

# Communicating from the Woods

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It is fascinating to watch how the revolution in communication between businesses and between businesses and customers is changing business logistics and customer relationships. In particular, the rapid growth of internet-based communication, whether business to business or business to customer, has enhanced our ability to communicate, advertise, process orders, and trade. While most people are familiar with email and web browsers, there are less well known uses of the internet that are also expanding. These changes include the forest sector and cover everything from growing forests, and the equipment and materials to grow them, to finished products to final customers in international markets, so it is important that we understand what they are and how they might affect us.

A number of companies have become involved in business to business trading systems. These types of systems bring together buyers and sellers internationally in a secure 'virtual trading room' that allows posting of both buy and sell orders. Other companies, like the New Zealand based forestmarkets.com, provide an internet-based listing service that allows national and global access to potential buyers of forests. Still other companies have developed on-line ordering or account management systems.

This issue of the Journal highlights some of these changes, with articles covering trends in Logistics and

use of the Internet to promote opportunities in the forest sector. Martyn McColgan's article on the role of regional ports underlines the need for good communications among our new, growing centres of forest development.

The NZIF's new look website (<http://www.fore.canterbury.ac.nz/nzif/home.html>) is also profiled. Similar to other professional forestry organisations like the Society of American Foresters and the Canadian Institute of Forestry, the NZIF is anticipating that the Internet will become an important means for the Institute to communicate among members and to promote itself.

However, not all communication can be done over the wire, and there are still many times when nothing replaces face-to-face contact. The recent National Forest Industries Conference, which brought together politicians and industry leaders, was a good example of this. Given the political events some parts of the forest sector have gone through in recent months and the looming potential of the forest sector (see the NEFD update in this issue of the Journal) the sector needs to look at the balance between the impersonal efficiency of internet-based communication, and the expensive and time-consuming nature of face-to-face communication. For the NZIF I can imagine the potential for its website to provide easier access for members to what is going on, but it can only ultimately provide a stimulus for becoming involved face-to-face.

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