

ACTIVE News April 2010

Editorial

Dear reader,

In this issue of ACTIVE News, we will focus on how solutions developed in the ACTIVE project can improve your business. In our first article, ACTIVE Project Director Paul Warren takes a look at what ACTIVE has achieved at its second anniversary.

In the next article, Ian Thurlow from BT presents one of those achievements in more detail. He describes how consultants at BT Business benefit from ACTIVE's solutions.

If you are interested to learn more about the achievements of ACTIVE so far, the two available annual reports give you a good overview – see the news item on the latest ACTIVE Annual Report in this issue.

We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter, and we would appreciate your feedback.

Milon Gupta, Eurescom

Project results & activities

Achievements in year two of ACTIVE

ACTIVE has now passed the major milestone of its second birthday. A great deal of technology has been created. This has meant overcoming hard technical challenges. For example, in the area of machine learning, algorithms have been developed to discover how a user's work can be categorized into different contexts, to detect when a user switches from one context to another, and to understand the informal process the user employs to achieve his or her goals.

In the domain of semantic technologies, work has included enhancing the power of the Semantic MediaWiki, e.g. through technology to detect inconsistencies in its knowledge base.

Much of this technology is described in the public literature and in the public project deliverables available on our website.

An architecture has been created to bring all this technology together, the ACTIVE Knowledge Workspace (AKWS), including a user interface designed to enable users to get the most from the technology. A trial version of the AKWS, incorporating some key elements of our ACTIVE technology, can be downloaded at <http://www.active-project.eu/publications/akws-download.html>.

All three case studies now have prototype systems, based on understanding user needs, and initial user validation has taken place. The next year will see the integration of more technology into these case studies, along with rigorous validation.

An article about one of our case studies, in the telecommunications sector, was recently the cover story in the Journal of the Institute of Telecommunications Professionals. The article can be downloaded at http://www.active-project.eu/fileadmin/public_documents/vol4_p1_KM_at_the_customer_front_line.pdf.



Alongside the development of technologies and their integration into our case studies, ACTIVE is also working to understand the costs and benefits of sharing knowledge. In particular, we are using folksonomies and lightweight ontologies, i.e. ontologies (schemas) which are relatively easy to create and yet are powerful enough for many knowledge management applications. This is part of our commitment to achieving real business benefit through our technology. We shall be reporting more about the business impact of ACTIVE in the coming issues of this newsletter.

Paul Warren, Eurescom
ACTIVE Project Director

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Helping BT help its customers



In the December 2008 issue of ACTIVE News we reported on the BT case study, and its planned trial in BT Business, a part of BT which provides products and services to businesses across the U.K. The first stage of the ACTIVE trial with BT Business has now started, so now is a good time to say a little more about our ACTIVE users and what they want from the system. The users themselves have titles such as solutions consultant, technical consultant, ICT specialist, and sales manager. What they all share, though, is a job which involves working closely with customers, understanding customers' needs, preparing customer proposals and, when those proposals are successful, working to deliver to customers.

The life of a homeworker

Most of our trialists are homeworkers, so when they are not out with customers, they are usually working at home, often preparing proposals or doing technical designs for customers. In any week, a typical trialist will spend two days at home and three on the road. A day on the road might start at 07.00 by logging on to BT's intranet and accessing email before travelling to the first appointment. Then he or she will be away, perhaps to meet a couple of customers during the course of the day, spending around two hours with each customer and quite a few hours behind the wheel of a car. On returning home, then it is back to accessing e-mails and updating BT systems with information about the customers met during the day.

This means they rarely get together as a community to share ideas. Yet they are each one dependent on shared expertise to be able to deliver to customers. That is why electronic knowledge sharing is important. The view of one of BT's solutions consultants sums it up: "Being in

contact with colleagues by phone and by email is vital – but it's still not enough. We need better ways of sharing knowledge and expertise."



Sharing knowledge

BT Business users are now having their knowledge sharing capabilities enhanced through the trial of the ACTIVE Knowledge Workspace. This enables users to tag information objects for sharing, just like photographs are shared on flickr. Users can create their own tags, and the system also suggests tags. The ACTIVE Knowledge Workspace also enables information to be managed according to its context. This not only helps with information overload, by focussing at any given time on the information the user really needs, but it also supports knowledge sharing. Where two or more users share the same context, then that supports the sharing of information related to that context. One user commented "by using contexts I get the information I really need for my current task, and can see how it relates to information held by others."

Feedback from users

In fact, this is the first stage of a trial which will go on to involve the Semantic MediaWiki, as well as trialling more advanced features of the ACTIVE Knowledge Workspace. All through those trials we will be obtaining feedback from users, and reporting on that feedback through the columns of this newsletter.

Ian Thurlow, BT

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ACTIVE Annual Report 2009

In February 2010, ACTIVE published its Annual Report for 2009. In particular, the report describes the main technical achievements for the year and how they fit into the three case studies. The report also explains the validation activities within the project, its major dissemination activities, and the key features of the work planned for 2010.

The Annual Report 2009 as well as the 2008 edition can be downloaded at <http://www.active-project.eu/news/view/article/active-annual-report-2009/8.html>.



Upcoming events

17th International Conference on Knowledge Engineering and Knowledge Management (EKAW2010)

Lisbon, Portugal, 11 - 15 October 2010

Event website: <http://ekaw2010.inesc-id.pt>

The focus of the 17th edition of EKAW will be on "Knowledge Management and Engineering by the Masses".

ACTIVE is a Gold Sponsor of the event.

About ACTIVE

ACTIVE is a consortium of twelve partner organisations from seven different European countries, co-ordinated by BT. ACTIVE aims to increase the productivity of knowledge workers:

- by tailoring information delivery according to task context – prioritising the information needed now;
- through powerful but easy-to-use knowledge sharing tools;
- by enabling the reuse and sharing of the informal processes used by knowledge workers.

Project website: www.active-project.eu