

**Gas Industry Standards Board
Future Technology Task Force
Enron Capital and Trade Resources, Houston, Texas
November 7, 1997 8:30am - 3:30pm
Meeting Minutes**

Adoption of Agenda

A request was made to add the report on the Internet Discussion Group pilot test. Copies of a prototype EDM communications scorecard were distributed, and a request was made to add this item to the agenda.

The agenda was unanimously adopted with the above modifications.

Introductions

Chris Phillips	Columbia Gas Transmission
Steve Hinton	Transcapacity
Mark Hooper	NrG
Lyle Schenher	NrG
Andy Sicignano	Enron Capital and Trade Resources
Stan Thomas	MidCon/NGPL
John Tsucalas	Enron
Susan Croley	Duke Energy
Jim Vander Noot	El Paso Energy
Geoff Wills	Sabre

Adoption of Minutes

Changes and clarification requested by Steve Hinton of TransCapacity regarding the discussion of request #R97104 and the vote on 2 min vs. 5 min for minimum retry interval. Steve will submit verbiage for review and acceptance vote at next FTTF meeting.

Leigh Spangler of Latitude Technologies requested that the description of the assignment for "Notification - Outages" be restated for clarification. He will be conducting general research, but will not issue a general survey of industry practices.

Review Implementation Status

John Tsucalas of EDS indicated that his company has observed a substantial increase in interest in EDM in the last few months and suggested that additional and revised informational materials be created for new users to supplement the EDM Standards Manual. At present there is no general document or white paper that describes what EDM is, why the industry has adopted those standards, and how companies will benefit by adopting this technology.

A concern was voiced about implementation problems caused by a literal interpretation of the EDM Standards Manual and the examples presented therein. Specific issues cited were:

- Assuming a specific length expected for the boundary string used for parsing the multipart form.
- Assuming that only one x12 document will be contained within an EDM transmission.

John suggested that the FTTF undertake a structured review of existing standards and documentation to be scheduled following Internet Look And Feel workload. Lyle Schenher of NRG Information Services noted the desirability of completing this task for the July 31, 1998 publication date. It was agreed that this item would be placed on the March 1998 agenda.

Discussion continued on the drafting of a promotional/general information white paper. This document should be a high-level, introductory explanation of EDM and its business benefit. It was suggested that we involve the technical press as consultants and/or authors. The purpose is to describe and promote EDM methodology and approach. Susan Croley suggested that we revisit this item with Rae McQuade, GISB Director to obtain her guidance and direction on this matter.

A question arose as to whether would be value in a service to certify EDM implementations. Veteran FTTF participants added that the question has come up in previous FTTF meetings and EDM Primer classes. On those occasions, it was asked whether GISB would be willing to provide for such a service. Participants added that GISB, being voluntary, does not have a need to measure compliance. Further comments indicated that this process would have a questionable benefit for the companies implementing such EDM sites given the amount of work involved and cost expended to receive such certification.

Review 11/4-5/97 Internet Look and Feel Task Force Meeting

Susan Croley presented overview of the new framework for the Internet Look and Feel work that was approved on November 4-5. FTTF has received two assignments as a result of that meeting:

1. Determine and publish the alternative ways of ensuring that a Service Provider name remain visible in the upper 1/3 of the screen display at all times (paraphrased).
2. Set minimal and optimal technical characteristics for developers and users of the Informational Postings (paraphrased).

Discussion of these items was added to the end of this meeting's agenda.

Site Management / Procedures for Normal Operations

DNS Cache Refresh

Susan Croley and Lyle Schenher reported the results of their research on the typical operation of DNS. Although the actual values can be dependent on the type of firewall a company uses, it is typical to refresh the DNS cache on an hourly basis. Some systems will clear the cache every 15 minutes. It was pointed out that a lot may depend on how a company interacts with their Internet Service Provider as some ISP's refresh their DNS cache as infrequently once a week. This could require a company to call its ISP to request a refresh when a DNS change is made on their site. A user can vary the Time To Live (TTL) on his DNS server entries; that TTL should propagate across the Internet and let entries expire more frequently.

A question was raised as to why an EDM implementer needed this addressed as a standard in the first place. Was it rooted from experiences with a trading partner that was simply changing their IP address with an inordinate frequency?

A suggestion was made that this is more a fallback/recovery issue and should be addressed under that heading, however the sense of the room confirmed that this issue should be covered as an aspect of normal operating procedures. Work product from this discussion should become a part of the implementation guide

A proposal was entered that this documentation should be phrased as a guideline and a disclaimer should be added regarding what may or may not be controllable by the user. Lyle Schenher and Mark Hooper, both of NrG Information Services will prepare a draft for presentation at the next meeting.

Review of draft request for standard on EDM posting retries

A wording change was proposed to "attempting a new HTTP connection," since the retry scenario presupposes the failure of the previous attempt to connect.

There followed a discussion of timeframe and impact on 15-minute deadline. The objective is to minimize the ability of transient errors to result in a failure of an EDM "unit of work." TransCapacity stated that

experience has shown that a 2-minute retry works flawlessly in their environment. The question was asked: if 2 minutes works well, would a shorter time work, too? TransCapacity said that their experience has been that trading partners using 30 seconds have had problems.

A proposal was entered that testing be conducted with specific time intervals. One minute was selected as a starting point for the test. TransCapacity and NrG will test and provide information about adequacy of one minute. One month's performance statistics will be captured and reviewed. Further testing beyond that review may be required.

John Tsucalas and Susan Croley will draft scenarios and supporting documentation on retries.

Internet Discussion Groups:

Jim Vander Noot presented the draft report on the pilot test and opened the floor for discussion. The task force agreed that the recommendations were appropriate in light of the test experience. The discussion then turned to proposals for incorporating discussion groups into the task force process. One approach would be to list "Discussion Group" as an agenda item for task force meetings. This would increase motivation to use the Internet-based forum. At the meeting, a summary of Discussion Group conversations would be added as minutes or attachment to minutes. Sometimes people spend time participating in a meeting with an interest in only one topic to offer their comments. By using the discussion group to register those comments, those persons would be able to express their opinions without having to wait through the rest of an agenda in which they have no interest.

It was suggested that some topics requiring much research and input-gathering become agenda items specifically slated for discussion groups to gather input and show examples, though decisions made by the task force on these items would be made in the scheduled teleconferences and in-person meetings. The FTTF will test this by using the Internet forum first to gather input for strawman Internet Look and Feel III.C. "minimal and optimal technical characteristics" and later to conduct a structured review of EDM Standards Manual. Items appropriate for consideration under the discussion groups would be those substantial pieces of work that are expected to be spread over more than one meeting. Following the agreement that the FTTF would test this approach, the draft report title was changed from "Preliminary Report" to "Interim Report," and information about the FTTF's projected testing was included.

Survey on Backup URLs

Concern was expressed about the anonymity of participants and the decision was made to request, but not require, company and segment information on the survey, but publish only summary results. Several additional questions were proposed and accepted, including the number of EDM transactions and the number of trading partners. Jim Vander Noot will circulate the revised version and post on the GISB site for review for one week.

Scheduled Downtime

Leigh Spangler presented a draft standards proposal covering scheduled downtime. A motion to change "weekly" to "regularly scheduled" was entered and unanimously approved. It was agreed to add "The downtime window should be communicated to all trading partners and posted on the information Internet site" and to change wording to "designated EDM sites."

The proposed request for standard reads as follows:

All designated EDM sites should have a regularly scheduled period of EDM system downtime (the "downtime window"). The downtime window should occur at a time of minimal business activity. The downtime window should be communicated to all trading partners.

Moved by Geoff Wills seconded by Leigh Spangler (Approved: 8 in favor, 1 opposed)

TransCapacity objected that this should be submitted by the business process groups and requested that the minutes reflect their objection.

7. Diagnostics and Troubleshooting

This item was requested by and assigned to Richard Hamilton at Williams. It was tabled until he can be present for the discussion.

8. Alternative means of communications & outage handling

Alternative means of Electronic Communication to be used in the event of a EDM failure as defined by standard 4.3.13

The discussion covered the following points:

1. There should be secondary mechanism, but perhaps we shouldn't specify one particular mechanism.
2. GISB could conduct a survey of scenarios and practices and come up with a list of alternatives, to be published in the implementation guide.
3. There is an advantage to having a single preferred standard, versus having to support a different approach for every trading partner.

There was a general consensus on the desirability of formulating a single mechanism. It might be advisable start with a list of alternatives, but then get it down to one so that there is an observable benefit. In order to achieve the desired response from GISB, this request should be sponsored by a company and request driven by customer needs. It was suggested this become a discussion group topic for gathering information on alternatives.

Draft of revisions to EDM Standards Manual on how error notification is used.

Tabled until Williams can present.

Review research on methods available and used for notification of EDM outages.

Tabled until Williams can present.

EDM Scorecard

John Tsucalas of EDS presented a draft proposal for an EDM Scorecard (attached as work paper). A suggestion was made that "Percent Successful" be reported instead of "Failed Percent" to lend a positive tone to the scorecard. A question arose regarding ways to protect anonymity of sites and yet correlate senders to receivers. The task force agreed that the desired qualitative analysis must be founded on hard facts which should be included in the report and that the report should limit the statistics to production transactions between production sites.

Clarification was requested as to how this item came to appear on the agenda. The response was that companies are being asked by management to evaluate the reliability of the internet since the industry is consider moving critical business systems to the Web. Without these statistics, we cannot accurately assess this.

Sense of the room indicated agreement on the desirability of collecting performance and trending information. The approach will be for each participating company to research the following items internally: 1) what concerns do companies have about the disclosure of this information. 2) What would be required of a third party to achieve a comfort level? Responses will be discussed at next meeting.

National Registry of Capacity Rights expressed their willingness to collect and summarize this information anonymously if we proceeded with the gathering and analysis of this information.

Prioritization of new requests for FTTF

1. Determine and publish the alternative ways of ensuring that a Service Provider name remain visible in the upper 1/3 of the screen display at all times.

Jim Vander Noot will draft and circulate a matrix showing possible approaches and results to begin discussion on the topic and as a prototype for the format used for the final FTTF report to Internet "Look and Feel" Team.

2. Set minimal and optimal technical characteristics for developers and users of the Informational Postings.

All participants should contribute specifications and further input for this issue. FTTF will collect this input through the Internet discussion groups, and the discussion group results will be on the agenda for the next FTTF meeting.

Summarize Assignments

Assignments listed above were reviewed and confirmed.

Schedule and Requirements for next Meeting

Susan Croley will select a mid-December date in consultation with the GISB office.