

## Meeting Report: SharePoint 2007 for Intranets and Websites

UKeiG Course, 15 July 2008

The day was packed with presentations from a group of experts in all aspects of SharePoint, and provided the 40 or so delegates with a variety of perspectives on the benefits and challenges of SharePoint. The seminar was chaired and facilitated by Martin White, from the consultancy Intranet Focus.

Janus Boye, the author of the *CMSWatch Enterprise Portals Report*, and a European authority on SharePoint, explained the background to this Microsoft product. It has a complicated development history, originating in 1999 from different content management systems, and is now being launched as a (free) part of Microsoft Office Professional 2007 (MOSS07). According to Microsoft, MOSS07 it is not only a content management system but a collaborative tool, a search tool and a portal which supports Web 2.0 and records management, and more! However, Janus felt that its strengths were mainly in its ability to act as a collaborative tool.

Janus also emphasised the issues around the decision to implement SharePoint in an organisation and the need to have good project planning when introducing SharePoint, with the right skills and right organisational governance.

One of the key features that ran through the whole seminar was that the basic functionality of SharePoint is handled best by third-party components or web parts, for example wiki or blog modules, although Microsoft is adding functionality as new releases are issued, for example for Records management. In addition, implementation of SharePoint in an enterprise can be carried out in conjunction with a Microsoft Certified Partner as the system integrator. Ben Robb of cScape, a Microsoft Gold Partner and specialist in SharePoint Server, outlined the role of the partner, and also described in more detail the various functionalities as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the product. Paul Henry from OI Software described SharePoint as a 'wide, shallow platform for building great solutions with third party products'. He then went on to describe examples of enterprise content management and social networking and intranet 2.0, and described how Web parts are built and integrated with the platform. Again, effective project management was considered paramount.

Case studies often illustrate very clearly the issues highlighted, and in this seminar, Susan Bradley described how the new extranet in Universities UK has helped to keep all members in contact with each other and to share information. Martin White described the situation in two other organisations that had introduced SharePoint and highlighted the successes as well as weaknesses.

Martin also went through the search functionality of SharePoint, rather complicated by the presence of four Microsoft search products – the overall impression being that information professionals had obviously not been consulted when developing these!

Experiences from a variety of experts, a good reading list, panel discussions and the opportunity to network with other delegates resulted in an informative and interesting day for all those who used or were planning to use SharePoint.

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***UKeiG has an informal network and mailing list – the Intranets Forum which holds free informal meetings every two months. This is open to all UKeiG members.***

***<http://www.ukeig.org.uk>***