Instant Messaging Is Not Just For Teens Anymore

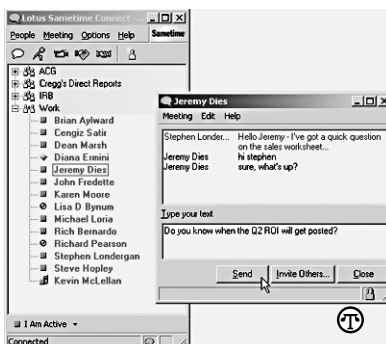(NAPSA)—A growing number of small businesses are getting the "msg" about instant messaging.

A leading industry consultant predicts that by 2005 instant messaging (IM) will be used more than e-mail. IM systems built specifically for businesses are now in use in organizations of all sizes because of the benefits they produce, including more productive employees and decreased operating costs resulting from fewer phone calls and a reduced need to travel. Unlike the telephone or e-mail, IM has the ability to keep employees, business partners, customers and suppliers connected at all times.

The capacity to see who is online at any time—what's known as IM's presence awareness technology—allows individuals to see who is available for quick responses to questions, even across time zones.

This embrace of IM by the business market—a trend some refer to as "chat hits the cubicle"—is particularly noticeable among companies dealing with a geographically dispersed workforce.

For example, software developed by IBM, Lotus Sametime 3, provides customers with a mixture of secure instant messaging and Web conferencing.

The software helps companies extend real-time collaboration services to those outside of their firewalls without compromising security. Sametime 3 also enables users to securely connect their instant messaging communities with other organizations' communities, such as customers or partners. It also offers the ability to more

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easily incorporate presence awareness into other business applications, such as a customer service Web site or a company Intranet.

Beckman & Hirsch, an Iowa-based law firm, has used the software to share files instantly with clients, hold e-meetings and use instant messaging as an alternative to the office intercom.

David Beckman said, "Lotus Sametime took off here like wildfire. It really has the security and the power to support the work we do and has indeed lead to increased productivity."

The manufacturer, IBM, believes the software reflects the brand's unique representation of the new ways individuals and businesses work together to achieve success.

The system was designed to be used with a Pentium II 266 MHz—or higher—and any number of Windows operating systems.

To learn more, visit the Web site at www.lotus.com.