

Social Computing in the Enterprise:

Controlling the Creative Beast

Written by:

Leigh Klotz, Senior Software Architect
Xerox DocuShare Business Unit

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As organizations continually seek new ways to increase efficiencies among dispersed teams, social computing tools, such as Weblogs (blogs) and wikis, are moving beyond the public domain to permeate the workplace. A recent survey of IT decision-makers from IDC indicates that more than 40 percent of the organizations polled were already using blogs internally for corporate use.¹

These tools serve as organizing hubs for workgroups to share and disseminate information. For example, engineers are using blogs to communicate product release notes and progress to stakeholders and senior staff. Marketing teams use them to announce upcoming promotional campaigns or new versions of products and new features to their internal divisions, while corporate communications teams often use blogs to make announcements to employees.

For some time, blogs have been associated with an underground image as the technology allows users a certain social equality on the Internet. From the corporate perspective it begs the question: does allowing blogs in-house mean literally opening the door to anarchy in your department? The best and wisest approach is for companies to find ways to harness the power of this technology so that they can use the latest “cool” tools and gain the benefits of promoting social networking. This requires the ability to manage and store organizational mind share without jeopardizing corporate reputation, encouraging inappropriate discussion, or risking exposure of confidential information.

While the technology is being widely adopted in some progressive organizations, the majority of businesses have yet to incorporate social computing tools into their processes. For many, the thought of using blogs and wikis for corporate use can be daunting, raising many questions:

- What is the best way to get started?
- How can we ensure the information stored in wikis and blogs is captured for reuse and saved as corporate knowledge?
- Is there any hope of controlling a technology that is known for its freedom of expression and lack of corporate control?

“Forty percent of organizations are already using blogs internally for corporate use.”

– IDC 2006

¹ IDC, “The Future for Content Applications: A Survey of Market Readiness and Technology Trends,” by Melissa Webster and Geoffrey Bock. IDC report # 34831, Vol. 1, Feb. 2006.

Delving into social computing

For those just getting started, it is best to begin using this technology for a specific project or within a defined workgroup. By starting with a small project, businesses can determine the policies and controls that are most appropriate before rolling these tools out enterprise-wide.

Policies are necessary to help control the technology. However, it is important not to be too restrictive to ensure the tools can be adapted to fit the needs of the various employees and workgroups within the organization. Also, be sure to select a solution to manage the blogs and wikis that is easy to use. Employees will adopt the technology only if it is straightforward and helps them work and communicate more efficiently.

If these criteria are met, users can rapidly see how blogs and wikis can speed and simplify processes – increasing interest in adopting the technology for wider use. When the time is right for an enterprise-wide rollout, encourage, rather than mandate, employees to use the technology and highlight the success of the initial implementation to their co-workers.

In order to use the tools effectively, companies must first understand the purposes of and differences between blogs and wikis:

- Wikis are built by communities to collect ideas in one central place.
- Blogs help build communities through posts about one main idea.

According to the Wikipedia Web site, a wiki (which can stand for “**W**hat **I** **K**now **I**s”) is a type of Web site that allows users to add, remove, or otherwise edit and change most content very quickly and easily, sometimes without the need for registration. Blogs are said to build communities because they provide a place where people can share ideas. This suggests that a corporate best practice would be to use wikis for brainstorming, refining ideas and plans, and blogs for more general networking and information sharing.

Managing the technology

Social computing requires tools to capture, control and manage group interactions.

The following features are essential for software used to manage blogs and wikis within an organization and will help ensure the technology is used appropriately for information sharing and streamlining internal business processes:

- **User access permissions** – Organizations should designate a corporate or workgroup system administrator or moderator to control user access to team blogs. Those granted access can read, post, and provide comments to the blog with the assurance that unwanted participants or lurkers cannot access their information.

“Unleash the collective and improvisational genius of the enterprise by weaving together people, documents and action with social software. The key is how to make it enterprise-ready.”

- John Seely Brown, Author of
“The Social Life of Information”

- **Moderator approval and routing** – The moderator should have the capability to review incoming posts to the blog in order to approve or reject comments based on the appropriateness to the audience and corporate policy.

Xerox DocuShare CPX Username: klotz

For Your Approval

From: Carlson, Chester
Subject: One Million Sold
Date: Sunday, April 23, 2006 04:19:07 PM PDT
 New WeblogEntry is added into Weblog Profit 123 Blog

| Type | Title |
|------|------------------|
| | One Million Sold |

Comments ☐ **Save as private**

Chester, please change the party to ice cream and cake per corporate policy. Thank you!

Forum appropriate postings can be reviewed, accepted, and posted or rejected by the moderator.

- **Version and history storage** – To protect the organization from any unforeseen legal issues, it is necessary to hold records of the various versions and topics of conversation. Similar to records management solutions, users and administrators should be able to store original postings along with additional comments and version changes.
- **Auditing and tracking** – After storing the blog and wiki content, users and administrators should be able to quickly locate specific records by author or by date and time to quickly find the information needed. It is also helpful for moderated blogs to be flagged automatically for approval in a moderator's listing so he or she can review them quickly, and for a moderator to be able to track past approvals. As blogs and wikis grow in use, it will become increasingly important to track them for compliance. For example, if a manager starts sharing internal data in a regularly updated blog, it may be necessary to track versions later, possibly even for auditing.
- **Tagged content for search capabilities** – Using XML technology to tag content enables users to search for and find information in wikis and blogs that can be reused in other business situations, ostensibly helping to increase the consistency of documents or communications.

Xerox DocuShare CPX is an example of a solution that allows organizations to leverage a content and process management environment to control content created within wikis and blogs. Designed to enable simple automation of document-centric business processes, DocuShare CPX offers a full spectrum of document library features such as access permissions, versioning, tracking, and auditing to support policy

and control of all types of content. DocuShare CPX further supports the secure access, monitoring, restricted contribution, review, and approval of individual wiki pages or blog entries. This kind of solution offers significant benefit by making control of wiki and blog content as simple as assigning access permissions and moderator duties.

When used properly, blogs and wikis have the power to collect latent knowledge in the organization and make it explicit. This shared information can help businesses gain a competitive advantage by fueling innovation, integrating ideas, and speeding business decisions.

About Xerox DocuShare

Addressing both the basic and complex requirements of Enterprise Content Management (ECM), the Xerox DocuShare family of products offers an innovative solution: two focused ECM applications built on one common platform. Xerox DocuShare enables document management collaboration, review and approval, and Web publishing to support information sharing at all points in the enterprise by every knowledge worker. Xerox DocuShare CPX offers the advanced ECM functionality required for integrating and automating content, sophisticated collaboration, and business process management around specific operational tasks. And all Xerox DocuShare products are built on the DocuShare Enterprise Content Platform, recognized for its ease of installation, administration, and use. This shared platform simplifies deployments and reduces IT complexity, despite the typically heterogeneous mix of databases, servers, directory services, and storage systems found in today's enterprise.

“Companies who haven’t already developed a clear policy on employee blogging will soon have to.”

- Frank Gilbane, CEO
Gilbane Group Inc.

Leigh L. Klotz, Jr. is a senior software architect with Xerox DocuShare and was editor of the World Wide Web Consortium XForms 1.0 Recommendation. He has been active in document capture, user interface, and document management projects at Fuji Xerox, PARC, and Xerox Corporation.

Xerox DocuShare Business Unit
3400 Hillview Avenue
Palo Alto, California 94304
USA
(800) 735-7749

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