

## Friendsters at Work: Displaying Social Media Streams in the Workplace

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Online social media services enable people to share many aspects of their personal interests and passions with friends and strangers. Much of the attention on such services – in the traditional media as well as scientific literature – has focused on the use and impact of such services on interpersonal awareness, connections and relationships. Although there is a growing appreciation for the role of friendships in work settings [Rath, 2007], and some work on the use of social media within the enterprise [Millen, *et al.*, 2006], relatively little attention has been devoted to how sharing through social media services can help foster stronger relationships in the workplace.

At Nokia Research Center Palo Alto, we are embarking on an investigation into the use of next generation proactive displays, in which we will be exploring how a sociotechnical ecosystem consisting of people, offices, mobile phones and situated computer displays can promote greater awareness, interaction opportunities and relationships among collocated collaborators in a work setting. Social media streams will provide the content that flows among these elements of the ecosystem.

*Proactive displays* are computer displays that can sense and respond in contextually appropriate ways to the people and activities taking place in their vicinity. Earlier instantiations of proactive display applications were based on special-purpose profiles and special-purpose sensing technologies. For example, UniCast, OutCast and GroupCast [McCarthy, *et al.*, 2001] all used a web-based profile with 12 “channels” from which users could select digital content that could be shown on a peripheral display inside one’s workspace, outside of one’s workspace and in break areas (respectively). The content shown at any one time was influenced by the detection of infrared badges nearby.

Three proactive display applications deployed at a conference – AutoSpeakerID, Ticket2Talk and NeighborhoodWindow [McCarthy, *et al.*, 2004] – used RFID tags and readers coupled with even simpler web-based profiles, inviting attendees to specify their name, affiliation, photo, homepage and an image representing an interest (“something you’d be happy to talk about with anyone at the conference”). AutoSpeakerID showed the name, affiliation and photo of each person who asked a question at the microphone stand (which had an RFID antenna mounted on it) on a large display during a paper presentation session; Ticket2Talk showed the name, affiliation, photo and image of interest of each person passing through a coffee break line (each person getting 5 seconds of fame); NeighborhoodWindow showed a graph-based visualization of people nearby and the words from their homepages that were either in common with others nearby or unique across the conference population.

Our next generation proactive display applications will be deployed in a workplace setting, and will differ in a few significant ways. They will utilize a broader array of content sources, representing a variety of public or external social media streams (such as Flickr and del.icio.us) as well as internal content (internal wikis and blogs). The sensing technology will also have a broader base – Bluetooth-enabled mobile phones – that will also enable us to investigate other potential streams of content from the phones themselves [Hankins, et al., 2007] and other kinds of activity (interactivity, in addition to “strict” proactivity).

The questions we hope to address include

- What kinds of media will people want to share in the workplace?
- How does physical world revelation affect digital world revelation (and vice versa)?
- What impact does the sharing have on the relationships at work?
- How does the sharing of content evolve over time?

We look forward to sharing our ideas and learning more about other workshop attendees’ insights and experiences with social media sharing.

## References

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## Bio

Joe McCarthy is a Principled Scientist at Nokia Research Center Palo Alto, where he is committed to the design, development and deployment of technology to help people relate to one another. Joe’s career includes earlier roles as an entrepreneur, research scientist, professor, consultant and musician. Other roles currently played include husband, father and wine aficionado. Additional information about Joe can be found at his official web site ([http://research.nokia.com/people/joe\\_mccarthy](http://research.nokia.com/people/joe_mccarthy)) and unsanctioned weblog (<http://gumption.typepad.com/blog>).