

March 9, 2005

Nextaris – Time and Task Management Tool for IT Workers

By Jim Hedger, StepForth News Editor, [StepForth Placement Inc.](#)

They say that time is money in the business world. As truisms go, the statement is true enough. It was also once said that computers would be time saving devices. The second statement, as any beleaguered IT worker will tell you, is simply not true. Computers, as time saving devices, continue to belong in the flying car category of science-fiction based reality simply because time cannot be saved, it can only be managed. Even though my colleagues and I labour under an executive team I consider to be among the smartest managers in Canada, the whole firm is working longer hours than ever before. My time is therefore not saved but it is very well managed. The computer allows me to accomplish far more in a day than my extremely talented Father could just one generation before me. At least he had the luxury of punching-out at 5 every afternoon in his comfortably hectic eight-hour per day, five-days a week world. Today, we live in an expanding 24/7 universe with change flying as fast as the electrons we push. To effectively manage time in a cyber-world that never sleeps, one needs to rely on electronic assistants and tools.

[Nextaris](#), the new content-management service from Menlo Park firm [SurfWax](#) is a toolbox for online publishers, content creators, design teams and developers. According to the copy on its site, Nextaris is *"an all- in-one set of web-based tools for searching the Web, capturing content, saving/sharing files, publishing blogs, messaging and networking."* The goal was to create a dashboard application, one that subtly changes the way users relate to searching and retaining content from the web. After establishing a free account, Nextaris users are able to set up several types of public and/or private files, the content of which is stored on the Nextaris server. The filing system allows users to surf the web and save specific content such as news-clippings, images, site copy, and source-code. Users can then sort through their saved files to determine information to make public and which to keep in secure folders for sharing with selected contacts or work-team members. The toolbox is an online application that does not require users download or install new files (though there is a clever drag-and-drop java installation required).

Ease of use is important for SurfWax CEO Tom Holt. Believing that information is best remembered and shared through contact groups or knowledge nodes, Holt has some simple advice for new users. "Start with the photo albums. Upload a few photos to share with family and friends."

After experiencing how easy it is to use the application, Holt feels new users will quickly appreciate the ability to save snippets of news-clippings or entire site-copy containing information they'll need later or wish to share with their contacts. As an example, StepForth will be using Nextaris to publish an internal news and info update (sorry, staff only) two or three times a week. The toolbox will allow us to store and archive what we consider to be important SEO related information, and share that information with each other without deluging ourselves with email-memos as we tend to do now. Nextaris provides "sourcing" information automatically, thus saving me the seconds required to enter the information manually. According to Holt, the goal was to make a system where users could, "...save specific snippets of content, a more efficient way to "bookmark" portions of pages. Likewise Nextaris Images will show just images you've selected." Another feature is the Nextaris News Accumulator which works much like Google's News Alerts but also saves a copy of the article for future reference.

The Nextaris system allows for the saving of images, site copy and source-code. By enabling users to select groups of co-workers, family or friends to update when new content is added to a file, Nextaris

makes an excellent collaborative and networking tool. A feature that will be easily appreciated by newcomers to the web is that Nextaris does not require users to purchase storage space as an ISP would. It allows users to establish accounts and publish for sharing via the web without learning HTML or a more complicated CMS.

Perhaps the strongest feature of Nextaris is the one that binds the others together in a publishing format, the Blog creator. Users of the Nextaris system can easily create and upload content to a Blog-space. A setting allows for news-clippings to be instantly added (and sourced to the original with a back-link) to the user's Blog as well as being added to other shared or private folders. With the growing popularity of Blogs seen in the corporate world, the Nextaris system provides an easily adaptable environment to learn and publish quality content from easily accessible files.

In their offices, the SurfWax staff has been using Nextaris for news and collaborative file-sharing for the past few months with great success. For search engine users, researchers, designers, developers and publishers, Nextaris provides a number of one-click solutions to the problem of information overload. This tool helps manage the only virtual resource a good programmer can not create, time. As the mixed metaphor says, time is money and every penny managed is a half-penny earned.