

E-tool: a personalised prototype for web based applications

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Abstract

E-tool is a web site offering a wide range of services and tools such as telephone number lookup facility, a dictionary, loan calculators, etc. The site is targeted to professional users such as employees, secretaries, managers, lawyers, and business consultant. As in the computer desktop all the most used applications are always available to the user, also in the system all the tools are always present as menu items. Users can save time as they have easy access to all the necessary working tools using the site as a dynamic web-based desktop. Since there is a large amount of different web-based applications, the interaction with the user is personalised to tailor the services to the individual user's needs and to create long-term relationships with repeat users. E-tool is a flexible prototype built with a main structure that can be easily be adapted to manage any other applications on different sites. To test the effectiveness and usability of the adaptation techniques adopted within the web pages, an initial test was performed which the results are here described.

Introduction

The boom of high-speed Internet access in offices and industry, mainly due to the broadband diffusion, makes web-based applications an effective alternative not only to traditional software applications but also to standard office tools. Free mail accounts, scheduling software, addresses databases, calendars and other web-based utilities are frequently used instead of standard desktop applications. These tools have the advantage of being accessible from any computer with Internet connection. It is now a long time since the major portals like Netscape, AOL, Yahoo, Excite, Lycos started to offer to the users this kind of free services because quite early they understood the potential of these services.

However, the large amount of information that is available from a large number of web sites often does not enable to find the relevant information quickly and it lets the users get "lost in the hyperspace" (Conklin, 1987). In these conditions

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