

# Technology



close working relationship with each team member. “They have to be much more proactive in the virtual environment,” he says. “I was talking recently to a manager who leads several virtual teams. He makes semi-annual visits to each team member to learn about him or her and determine the best leadership style to use with each one.”

Designing, delivering, scheduling, and evaluating virtual team training will be a major challenge on the corporate agenda, say these professors. They presented a paper based on their study, titled “Identifying Training Needs for Virtual Team Leaders and Members,” at the Academy of Management’s annual meeting in August.

## Time to Disconnect?

**Communications technologies such as e-mail, cell phones, and pagers** may make the world seem like a smaller place. But do we really want to use technology to defy distance? In a recent lecture at the New Jersey Institute of Technology’s College of Computing Sciences in Newark, computer guru Darl Kolb argued that distance isn’t always a bad thing. He questioned the world’s growing use of communication and Web-based technologies and warned that “staying connected” could be a growing threat to our need for some time alone.

Kolb, a visiting professor at NJIT from the University of Auckland Business School in New Zealand, pointed out that technological connectivity “has rendered the perception that distance as a phenomenon is diminishing.” Even so, he added that “improvements in com-

## Act Locally, Think Virtually

### Employees working on virtual teams at

Dow Chemical take courses in virtual team etiquette and online meeting management. GlaxoSmithKline uses cultural awareness exercises to improve virtual team communication. Dow Chemical and GSK are only two of a growing number of companies that are making virtual team training a priority, say researchers at the Kenan-Flagler Business School at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Kenan-Flagler professors Ben Rosen and Dick Blackburn and former doctoral candidate Stacie Furst, now an assistant professor at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, recently conducted a study of virtual workgroups. In it, they explore just what today’s HR professionals find most important when it comes to virtual team building.

Blackburn, Rosen, and Furst surveyed 440 HR professionals; most indicated that companies could be

doing more to prepare employees for virtual team projects. Seventy-two percent of respondents noted that employees needed skills in leading virtual team meetings; 70 percent emphasized the importance of virtual coaching and mentoring skills.

Respondents also identified the following skills as important in virtual team projects:

- Establishing trust and managing conflict among team members (61 percent).
- Maintaining cultural sensitivity and communications (58 percent).
- Teambuilding (57 percent).
- Using communications technology (65 percent).

It’s human nature for workers to pay more attention to “co-located” team members than to those in remote locations, says Blackburn. However, virtual team leaders also need to know how to develop a

### DATABIT

Seattle recently topped Intel Corp.’s list of wireless U.S. cities. According to a map created by University of Washington students, Seattle’s downtown boasts 5,225 public networks within a two-mile radius.

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munication technology cannot completely overcome human needs for personal space, privacy, and disconnection from others."

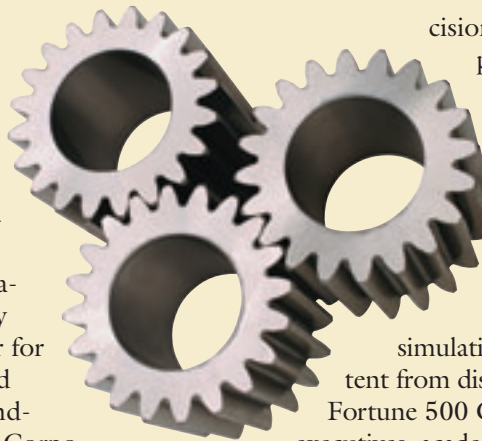
Soon, he warned, technology such as wearable computers and cell phones may allow users to stay connected at every moment, even as they move from one place to the next. Once such technology is in the mainstream, Kolb argued that the concept of distance among people still should be maintained. He suggested the need for "discontinuous connectivity," through technology similar to two-way radios. Such devices allow instant, long-distance communication, without subjecting users to an "always-on" link.

"Distance should not die," said Kolb. Rather it should be managed, both by individuals and by companies coping with a globally distributed workforce. Discontinuous connectivity, he emphasized, "allows us to deal with dynamic distance in a way that has meaning."

## **TOOLS OF THE TRADE**

### **Darden's Newest Ethics Simulation Hits the Web**

Darden Business Publishing recently announced the release of its newest Web-based ethics simulation, Turning Gears. The simulation, developed by the Olsson Center for Applied Ethics and the Business Roundtable Institute for Corporate Ethics, places business students in the role of a product manager at a competitive toy company. Each participant is required to make a series of decisions through five integrated case studies based on real-world scenarios. Throughout the simulation, students must make de-



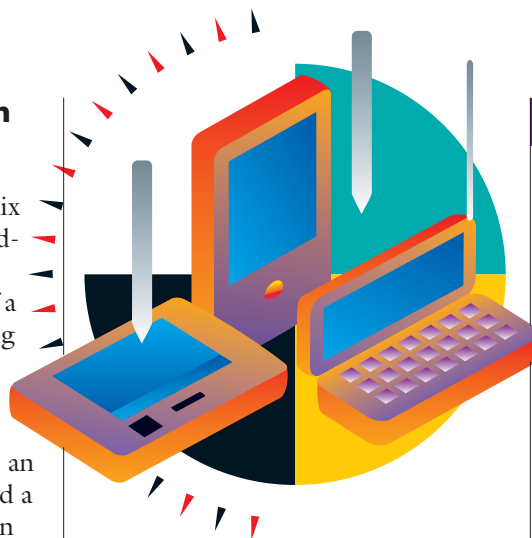
isions with incomplete information, while also considering the impact of their decisions on the company and its stakeholders. Features of the simulation include content from discussions with Fortune 500 CEOs, corporate executives, academics, and MBA students; and an interactive, Web-based Macromedia Flash platform. Students can complete the simulation, individually or as part of a small team, in less than 90 minutes.

To view a demo of Turning Gears, visit [it.darden.virginia.edu/preview/TurningGears/](http://it.darden.virginia.edu/preview/TurningGears/).

## A Boost for Wireless Tech

**Students at the University of Arizona's Eller College of Management in Phoenix** soon will be taking even greater advantage of wireless technologies. Eller was selected as a recipient of a 2005 HP Technology for Teaching grant, which is geared toward augmenting educators' use of wireless technology to enhance student learning. Eller will receive an award package of HP products and a faculty stipend valued at more than \$74,000.

Through the grant, more than 400 business undergraduates at Eller will use wireless tablet PCs and PDAs to collaborate on team projects via Web conferencing, work with simulations, and participate in blended online and face-to-face learning environments.



The 2005 HP Technology for Teaching grant program is awarding grants totaling \$8.5 million to 174 elementary and high school programs, as well as to 31 higher education institutions. The company will give a total of \$35 million over three years. So far, more than 400 schools have received grants worldwide.

## WEBWATCH

### COLUMBIA LAUNCHES PORTAL

This spring, Columbia Business School launched "Columbia Ideas at Work," a new online knowledge portal designed to showcase the research of its faculty. The site includes research briefs that distill findings into practical applications, a searchable archive of faculty research and publications, and an online magazine. The site "captures the innovations and applications that play a significant role in the evolution of business practice," says Glenn Hubbard, dean of the business school.

The inaugural issue of the online magazine focuses on faculty research in entrepreneurship. Content includes a discussion with Dean Hubbard about progressive tax rates and their impact on entrepreneurs. The issue also includes feature articles on venture capital networks, pricing risk in venture capital, and the impact of founder succession.



## NEWSBYTES

### A MORE SECURE CANADA

Canadian leaders in industry, government, and academia have partnered to create a national security forum. The Forum for Information Security Innovation in Canada (FISIC) aims to become a focal point for research initiatives in information security. Its founding partners include Bell Security Solutions Inc.; the Canadian Advanced Technology Alliance; Communications and Information Technology Ontario; the Mathematics of Information Technology and Complex Systems; and Carleton University in Ottawa.

### NSF HONORS ZHU

Kevin Zhu, a professor at the Paul Merage School of Business at the University of California at Irvine, has received the National Science Foundation's Faculty Early Career Development award. Zhu will receive a \$377,000 grant, which he plans to use to support a five-year research project that will study how digital technologies are transforming companies.



### LEHIGH PLANS ONLINE MBA

Lehigh University's College of Business and Economics in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, is in the planning stages of an online MBA. Its launch set for 2007, the program will deliver courses and content, which will mirror those in the school's traditional MBA program, via a Web site designed exclusively for the online cohort. Students will come to campus for face-to-face instruction three times during the program. **Z**



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