

# Blogs, Wikis and Workspaces

Best Practices Survey / June 2006

Survey Coordination:



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## Executive Summary

In June 2006, Jim Cashel (Forum One Communications) sent approximately 200 invitations to participate in a research circle involving blogs, wikis and workspaces. We received 72 completed surveys. Participating organizations ranged from small to very large, with approximately two thirds representing non-commercial and educational groups, the balance representing commercial groups.

The survey results contain a great deal of collective experience and advice on blogs, wikis, and workspaces. We provide full text results -- which admittedly require a bit of effort to comb through -- but the collective wisdom of 72 experienced practitioners is valuable.

A few key findings stand out. With respect to blogs:

- 60% of respondents run blogs, with most organizations running a handful (2-5);
- They are predominantly used for external audiences;
- Respondents cite a wide variety of reasons for using blogs, most pivoting around rapid responsiveness, marketing, and giving the organization a voice;
- The principal challenge in running blogs is committing appropriate staff time to keep sites current;
- A number of platforms are mentioned, with Typepad and Wordpress being particularly well regarded;

With respect to wikis:

- 27% of respondents run wikis, with most organizations running only 1;
- Wikis are used predominantly for internal consumption;
- Socialtext is most frequently mentioned as the platform of choice.

With respect to workspaces:

- 52% of respondents run workspaces, with most running multiple instances (and 12% running more than 25 instances);
- Workspaces are used for both internal and private (extranet) consumption;
- Basecamp and ProjectSpaces are platforms mentioned in favorable terms.

With respect to all three technologies -- blogs, wikis, and workspaces -- respondents offered useful advice for groups launching these technologies (on pages 11, 17 and 23 respectively).



We'd like to thank respondents for their participation. We find compilations like this extremely useful and hope you do to. We plan to do several more this year. Feel free to contact me with suggested topics.

We sponsor periodic meetings to discuss these topics. Stay abreast of our schedule at the Online Community Report site <http://www.OnlinecommunityReport.com> .

Best regards,

Jim Cashel  
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#### About Forum One Communications

Forum One Communications <<http://www.ForumOne.com>> is a web strategy and communications firm which assists organizations in using new technologies to enhance communications and collaboration. Services include communications strategy; information architecture; user interface issues; graphics design, web development and programming; audience analysis; web marketing; and web metrics work. For further information see our website or drop Jim Cashel a note [Cashel@ForumOne.com](mailto:Cashel@ForumOne.com) .

## Full Survey Results

### Questions 1-4:

Name, Organization, E-mail Address

[responses suppressed]

## Blog Information

### Question 5:

Does your organization run any blogs?

|     |     |
|-----|-----|
| Yes | 60% |
| No  | 40% |

### Question 6:

How many blogs does your organization run?

|      |     |
|------|-----|
| 1    | 24% |
| 2-5  | 58% |
| 6-10 | 12% |
| > 10 | 6%  |

### Question 7:

Does your organization provide blogs for (check all that apply):

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Internal (staff) consumption | 24% |
| Private external consumption | 15% |
| Public consumption           | 97% |

**Question 8:**

What are the principal advantages to your organization for running blogs?

1) Provide a single source for notifying the public about everything going on with the organization. 2) Gain the network effect by linking to other blogs, and having them link to us.

1) Ability to comment quickly and at low cost on current news topics related to our areas of activity 2) Increased visibility for our staff among expert audiences 3) Improved visibility in search engine results due to frequent updates and increased in and out links.

1) Provide quick updates on news items to the public 2) Give members of our audience a voice

1. Keep our thinking 'open'. 2. Easy content publishing for non-technical staff. 3. Keeping notes and live connection to members.

A public presence. In a world where the new advertising is content it seems to me a blog is a 21st Century business card. It is essential to participate in conversations on topics in which we claim expertise.

A quick way to get information/news out to people as it becomes available, and interaction with our readership

Ability to communicate fast and efficiently across all offices nation wide. Ability to also take materials generated internally and posting them externally without a lot of time loss.

Additional ways to facilitate communication. News coming from a variety of voices.

Apart from our company running a 'blogging site', we engage with our users online. XX is very open about our business practices, upcoming technology, and understanding our customer's needs. We participate in discussions on with our members on how to make XX a better place. Our CEO does live chats with our members. Many of our employees post articles, respond to user comments and run and participate in groups on XX.

Attracts more readers. Allows us to engage and retain customers without writing long articles.

Blogs can be a cost- and time-effective way to allow frequent updates to a site. RSS feeds (not strictly a blog feature, but...) allow content from one site to be used in different ways on other sites.

Community content, information gathering and feedback loops, major development announcements and information sharing with the general public and press.

Ease of information exchange

Easy knowledge sharing, invitation to think together with readers/commenters, good visibility

Easy to update and post articles, get comments

Easy way to try to build new audiences, fundraising, brand awareness

Gets out opinions and analyses in easy-to-write, easy-to-read format

Giving prospective clients the ability to understand how we think. Also, to keep the site 'live' and announce news.

I run blogs for other companies. They use the space to promote their expertise and/or share information with constituents on a given topic. We have found that blogs do well with search engines and can be a great 'unbiased' promotional tool.

I think blogs are collectively viewed as a complement to more traditional academic research. Blogs allow researchers to keep up with current events, reaching out to non-academics, and synthesizing information. Blogs also allow researchers to link to relevant online academic research to provide further, more in-depth context for readers. Blogs can open new readership markets and think tank constituencies.

Inexpensive, effective way of publishing up to date content and encouraging participation within our online community

Information sharing

Interact with our subscribers on a more personalized level.

It's a good way to organize material

Marketing. raising awareness.

Quick reaction to news as it relates to our organization. Assisting in establishing XXX as a thought leader on specific topics. Lastly, expanding the debate in the International Development community.

Telling our story. connecting with our community. highlighting news and content, linked to our database. i think our use of blogs and structured data may be fairly unique.

They provide a more spontaneous way for people to contribute content, and a means for reader feedback.

Thought leadership, marketing, staff participation.

To provide additional material to our readers and drive traffic to our Web site.

We reach the media

**Question 9:**

What are the principal costs / problems to your organization for running blogs?

Costs were just getting it set up. The only problem is finding time to consistently post.

**COSTS:** - Training new blogger candidates - Staff time (we need bloggers + editors to review posts) - Other lost opportunities (will blog returns really justify the costs?)  
**PROBLEMS:** - Learning the 'voice,' the techniques for wide distribution, and the conversational habit (vs the publishing habit). - Identifying good blogger candidates (the new medium makes new stars, and not all stars of other media make the cut in the new). - Integration with other media.

Finding time to post and maximize the blog's potential.

Getting the software installed. Tried the Unix version first but then installed on Windows and it was much easier.

Initial set up costs (fairly minor for us); ongoing training and coaching of staff. No major problems

It often becomes a challenge to integrate the blog into the rest of the web site. If they're not updated frequently blogs quickly look abandoned.

It's linked into a larger development budget; we've spent about \$50k so far.

It's tricky to provide access for multiple people to 'run' the blogs ...

Keeping a single voice among multiple contributors.

Keeping them current

Keeping up interesting content without being a major time burden

Lack of time on the part of staff

Limiting bad news; controversy

Minimal costs; license for movable type; minor development costs. Problems: Finding suitable compelling writers who understand the world of blogging.

Principal cost is labor. Principal problem is engaging other members of the organization (outside of the blog manager and one or two others) to post.

Since we are essentially a blogging company, our costs wouldn't be an apples to apples comparison to other organizations taking this survey. As far as problems, opening yourself up to the community does have its challenges. If we miss a key date, the site goes down, or our functionality doesn't work the way our members want it to, then we definitely hear about it. We want to communicate with our members and meet their needs but sometimes we make business decisions (e.g., recruiting commercial organizations like Match.com to put content on our site) that aren't popular with our members and have to walk the line between defending ourselves and telling our users it's really none of their business. Having a blog opens you up to public criticism for all the world to see. No longer are custom complaints a private two-way conversation between the customer and a customer support rep.

Some concern about the format of blogs (i.e.: is it the best way for people to interact? Because it often comes across as more of a publication (one to many) than a discussion (many to many)) hardly any cost issues, although we are looking at ways to integrate blogs that people have already written into a central platform and still enable commenting (rather than just RSS aggregation)

Spam was a major burden that we may have recently fixed, but I'm sure it keeps people away sometimes as well.

Staff time

Staff time and maintenance. Encouraging a wide range of staff to submit postings.

Staff time to keep it updated. It's difficult to attract outside writers to post content unless we pay them.

Staff time to research trends, interview experts, etc. Also staff time to run the blog.

Staff time.

Staff time. Finding the time to feed information to a blog has been challenging. Even so, we would like to look at starting more blogs.

The current website is not suited well for interactive media. The offline / traditional mindset of older researchers and administrators seem to be reluctant to embracing new technologies. Sometimes blogs are viewed as cheapening scholarship. To the contrary, I see blogs and other web social applications as opportunities to democratize scholarship, providing more 'friendly' outlets for disseminating research findings. I think the web's social applications (blogs, social networks, tagging/folksonomy) can create market dynamics to research fields, and democratize academia.. hope that makes sense.

The disparity in writing skills from staff to staff, assuring that we are preserving our image and message, measuring impact within our community.

The only problem we have faced so far is allowing comments on our corporate blog - spamming is the key issue.

Time

Time to maintain.

Time, content approval, executive understanding

We have a very detailed and demanding editing, vetting and fact-checking process for 'normal' print and web content. As blogging requires more 'immediacy', this puts a strain on our internal processes to ensure the message is of a consistent high level of quality.

**Questions 10 - 13:**

Blog platforms, strengths, weaknesses, and recommend to others?

| Platform    | Strengths  | Weaknesses   | Recommend? |
|-------------|--|--|------------|
| Blogger.com | Very easy for everyone - can provide a separation between organization and blog if we use the blogger.com address. | Not necessarily seamless to end users when we don't want to separate ourselves from our blog | Yes        |

| Platform    | Strengths   | Weaknesses   | Recommend? |
|-------------|---|--|------------|
| Blogger.com | Easy to set up the basics, accessible from anywhere.  | No categories, customizing becomes a steep learning curve, lately lots of down time.   | Yes        |
| Blogger.com | It's free and easy to get started   | Not integrated w/our systems   | Maybe      |
| Blogger.com | By using blogger we eliminate the need to provide IT support for bloggers, it's extremely simple, and if a person has a blog already there's no need change anything.   | Seems a little disconnected, not always great to rely on third party solutions that can be subject to change   | Maybe      |
| Custom      | The fact that users don't have the stress of having their own isolated blog that they have to publish to every day. A blogging community is better for people who want to engage with a variety of people on a variety of topics. Plus, the community helps determine the best content. It's tough for individuals who have their own blogs to get noticed and attract and maintain an audience. For the reader, it is tough to know how reputable a blogger is and difficult to find the best content. | We still don't have all the bells and whistles of some blogs but we are continuing to launch new functionality. I'm looking forward to RSS feeds and the ability to include video. | Yes        |
| Custom      | It is quite simple.   | It is quite simple, without a lot of the customization features found in standard blogging tools.  | No         |
| Custom      | Very extensible. Integrated with the rest of website (important for linking, metadata, etc.)  | Doesn't take advantage of improvements in the wild. All improvements (e.g. comments, technorati ping) have to be coded in.   | No         |

| Platform              | Strengths   | Weaknesses  | Recommend? |
|-----------------------|---|---|------------|
| Drupal                | Wordpress and typepad are the favorites in our office. Wordpress is know to be clunky and not quite there. With Typepad concerns are around it going down and not functioning properly. |   | Yes        |
| Drupal                | Nice to have it integrated with the rest of your web site.  | Pretty basic functionality.   | Maybe      |
| Movable Type          | It's relatively easy to use   |   | Yes        |
| Movable Type          | Easy to use ...   | It's tricky to provide access for multiple people to 'run' the blogs ...  | Yes        |
| Movable Type          | Allows for customization of look/feel.  | It's cumbersome; often requires a developer to make changes.  | No         |
| Movable Type          | Being able to run multiple blogs from one login   | Almost everything   | No         |
| Movable Type          | Easy to use   |   | Maybe      |
| Movable Type          | Customizable, easy to integrate with our CMS.   | Formerly too much spam  | Maybe      |
| Movable Type          | It's still very new to us and I don't have much to compare it with. One feature I like is being able to save drafts and scheduling posts.   | Unsure if we've configured the tagging feature correctly and need to check out the notification feature too.                  | Maybe      |
| Movable Type          | Convenient interface for interacting with all three blogs.  | A bit daunting in appearance and use for non-HTML savvy staff.  | Maybe      |
| Prospero Technologies | Relatively easy to set up and use.  | Don't know.   | Maybe      |
| Scoop                 | Many features, including personal diaries and reader ranking of comments, that we haven't yet built out.  | It's lack of integration with our main website, including integrated search.  | Yes        |
| Serendipity           | Ease of use, open source, flexible  | Doesn't manage multiple accounts as efficiently as other platforms.   | Yes        |
| Serendipity           | Ease of deployment Cost   | Hard to customize Hard to integrate into a dynamic site Too many features Poor protection out of the box against comment spam | Maybe      |

| Platform  | Strengths   | Weaknesses  | Recommend? |
|-----------|---|---|------------|
| Typepad   | Easy  | Getting at old content<br>..organizing old content usefully.  | Yes        |
| Typepad   | It's very easy to use.  | There is a bit of a time delay between when we complete the post and when it is actually posted on the website. | Yes        |
| Typepad   | Very easy to use  | n/a   | Yes        |
| Typepad   | Easy to use and new functionality and tools are being added. Best addition since I started using is draft mode. | Typelists are limited. You can add a link but copy limited to a rollover.                                       | Yes        |
| Typepad   | Ease of use   | Would like even more flexible features  | Maybe      |
| Wordpress | It's open source. It evolves.   | Some features don't seem to be keeping up with commercial software sometimes.                                   | Yes        |
| Wordpress | It works and fits into the look and feel of our company site (after the designer worked at it, of course)       | No spell checker.   | Yes        |
| Wordpress | Cheap, easy to use, good comment spam filter  | They could have an easier way to markup text in colors, embed photos, format paragraphs, text.                  | Yes        |

**Question 14:**

Your colleague is considering launching a blog in his organization. What advice would you offer?

1. Define your content area and objectives before starting. 2. Understand your organization's policy and expectations of bloggers. 3. If you can't commit an hour a day to your blog, both posting and keeping watch on related blogs and conversations, think carefully before starting. Blogging well is time consuming.

1. Know why you are doing it (there are lots of good reasons and some bad ones) 2. Allocate some regular time to it 3. Practice writing with an authentic voice 4. Read other blogs 5. You get what you give: Link to others

Assign the job of maintaining it to one person (even if their job is to delegate) and/or hire someone to maintain it.

Be clear about the purpose and audience; have a plan for sustaining frequent postings; read blogs in your chosen topic area first; practice writing snappy headlines and using link/quote/comment format.

Be sure that you have enough resources to keep it going

Be willing to commit the time and resources needed to make it successful. Develop both a content and promotion plan for your blog and make sure you are willing to spend time to engage in the conversation. If you are moderating comments do it persistently so you don't stifle or slow down the conversation. Use negative comments as an opportunity to get your message out there and listen to what your customers have to say.

Budget enough time - a good blog that develops a regular readership will takes several hours a day. \* Develop a policy that sets boundaries and lets people know what it's ok to post.

Consider how you're going to market it and how easily it can be found by visitors to the organization's website.

Consider using technology that allows you to grow into features you might not think you want/need now, and be sure that you have an HR plan for creating content.

Define the overarching theme for any blogs that come from within an organization, include length per word and appropriate content expectations, as well as any style, graphic or presentation considerations. While it is important to define the boundaries, it helps to take also identify the areas where individuals have more creative freedom. Establish an editorial chain of command, where key staff have an opportunity to verify and approve content before it goes live. Try to analyze pending blog entries for weak language or information that can be misconstrued or unclear to the reader. Be prepared to address user reactions to the information posted in your blog, and provide a space for that specific purpose and monitor and respond to it with regularity- if only to say 'That's a good point, I'll look into your concern.'

Do it. think of it as open notes. less formal and more personal.

Don't say anything you would be ashamed of seeing in the New York Times the next morning. (Unless, of course, you're Anne Coulter)

Don't start a blog so that you can have a blog. Start a blog because you have an audience that's interested in frequent, short(-ish) dispatches from your organization. That said, just try it -- starting a blog is too easy to make a big deal of it.

Go for it. But make it worthwhile. Focus on a topic that you are passionate about and would hold forth on in any case. That inspires you to keep it up to date. Don't blog for blogging's sake. You'll stop after a month like nearly everyone else.

Keep it fresh. Keep it informal. Provide links to outside resources.

Know who your target audience is. know what larger messages you will convey. know you can keep it up in a timely way.

Know your audience. Know what you want to convey. Know that it's not a personal blog and you need to be careful to balance your expressive needs and wants with what's best for you and the organization.

Make sure there is a plan for getting sufficient interesting content

Make sure you have something to say! Develop a strong voice. Participate in the community by commenting on others' blogs. Update frequently.

Make sure you have wiggle room and your boss protecting you!

Make sure you're committed to keeping it current.

May need to experiment to find the right purpose -- scope & audience.

Plan for daily management and run an internal seminar on the what, how, and why of blogging. Also, make sure to put the SPAM filters on.

Seek out a web strategy firm that can maximize the usability and readability for the blog. Conduct an audience analysis for the blog's target group... maybe after the initial months of outreach and blogging? Understand what the audience's interests are and see how well those interests match up with the blog's motivations and goals.

Sitting down with a group of people and asking some important questions: What audience is the blog targeting? Who will feed information to the blog? How often will it be updated? What potential ethical or logistic problems will the blog create?

Start by identifying and participating in other leading blogs in your topic area. - Don't start your own until you've got the big picture in your area and have defined a starter-niche, a point of view. - Identify bloggers + backups + support staff. -

Think most about the blogger, trying to identify someone excited by the topic, knowledgeable, comfortable with the web, and who can write well.

Think through exactly what you want out of it.

To create an editorial calendar of topics to blog about when inspiration does not strike and to make sure this coordinates with the marketing teams efforts.

Try a free solution first and make sure you can actually keep the content up to date, there's far too many dead blogs out there.

Understand the benefits and risks. have an open mind.

## Wiki Information

**Question 15:**

Does your organization run any wikis?

|     |     |
|-----|-----|
| Yes | 27% |
| No  | 73% |

**Question 16:**

How many wikis does your organization run?

|     |     |
|-----|-----|
| 1   | 60% |
| 2-5 | 33% |
| > 5 | 7%  |

**Question 17:**

Does your organization provide wikis for (check all that apply):

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Internal (staff) consumption | 87% |
| Private external consumption | 33% |
| Public consumption           | 27% |

**Question 18:**

For what purposes does your organization run wikis?

For organizing and documenting our work. For storing and sharing files.

Collaboration of people that attended an event. Wiki for staff support and development team. We are considering opening one for our members to share information with each other.

Collaboration, resource documentation, co-editing

Conferences, internal directories, feedback on development projects.

Internal collaboration

It is a place to post HR information, press releases, all information regarding our product planning and releases.

Note-taking

Organizing conferences

Project management, research projects. will use them as adjunct to db and blogs. Searching for a platform for that.

Share information with others. Work collaboratively. Keep information, tools, publications in a format that is easy to search and retrieve.

Sharing content.

To track bugs and feature requests in new applications.

Tracking internal processes, new hires, policy changes, staff resources.

We tried to use one to support a learning group

We're trying to use wikis more (rather than emailing word documents back and forth) for things where staff members collaborate (i.e.: board docs, proposals etc.)

**Questions 19 - 22:**

Wiki platforms, strengths, weaknesses, and recommend to others?

| Platform   | Strengths  | Weaknesses  | Recommend? |
|------------|--|---|------------|
| Confluence | Flexible, easy to use, easy to configure   |   | Yes        |
| Daisy      | It is a great place to keep company information. I haven't published to it. I just use it to retrieve information. I also like that it has a table of contents (left nav bar). One problem I've always had with SocialText is being able to see everything that is in there. | I don't use it enough to have any dislikes              | Yes        |
| Mediawiki  | Cost   |   | Yes        |
| Mediawiki  | Pretty easy  | Getting information off the wiki into formal documents. | Maybe      |

| Platform   | Strengths   | Weaknesses  | Recommend? |
|--|---|---|------------|
| Not Sure   | Very easy to enter information.   | Not as clear on easy ways to sort entered information.  | Maybe      |
| SeedWiki   | nothing   | Never could get 'normal' people to figure out how to make it work .. not reliable   | No         |
| Socialtext   | Easy to use   | Formatting is a challenge sometimes   | Yes        |
| Socialtext   | Haven't used others, so can't compare. Seems easy to invite users, relatively straightforward to use. | This may be true of all wikis: * It's hard to create a flexible, enduring structure from the get-go, and it's hard (on users) to change the structure once you've started using the wiki. * Users say it's ugly.  | Yes        |
| Socialtext   | Socialtext is powerful, open source platforms seems to work fine.                                     | Appearance on all of them is bad (and intimidating to many). wysiwyg editors are still not great.   | Yes        |
| Socialtext   | Simple. Cheap.  | Intimidating for non-technical users.   | Maybe      |
| Socialtext   | The people  | It does not seem to be keeping up in developing new features.   | Maybe      |
| Socialtext   | Basic and industry known.   | Finding what's been posted especially files that have been uploaded. Perhaps my inexperience but while a wiki exists for collaboration it doesn't seem easy to establish a sense of community within the wiki, certainly compared to facilitating a message board that is my benchmark. |            |
| Varies - wikicities, pbwiki, writely, writeboard, socialtext, media wiki | Most of them are pretty easy to use   | Some have good email notifications and tools to prevent overwriting by two people at the same time. I don't like it when these features are missing   | Yes        |

| Platform | Strengths               | Weaknesses  | Recommend? |
|----------|-------------------------|---|------------|
| Writely  | Simple, free, effective | Nothing (well .... except that they were bought by google so now new members can't sign up... lol) ;) | Yes        |

**Question 23:**  
 What advice would you offer to a colleague launching a wiki within his organization?

1. Know why you are using it 2. Start small and simple 3. Work with your team on process 4. Think iterations

As for blogs. Be clear on objectives and positioning. Ensure time for managing to accomplish wiki goals.

Define purpose of wiki up front -- and clear objectives for its use. Train staff to use it and check in with them regularly to see if they need help. Share wiki usage statistics.

Develop an organizational scheme -- wikis can quickly become unruly.

Don't expect people to use wiki' just because they're there, it might take some heavy persuasion.

Encourage a culture of contribution and ownership, top to bottom.

Good for use with tech-savvy groups that already know each other.

Look at all the alternatives: pbwiki, social text, etc.

Look at newer platforms.

Not ready for prime time

Provide a few guidelines for folks that you expect to post to the wiki. Designate one person to track and complete tasks (if being used for software development).

Provide some training to users in your organization and involve all departments in using the wiki. It works well for us because whenever you ask a question, you usually hear, 'It's on the wiki'. After any meeting people say, 'I'll post the presentation on the wiki.' So it has been reinforced that this is the place to go for company information.

Spend enough time planning out how you will use it and organize it.

Take your time and slowly let it develop - don't expect immediate returns - people need to get used to collaborating on the web.

## Workspace Information

**Question 24:**

Does your organization run any workspaces?

|     |     |
|-----|-----|
| Yes | 52% |
| No  | 48% |

**Question 25:**

How many workspaces does your organization run?

|       |     |
|-------|-----|
| 1     | 25% |
| 2-10  | 42% |
| 11-25 | 21% |
| > 25  | 12% |

**Question 26:**

Does your organization provide wikis for (check all that apply):

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Internal (staff) consumption | 89% |
| Private external consumption | 74% |
| Public consumption           | 11% |

**Question 27:**

For what purposes does your organization run workspaces?

- Coordination with remote staff.
- Document sharing
- Document sharing/versioning, notifications, reference
- External working groups; have been unable to get staff to use them for internal project management and publications
- In order to unite disparate working group members and tracking task progress.
- Intranet teams spaces with and for clients educational activities
- Long-term projects involving multi-organizations spread out nationally.

Lotus Notes for all corporate e-mail; various projects also use collaboration software for development of reports and other documents

Mostly for internal file sharing. One external workspace for a project.

Multi-stakeholder projects involving 2 or more discrete companies/organizations.

Our Director of Research has created a workspace for people working on stateless issues to share documents and information.

Post-event discussions, maintaining ties.

Private committee collaborations, internal working groups

Project coordination Communities of Practice Learning Play

Project delivery of client engagements; some internal collaboration on capability development.

Project management

Project management

Project management and communications

Project management tracking and collaboration; file management and sharing (in development).

Project management, of our software/site development.

Remote office file sharing and project management

Share docs and task lists.

Sharing documents, information

To organize decentralized staff/consultants

To share news, information and announcements about organizational events such as workgroup meetings or celebrations.

We have a group on XX to communicate directly with our users on how to make XX a better place. I run a group for group owners where we share best practices and tips for running your own group on XX. Both of those groups are open to anybody who wants to join. We also have a private company group where we discuss company issues and product-related issues. A lot of times, we will cross-publish content to all of these groups. We also run some user-groups on XX for broad topic areas like movies or music. Our goal here is to build a group and work with movie or music partner companies to provide and promote their content.

Working group coordination, sharing files.

**Questions 28 - 31:**

Workspace platforms, strengths, weaknesses, and recommend to others?

| Platform                                  | Strengths  | Weaknesses  | Recommend? |
|---|--|---|------------|
| Basecamp                                  | Alerts work fine. it's easy to find things.  | Difficult to embed images,  | Yes        |
| Basecamp                                  | Ability to share, post files, keep communications about a particular project in one place  | Doesn't allow file folders (each file has to be uploaded and stored discretely)           | Yes        |
| Basecamp                                  | Creates a project history and location for all communications and milestones.  | Some people won't use any tool you give them.   | Yes        |
| Basecamp                                  | Basecamp is nice.  | The way it doesn't integrate with our shared drive or calendar in the office              | Yes        |
| Basecamp.                                 | It is very intuitive. It also easily provides ways to save previous versions of documents.   | Can't think of any negatives.   | Yes        |
| Basecamp.<br>FilesAnywhere.               | Easy to use. Very good permissions subsystem.  | Front end can be flaky. Bandwidth/capacity on their side seems to be a problem sometimes. | Yes        |
| Caucus (Group<br>Jazz<br>implementations) | - Very flexible - can include other 3rd party products in an integrated way - very easy for users, get up and going right away - can manage large numbers of spaces at once easily |   | Yes        |

| Platform  | Strengths  | Weaknesses   | Recommend? |
|---|--|--|------------|
| Custom  | Our group functionality allows organizations to set up their own branded space on XX. Groups can be open or closed, moderated or unmoderated. I like that we use a blog format (as opposed to a message board format) and that all content (articles, images) and groups are tagged. A cool feature is the ability to cross-publish content so that multiple groups can benefit from the same article and people can find the content and join in the conversation in a lot of different ways. | We are currently in version 1.0 of our groups product. As product manager for groups, I have a lot of functionality in the pipeline that I would like to see released (e.g., RSS feeds). Our groups product will continue to get better as we roll out new features throughout the year. | Yes        |
| Plumtree  | too new to tell  | too new to tell  | Maybe      |
| ProjectSpaces                                     | Ease of use, accountability is confers on a project.   | All products don't integrated closely with intranets.  | Yes        |
| ProjectSpaces                                     | Ease of use adaptability knowledge management  | I find the calendar function a bit tedious.  | Yes        |
| ProjectSpaces                                     | Simple interface, easy to navigate, short learning curve.  | No RSS, log in address.  | Yes        |
| SharePoint  | Ease of use  | Slow, inflexible, heavy  | Maybe      |
| Sharepoint is used by a few people here, I'm told | Don't know - haven't used it myself  | No master plan for familiarizing people with the available software  | Maybe      |

| Platform  | Strengths  | Weaknesses   | Recommend? |
|---|--|--|------------|
| Sharepoint.   | Easy to customize some of the major features--like document libraries. Versioning and check-out control.     | Not easy for regular site users to customize some of the site structures. This is reserved to the site admin, which often is not the project manager for the particular use of the workspace.  | Maybe      |
| SharePoint; some eRoom use.   | Very little  | Very much behind the times. No Currently no internal standard across the segments created by country to country or other regional differences in our Firm. No ability to collaborate in development of material (example: desire to create a research publication - must create this via email or eRoom - no real time collaborative mechanism to view and edit) | No         |
| We've tried several but found none that work well - intravets.net was the one we've liked best. | Generally they are good for archiving materials - especially good when used to organize for an annual event. | Often clunky to use - very often we resort to email because board members won't use other tools  | No         |
| Yahoo groups  | Convenient way of sharing documents, information, pictures, chatting, etc                                    | Nothing but would like to switch to google groups because it's more user friendly  | Maybe      |
| Yahoo groups  | Free   | I find Yahoo to be difficult to use, but our users don't complain  | Maybe      |

**Question 23:**

What advice would you offer to a colleague launching a workspace within his organization?

Ask people what they want and need - and see if there are existing products that people are using that may be able to do some or all of what needs to be done. Creating something from scratch probably isn't the easiest route to go - but it was a good fit for our organization given some of our specific needs and technological constraints.

Be sure that you understand that it requires a lot of design and management ...

Build in house

Cost points are now so low that aggressive use of workspaces should be a no-brainer.

Ensure that it is as simple as possible and user friendly. I DO NOT like lotus notes.

For people to participate, it has to provide business value or be compelling in some way. Participation needs to start at the top of the organization. Managers need to lead by example. Business processes/culture may need to change so that the workspace becomes the place for particular content and interactions and it becomes engrained that this is where to go to put or view that information. Incentives might also be aligned with knowledge sharing and the workspace is the place where that happens.

Get a few of the staff to 'drink the koolaid' it takes everything public for it to work.

Get a few ringers to get it going

Get feedback from all potential users on what features they need; then use an app that delivers on those needs and doesn't leave a ton of unused functionalities in place. More generally, just make sure that the workspace tool is really needed before asking IT to spend time in development.

I'd use it. i'd make someone in charge of different parts of the process, someone who can tone down the debate.

Make sure everyone involved is committed to maintaining fresh, new content and that you have a plan in place to involve others and to keep it going.

Make sure it fills a need that will support work and workflow; beta test for usability with a small group of regular users (not techies or power users); include management in beta testing; have a fun roll-out event to launch the new software; provide lots of encouragement and feedback

Make sure there is really adequate demand and sufficient returns to justify investing in changing behavior. E-mail for all it's shortcomings may be the easiest solution for many problems.

Needs to be part of organizational change; needs to be a shared commitment to using the new technology!

Once again, I believe selecting a specific point person/manager is a key to success because inevitably there will be questions and some resistance from members. This person should be ready to answer all questions and assist with log-in.

Provide some minimal guidelines for folks that you expect will use the workspace. Simple formats for naming files and rules for what type of info should be shared can make the space productive for all. Little to no structure could cause chaos and could defeat the purpose of the workspace.

Solve a real problem, rather than create (yet another) collaboration zone.

Start with a small project and test first

Test it out first and start small; make sure that the people assigned to use it will actively participate.

Use projectspaces for a year, then modify as appropriate.