for the project and given a very tight deadline. Even the specifications of the project were not fully defined. Luckily, the e-Infochips team pulled it off," says company Director (Software Division), Sujal Shah.

The e-Infochips team at Ahmedabad took up the challenge, but decided to make one key differ-

ence. Instead of attempting the project on technologies such as Java or .NET or VC++, the company's R&D cell suggested Flash MX as Front-end and flash Communication Server and C++ for back-end tasks to achieve the project deadline.

"Our team felt that if we used Flash, we would be able to get the right combination of aesthetics of user interface, animations and good performance for the product in the pressing deadline of just 60 days," says Shah.

The team's efforts paid off, and Thunder was rated as the "Best New Product" at Infocomm 2005 that was held in Las Vegas this June.

PolyVision now intends to launch the product commercially in the next couple of months. The Indian partner company will continue to be associated with the project by providing technical support to PolyVision's customers.

Thunder can be put to a variety of uses that range from a corporate with geographically spread out offices using it for inter-office communication or by a management or technical institute as a distance learning tool, says Shah.

The main hardware required is the touch screen, which is a proprietary product of PolyVision, and projectors linked to PCs. The touch screen would also be the most expensive part of the set-up. □

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