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**HyperOffice and the On-Line Collaboration
Marketplace**

By

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About the Author

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Amy Wohl is a widely known computer industry analyst who specializes in the commercialization of new technology. She has been observing, writing about, and commenting on the information technology industry for more than 30 years. She writes for both her clients and her own blogs and books.

Wohl's current specialties include SaaS, Cloud Computing, SOA, collaboration and the commercialization of new technologies, including the creation of new markets and business models. Her clients are software companies whom she assists with projects in new technologies, new concepts, and new products.

Executive Summary

In the spring of 2011, Wohl Associates looked at the on-line collaboration market, eventually selecting five products (Google Apps, HyperOffice, LotusLive (IBM), Microsoft, and Zoho) to look at in detail, via interviews and research.

Based on that research, which will appear shortly in a research note, we placed HyperOffice in the growing on-line collaboration market, comparing its offering to the others. In this white paper, we are looking at both the on-line collaboration marketplace and at the place for a product like HyperOffice, specialized for the SMB market, in the larger market.

HyperOffice offers a diverse offering, including both a collaboration suite and additional pieces which may be added to suit a client's needs. It is an experienced company, with more than 13 years in the market. It goes beyond offering collaboration function, to providing a level of support and training that is not usually found in this segment of the SaaS market.

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The On-Line Collaboration Marketplace

Collaboration is moving on-line. Dozens of products designed for the on-line collaboration market have appeared, some with remarkable success. Marquee desktop and server-based products are moving on-line. Now that more people do their computing from some kind of portable device (laptop, desktop, tablet, SmartPhone) rather than from a desktop computer, being able to access collaboration tools from anywhere has become the criteria for success – both for the ISV and the customer.

The market is sufficiently large and successful that traditional desktop players like Microsoft and Lotus have created on-line versions of their offerings. These are new and still in their early stages. In contrast, players like Google, have more experience in the on-line world. But these big players are not alone. There are many excellent on-line offerings with experience and solid customer bases such as Zoho and HyperOffice.

In fact, one difficulty in looking at today's collaboration marketplace is that the word "collaboration" has now gained market traction and companies with everything from project management to CRM now want to use the collaboration label. They may do so, but here we are considering more traditional offerings that include shared spaces for collaboration, document management, and access to calendars, contacts, databases, and more. They may also include productivity tools (word processing, spreadsheets, etc.) and email.

An online collaboration solution is a strategic investment. It will be used by most people across the organization throughout their work day, and may be the difference in them working better individually and as a team. Therefore, a key task is to map the capabilities of a solution to the organizational context – what are the feature needs? what other systems in the company will it interact with? is the company mainly PC or Mac? do workers use mobile devices and tablets for business use, and if so which ones? The services and support wrapped around the product are an equally important part of the decision. Some of these offerings provide very little formal support and no training. This means the buyer must be prepared to buy these offerings elsewhere or do with the scant (and delayed) help of a community site. HyperOffice offers built-in administrative as well as end user support. It also offers free daily "webinars" in addition to paid training options.



HyperOffice

HyperOffice was founded in 1998, offering its on-line messaging and collaboration solutions from the very beginning of the SaaS market. Their offerings include an integrated suite of online tools covering the entire range of productivity needs - contact management, calendaring, document management, intranet and extranet workspaces, project management, forums, online databases, and web forms. HyperOffice also offers business email, a HyperMobile solution for mobile messaging and its HyperBase online database.

HyperOffice Offerings

Collaboration Suite	Product Add-Ons
Document Management	Business Email
Intranet/Extranet Workspaces	HyperMobile
Shared Calendars	HyperBase
Project Management	HyperShare for Outlook
Wikis, Forums, Polls etc.	Email Archiving

HyperOffice is priced to include free live help. The Add-Ons are priced separately from the Collaboration Suite, so customers can pay for just what they need and use. Additional security features such as a secure SSL connection are available. HyperOffice also leverages its experience to offer a range of professional services like consulting, implementation, migration and customization.

User organizations may choose to simply pay monthly, with no commitment, or to pay annually for lower costs.

HyperOffice thinks of themselves as a one-stop shop for small and medium businesses, allowing them to take advantage of supported applications formerly only available to much larger firms with significant IT resources. More than 300,000 users have employed HyperOffice to date.

HyperOffice and the On-Line Collaboration Marketplace

As you might imagine, product features and functions can change very quickly in the on-line world, where your ISV can add additional features and upgrades at any time. Not every on-line offering is taking the same point of view or offering the same feature set, but there are some areas of comparability.

Here's an example of what you might expect.

Companies	Products	Collaboration	Email	Document Storage & Management	Productivity Applications	Other
Google	Google Apps	✓	✓	✓	Limited Function Editor, Spreadsheets, Presentations Can be used with Microsoft Office	Advanced functions for email, migration Group provisioning Directory Synchronism with LDAP
HyperOffice	Collaboration Suite	✓	✓	✓	Works with Microsoft Office or any other file	Contact Mgt. Calendars Project Mgt. Mobile Support Chat/IM (coming soon) Database
Lotus	LotusLive	✓	✓	✓	✓	Project Mgt. Web Conferencing, Calendars, Chat/IM, Communities, Forums
Microsoft	Office 365	✓	✓	✓	Limited function with Office Web Apps; can be used with Office Desktop	Calendars Contacts SharePoint, Exchange, Lync integrated Advanced functions for Enterprise Editions
Zoho	All products priced and sold separately	✓	✓	✓	Works with Microsoft Office	CRM Project Mgt. Chat, Web and Audio Conferencing Integration with Google Apps, QuickBooks

Every day we see additional contestants entering the fray. For example, a number of cloud providers (infrastructure, compute, and storage specialists) are now putting together broader offerings that include SaaS (software as a service), generally buying the software from one of the providers named above or sometimes from ISVs who only sell to providers (think of wholesale vs. retail) and whose names rarely appear on the offering.

Mobility

With the widespread availability of powerful mobile devices like iPhone, iPad, BlackBerry and Android, workers expect to access and manage work related information on their mobile devices. All vendors offer mobile support to a greater or lesser extent, in terms of features offered, and devices supported. Optimized mobile browser interfaces are offered by all vendors, but customers want the next level of support – apps which work natively on mobile devices. HyperOffice syncs natively with the mail, calendars, contacts and tasks (where applicable) apps of any device which supports the ActiveSync and SyncML protocols, and prominent proprietary protocols, which covers a large spectrum of mobile devices including iPhone, iPad, BlackBerry, Windows Mobile and many Android and Nokia phones.

	HyperOffice	Google Apps	LotusLive	Office 365	Zoho
Feature					
Push email	✓	✓	✓	✓	Zoho is currently in Beta for synching calendar and contacts; a public release for mail, calendar and contacts is scheduled for 10/11
Push Calendar	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Push Contacts	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Push Tasks	✓ ¹	✗	✗	✓	
Devices Supported					
iPhone	✓	✓	✓	✓	TBA
BlackBerry	✓	✓ ²	✓	✓	TBA
Windows Mobile	✓	✓	✓	✓	TBA
Android	✓	✓	✓	✓	TBA
Symbian/Nokia	✓	✓	✓	✓	TBA

1. Supports push tasks for devices which have a native tasks application.
2. Google Apps Push support for Blackberry requires Blackberry Enterprise Server. Alternatively, you can access Gmail on Blackberry using the Gmail BlackBerry application.

Social Collaboration

“Social collaboration” or “Enterprise 2.0” is an emerging theme in collaboration. End users, who are used to cutting edge “social” tools like Twitter and Facebook in their consumer lives, are starting to have the same expectations from their enterprise software. These “social” tools can spur collaboration and enable cross organizational connections easily and intuitively. Social collaboration features form an important part of HyperOffice’s short term product map, ranging from business social networking, to activity streams, to comments and social messaging.

Integration

Offering lots of features can help the user find whatever he’s looking for, but the real usability test of a collaboration offering is how well the features play together. That means common interfaces, integration between features, and being able to easily use modules together. Many collaboration vendors create their offerings not just from organic (internal) development, but by acquisition so how much of this common look-and-feel you get can vary greatly. Greater integration can lead to greater user adoption because of a simplified and intuitive user experience.

HyperOffice scores high on integration because it has been developed organically as a single product. It scores over vendors who have gone the acquisition route, or market different components as standalone products.

HyperOffice offers a clean navigation structure and consistent interface. Collaboration modules are listed on the navigation under “Personal” and “Groups”, and switching between modules takes just a click. The user experience is consistent across modules, and there is no shock of dissimilar interfaces. There are many instances of deep integration where modules communicate at the data level. Two good illustrations are the “interlinking” feature, where any related data (documents, email records, forum discussions, contacts etc) may be linked; or “email to tasks” where an email may be converted into a task and managed from the project management system through a button on the web-mail console. It’s important to note that it’s not just functions you’re buying (in that case, counting up who has the most might be the way to go), but rather how well the product will fit into your company. In that case, training and support definitely count. Google originally offered no training or support at all, but now offers support for companies that buy the fee-paid version for \$50 per user per year. Microsoft similarly

provides only community support for its Home and Professional versions of Office 365; you have to move up to an Enterprise version to get live support. Training is pretty scarce for most on-line collaboration products: HyperOffice is unique in offering live support in its base offerings. That can be particularly important for SMBs who often have limited or no resources for training or support.

Conclusion

On-line collaboration is here to stay and becoming more important and ubiquitous over time. Exactly what it means varies with vendor offerings and customer needs, but it broadly includes shared spaces for collaboration, document management, calendaring, and access to email. It might also include productivity software, project management, contact management, and anything else a vendor decides might give him competitive advantage in the marketplace.

Some products are fairly static (and can't be customized); others provide for user customization and others, like HyperOffice offer more extensive customization by the vendor or his ecosystem. Almost all the products can be integrated with other software via portals or other aggregation tools.

The important thing is that with all that choice, your organization takes the time to explore what's available and make a choice that will work well in your environment. This is a tool that most of your information workers will be using every day, so small problems in using the tool will be major irritants. Choosing carefully counts.

This paper was authored by [Amy D. Wohl of Wohl Associates](#). Wohl has been commenting on, writing about, and observing the information industry for more than 35 years.

Note: Some of the statements in this brief opinion are based on a study of five selected on-line collaboration vendors. We will publish that study shortly in a Research Note that you will be able to access at www.wohl.com.