Database applications

Database Applications What do we mean by groupware anyway? Groupware1 (McGovern, 2003), in a comprehensive form, can be understood as programs or softwares or tools that facilitate people work together as a ‘ group’ while being ‘ distant’ from each other. These can be synchronous groupware (real time collaboration) like instant messenger, shared whiteboards, screen, application sharing tools, e-talk, audio-video conferencing tools etc. or asynchronous groupware (not real time collaboration) like email, calendar, email listing, discussion group, workflow, document manager etc. Arnisted2 (2001) categorizes and differentiate these softwares as family software and business software depending upon contact information, medical records, hobbies, educational records, wish lists, diary, journal, etc. Groupware, also called as collaborative software, is an elementary component of a field of study known as Computer-Supported Cooperative Work or CSCW3. A few examples can be listed as Microsoft Exchange, MediaWiki, WetPaint, and ClassroomLive2. 0 and so on. 2) What kinds of things do groupware users do with data? How does that data have to be treated? In general there are three functions of groupware, enabling human to converse, transact and collaborate the ‘ information and knowledge’ (also termed as data), about self and others. Groupware users use data into several ways and for several purposes including sharing, analyzing, creating, discussing, debating, planning, summarizing, concluding, etc. Since data is a unique significant aspect for human individual/group identity, this must be used and shared with utmost care. This can be used for semantic purposes, and, sometimes, can be misused too. Ample privacy and security of the data should be of prime concern while treating with this data. 3) Who pays the costs of groupware deployment? Who receives the benefits?

Groupware can be freeware or shareware or authoring. As far as shareware and authoring software are concerned, it can be easily drawn that it is the honour who bears the initial cost for groupware deployment, but by selling the copyrighted software and its services, the author/honour can make up the cost and, later, can be benefitted. In case of freeware, in most of the cases, the honour-ship of the data shared, gets transferred to the groupware honour. And, by an initial agreement, the copyrights etc. remain with the honour. And, it is upto the honour, how he uses the data. Anyways, users are benefitted by using the services provided by groupware and the honour is benefitted by making money. 4) Who within the organization might be expected to support groupware implementation? Who might oppose it? Why, in each case? Within an organization, the top level or executive management will have most of the rights to operational and functional control of the groupware and it will be decision making authority to make use of all the data shared using groupware. It is the top management, whichcan decide distribution of authenticity and restrictions while using groupware. Moreover, the top management will be the direct viewer, tracker, manager and controller of overall information system. And hence, the top management might be expected to support groupware implementation in the organization. And for the similar reasons like restriction, vulnerable to information (data) use, lack of honour-ship, significant dependability upon others, the professional working at lower most level might oppose the groupware implementation. Also, the supporters of transparency will support the groupware implementation while non-supporters may not. 5) What is the relationship between groupware and databases? What are the special needs for database design in supporting groupware? All information or data shared

or posted by users of a groupware are saved at a centralized database. The information can be accessed by users located in this database, which is synchronized by the groupware, as per the variables commanded. It is the database which makes it possible to access and retrieve information, handle a vast amount of data, facilitate groupware to act as semantic web4 for users and honour, as well. It means, for a sound working of a groupware, a sound database is a must. The special needs and characteristics for database design in supporting groupware can be vast capacity and space, supporting hierarchy, several channels, several outlets, fast retrieval, distortion free, fast synchronization, etc. 6) What trends in groupware and databases might come into play over the next few years? Over next five years, a boom can be expected in groupware and database regarding connectivity, access, capacity, semantic web, individualization, and control and traffic factors. It can be imagined that everybody, anywhere, anyhow, in any manner using and being benefitted by groupware and having personal databases. One would require no big appliances, apparatus and instruments for maintaining databases and functioning with the groupware. Everybody would be capable of designing, implementing and handling groupware. Groupware and databases will be free from problematic issues pertaining to who does the work and who benefits, critical mass problems, compatibility with social practices, exception-handling, frequency of use, difficulty of evaluation, poor intuitions for groupware, acceptance (Grudin, “ Groupware…”)5. 1. McGovern, C (2003). “ Adding value to services through groupware”. EduCause (Proceedings 6-9 May, Adelaide, Australia). Adelaide: Causal Production Pty Ltd. pp: 197-201 2. Armistead, C. L. (2001). “ How family groupware would differ from business groupware” http://www.

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