

# Enterprise portals provide vital tools for organisations

When talking about enterprise portals, there are four main questions to be asked: what is an enterprise portal and what features characterise it? What are the benefits of employing one? And what value does it hold for an organisation?

An enterprise portal is a business tool or service that creates a single "gateway" to enable every stakeholder within a firm to access and share all of its internal and external information, resources, applications, data bases and business tools. The stakeholders do not only consist of the staff and management of the company, but outside parties such as business partners and suppliers, and even competitors. Enterprise portals are 24/7/365 and can stretch across borders.

This universal access to a company's information provides a single view of corporate knowledge, easy orientation of new employees, improved education of existing employees and a sharing of the responsibilities across all employees.

Typical features of an enterprise portal include the facilitation of easy input of new data, the virtual collaboration of the users within an organisation, the personali-

sation of the information accessed, the integration of disparate and different systems, and the production of the organisation's human and informational resources and business tools.

An enterprise portal consists of a single software application, through which one would work to access all the information contained throughout the

organisation. Commonly, but not always, an enterprise portal is Web-based because of the popularity of TCP/IP protocols.

There are some enterprise portals, however, that use propriety applications instead. They are similar to intranet and extranet solutions.

It is important to remember that an enterprise portal is a personalised interface because everybody's needs in a company are different.

Enterprise portals provide organisations with myriad benefits.

□ *This article is an edited version of a presentation made by Neels Bothma, the author of E-commerce for South African Managers, to the Gordon Institute of Business Science. Visit [www.gibs.co.za](http://www.gibs.co.za) for details on upcoming debates*



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