

# The Social Media Newsletter

Melcrum's free technology e-zine for internal communicators

## The Quick-Start Guide to Social Media for Internal Communicators

- Explaining blogs, RSS, podcasts and wikis
- Reasons why social media is relevant to you
- Case studies from Southwest Airlines, Siemens and the BBC
- Resources to help you get started
- Using social media for internal networks

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## About Melcrum

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- Strategic Communication Management
- The Hub for Internal Communicators
- Knowledge Management Review
- The Business Communicator
- Strategic HR Review
- Top Ten Technologies for Internal Communicators
- Transforming your Intranet
- Developing a Communication Toolkit for Managers
- Mastering Audience Segmentation
- Effective Leadership from the Top
- How to Structure Internal Communication
- Making Managers Better Communicators
- Employee Engagement
- Internal Communication Measurement
- Best Practice Measurement Strategies



# The Quick-Start Guide to Social Media for Internal Communicators

## Foreword

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Call it web 2.0, new media or social media, regardless of what it's labeled this week or next, the culture of connecting people with people is well and truly upon us. Blogs, podcasts, RSS, wikis and even having a Second Life online, are having a huge impact on internet user habits and are becoming the embodiment of a critical evolution of web capabilities and technologies.

This free report, focusing on internal communication, but applicable across many, if not all, areas of business is intended to give you a basic level of understanding about some of these new tools and applications, with quick explanations and case studies demonstrating how organizations are using them already, both internally and externally.

People – the main ingredients in any business – do love to communicate. We love to learn, we love to discuss, we love to connect. Social media applications help us to do that on all sorts of levels. Be it internal communication, human resources, knowledge sharing, feedback, bad news, good news... Whatever conversation your organization needs to have, the opportunity is there now to have it.

It's time to dive in.

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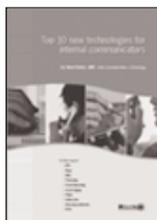
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# Acknowledgments

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The information and case studies contained in this free report for subscribers to The Source on Social Media, has been compiled with material from Melcrum reports, journals and online services. <http://www.melcrum.com>



Top Ten Technologies for Internal Communicators



Transforming your Intranet



Developing a Communication Toolkit for Managers



Strategic Communication Management



The Business Communicator



The Hub for Internal Communicators  
<http://www.internalcommshub.com>

# 1. Blogs

**Blogging is currently the most well-known of all social media applications. The number of blogs is growing rapidly every day as more and more people and organizations become familiar and, more importantly, comfortable with the concept. In this section, we look at the definition of a blog and include a case study from Southwest Airlines and an opinion column from social media expert, Neville Hobson and corporate blogging guru, Debbie Weil.**

What is a blog? The word “blog” is an abbreviation of “weblog.” Blogs are easily published personal or, increasingly, multi-author websites that serve as sources of commentary, opinion and uncensored, unfiltered sources of information on a variety of topics.

Each new blog entry is called a post and posts appear on a blog page in reverse chronological order. Blog posts are typically characterized by numerous links to other pieces of information, including other blogs, news stories, images, commentaries, videos and audio clips. Ideally they become fantastic portals to a wide range of resources.

While primarily a one-way communication channel in the sense that the author (or authors) are leading the conversation, the key factor of blogs is that they allow readers to post comments and reply to what’s being communicated.

*“In ten years, CEOs will communicate directly with customers, employees and the broader business community through blogs.”*

*Jonathan Schwartz,  
CEO, Sun Microsystems*

Another key point; many bloggers expand their reach by being linked to other blogs, commenting on fellow bloggers’ comments and building a conversation. The name given to this growing bubble of conversation is called the blogosphere.. As in, “News in the blogosphere is this...”

As of December 2006, blog tracking website Technorati (see resources, page 20) is tracking around 63 million public blogs, with more new blogs created every second. Of those 63 million, many are undoubtedly poor, while many are personal. There are lots of good ones however, and there are some immensely popular ones – and these are just the public blogs, ones that are available to view in public. This doesn’t count what’s now undoubtedly the thousands of internal blogs that are either private or housed on intranets, or those that are private and password-protected.

Why are blogs important for internal communicators? Quite simply, they’re great tools for communicating and creating an open, honest, up-to-date dialogue with an audience. Be that employees communicating with one another, from across the office or across the world, or senior executives communicating their vision, thoughts, company ambitions and news – good or bad.

Increasingly, there are a number of CEOs with corporate blogs. Some, like Intel CEO Paul Ottellini’s, are tucked away on the intranet for company eyes only, yet some are very public, including well-known examples of Jonathan Schwartz, CEO at Sun Microsystems, and the Fastlane blog at General Motors, which is kept rolling by vice chairman, Bob Lutz, Rick Wagoner (the CEO), and a number of other board members.

## Why are blogs relevant to internal communicators?

### The reasons why and pitfalls to avoid

**In this article, social media expert, Neville Hobson and corporate blogging guru, Debbie Weil, comment on the pros and cons of organizations and senior leadership blogging for business purposes.**

Bob Lutz, vice-chairman of General Motors, says they're indispensable while Jonathan Schwartz, CEO at Sun Microsystems, says corporate blogs blend culture and technology into an effective corporate weapon. But will company blogs ever enjoy the same credibility as their independent counterparts? And what roles do they perform internally for companies?

#### WHAT MAKES A GOOD CORPORATE BLOG?

According to Neville Hobson, communication consultant and blog author, good corporate blogs are generally ones where the blogger or bloggers are natural communicators able to write content that comes across as genuine. In other words, it sounds as if it's written by a real person and isn't just a page for wooden corporate speak.

He points to the extremely successful General Motors blog largely written by vice-chairman Bob Lutz (see Figure 1.1, overleaf). "He's not there talking as the vice chairman about the company finances or the business strategy, but giving his opinions on the products they make, sometimes passionately."

#### GATHERING FEEDBACK

Another important element of successful blogs is that they act as conduits for readers' feedback. In February 2006, Lutz received 323 responses, many of them very detailed, when he asked readers for their

suggestions on improving the company. "People like the chance to give their feedback directly to the number two person in the company," says Hobson. "The GM blog has shown that blogs can be a highly effective means of directly engaging with customers, car enthusiasts and anyone with an opinion on the company."

#### THE PERILS OF GHOSTWRITING

But where companies can come unstuck is through ghostwriting: a CEO's blog that's really written by corporate comms or, in the case of L'Oreal last year and Wal-Mart this year, a "blogger" who's a fictitious person or an external PR person posing as a regular employee. The backlash within the blogging community against companies that make such mistakes can be devastating. Yet L'Oreal was able to establish far greater credibility than it had previously enjoyed when its head of marketing admitted a big mistake had been made and asked readers how to put it right.

"Many companies think the CEO should have a blog and that PR will write it," says Hobson. "But blogs aren't just another marketing tool – when people understand the nature of how blogs build communities and relationships, they realize the risks that mere ghostwriting will entail."

#### CREATING GUIDELINES

Microsoft stands head and shoulders above other corporate bloggers in that it allows employees to write blogs that can be critical

**Blogging:** Why is it relevant for internal communicators?

**Fig 1.1:** *The GM Fastlane blog, started by Vice Chairman, Bob Lutz*



of the company. It's a great way to build credibility both internally and externally, but according to Debbie Weil, corporate blogging consultant and author of *The*

*Corporate Blogging Book*, companies need to have clear guidelines for bloggers. It's also a good idea to be very upfront with readers about what your blog is about and what its topic is. "People got very upset when GM was headline news but this wasn't covered at all on the blog," she points out.

**INTERNAL BLOGS**

But while feedback from consumers may be seen as critical for external corporate blogs, the same is not true of employees and internal blogs. "If people have a really big problem with their boss or company policy, it's doubtful they'll feel comfortable posting this to an internal blog," says Weil. "The idea of transparency and authenticity sounds great, but if the blog's internal, then trying to get employees' sentiments on

really important topics won't work because they'll be understandably cautious."

But internal blogs can be excellent tools for companies in very different ways than their external counterparts. "An obvious way is for a team working on a project to use a blog as a way of keeping track of what's going on," says Weil. "Another is a horizontal marketing and comms blog to enable people all over the world to share ideas."

But a third use is one that Weil most often recommends to clients. "An internal CEO blog is a great idea because one of the main purposes of internal comms is to make senior staff seem more accessible. You can talk about things on a blog that you wouldn't be able to elsewhere – be forthright about your thoughts, or just informal and anecdotal."

**THE EVOLUTION OF BLOGS**

But talk of what's best suited to external or internal blogs will be immaterial in years to come, says Hobson. Interactive sites will be the tools of the future, replacing the blogs that are big today, just as surely as they've replaced websites. Both Hobson and Weil predict that today's blogs will evolve into company sites with a mix of static and interactive content. "It'll be a seamless online presence where you'll engage with the company through that portal," says Hobson.

He points to Microsoft employees whose internal blogs are visible externally. "We already see a blurring of external and internal comms in many areas. There's a seismic shift in organizational comms that's in alignment with technological tools, but also attitude and behavioral changes. The really big issue will be engagement itself, not the mechanism to do it."

**Blogging:** Why is it relevant for internal communicators?

## SOUTHWEST AIRLINES

### Using blogs to demonstrate company values

A corporate blog may be considered an external channel, but at Southwest Airlines, a new blog is not only providing a glimpse into the company's culture, it's also creating an opportunity for employees to talk directly and informally with customers.

Southwest Airlines prides itself on being a customer-focused organization. Ask employees what kind of characteristics describe the brand and you'll probably hear words like, "open, friendly and approachable." Which is why the launch of the company's "Nuts about Southwest" corporate blog in April 2006 makes sense as a credible brand extension.

Heralded by some as a perfect example of the growing trend in "X," the blog is attempting to do what few other formal channels can do: allow employees and customers to engage in conversations outside of the usual transactionary mode. Angela Vargo, senior specialist and public relations spokesperson for Southwest Airlines and manager of Nuts About Southwest, describes the rationale behind the blog as such: "If you enter 'Southwest Airlines' into a blog search, you'll find thousands of hits where people are talking about our products and services. We wanted to join in on that conversation."

Around 20 employees have been handpicked to kick off that conversation. These people come from across the organization and represent employees on the front line all the way up to the executive level.

"Some were chosen because we know they're great communicators, some were selected by our president, some come from the company's culture committee and some have come to us and requested to be bloggers," says Vargo. "We've started with a core group of bloggers, but this will evolve and grow."

The topics covered in the blog are varied. They range from a story told by a mechanic about an over-zealous bee keeper trying to remove bees from the engine of multi-million dollar plane, to an anecdote about a family reunion. The posts all relate back to the company in some way, but they're not scripted and bloggers are encouraged to write about whatever they want.

According to Vargo, it's this informality that prevents the blog coming across as a PR or marketing gimmick. "Before launch, we explained to our bloggers how a blog works. We said we wanted them to share their insights and their personality. We said, just blog the way you talk. Talk about your day."

The blog costs nothing to run and takes up about an hour a day of Vargo's time in terms of moderating the postings (for inappropriate or profane comments only). And each blogger need only contribute once a month, making it a small contribution in terms of their time. But once conversations get going, all employees are welcome to jump in with advice or suggestions as appropriate. The conversations, says Vargo, take on a life of

**SOUTHWEST AIRLINES:** Using blogs to demonstrate company values



their own, although care is taken to avoid the blog taking on a customer-relations function.

Visitor stats are tracked daily as are click-throughs from the blog to the main website and resulting ticket purchases. According to Vargo, 11,000 unique visitors viewed the blog in its first two weeks. And employees are also impressed.

“We’ve had a wonderful response. Employees love seeing our customers write in and they love responding. Currently we don’t have an internal blog, but this has been so well received it’s opening up new ways of thinking about communicating internally. Many companies start with an internal blog, but we’re a very transparent company. It made sense for us to go external first.”



**SOUTHWEST AIRLINES:** Using blogs to demonstrate company values

## 2. RSS

**In this section, we look at what could become one of the most important web technologies in history: RSS. With billions upon billions of web and intranet pages, RSS can help you get the information that’s relevant and interesting to you. Included are a short case study from Siemens USA and some resources to help you get started.**

RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication. But, of course, that means absolutely nothing to most people. This is a shame as it’s actually a brilliant invention that has a very simple idea behind it, but people are not picking it up as quickly as they might without the barrier of its rather geeky name.

In a nutshell, RSS allows you to choose or “subscribe” to an RSS feed on a chosen subject. Every time there’s an update on that website or specific subject, the RSS feed is updated automatically for you so you can stay constantly updated on the website or topic of your choice; there’s no manual checking or going back to websites for the latest information or news. When you have a list of your favorite RSS feeds, you can then click through them quickly and easily, decide if there’s anything of interest for you and then click through to that story using the link in that particular update.

Another way to describe RSS is that it summarizes a website or page for you, much like an index of a book or magazine. It means you don’t have to hunt around, you can see straight away if there’s a headline that grabs you. Or, it might help to think of them as the free, internet version of the old-fashioned ticker-tape newswire machines that are constantly feeding you the latest information without any effort from you – except for the initial action of subscribing.

For consumers and employees alike, the best thing about RSS is that it allows people to streamline and customize the information they receive on their desktop. For businesses, it can cut through the clutter of group e-mails that cover everything from social events to Board news, by allowing the person responsible for getting those messages out (i.e. you – as an internal communicator) to offer different “feeds” for people to subscribe to.



## RSS: News readers, browsers and related software

When it comes to RSS news readers, there are a wealth of options available. The two most basic options are **software** to install on your computer (stand-alone applications or plug-ins) or **websites** that provide news reader services.

### 1. SOFTWARE-BASED NEWS READERS:

First, software (which, on a laptop for example, allows you to read feeds that were delivered earlier, even when you're no longer connected). A popular program is "FeedDemon." It's easy to use, boasts several excellent features and is an investment of only US\$29.95. Some of the more popular **free** readers include "RSSFeedEater" and "SharpReader." But don't forget also that new web browsers, Internet Explorer 7 and Mozilla Firefox 2 are now available as free downloads and heavily promote RSS or "webfeed" use.

Web browser downloads:

- Internet Explorer 7 (Windows)
- Mozilla Firefox 2 (Mac or Windows)

A fairly comprehensive list of most alternatives is at:

<http://www.hebig.org/blogs/archives/main/000877.php>.

- SharpReader (Windows)  
<http://www.sharpreader.net>
- FeedDemon (Windows)  
<http://www.bradsoft.com/feeddemon>
- RSSFeedEater (Windows)  
<http://www.babisoft.com>
- NewsFire (Mac)  
<http://www.newsfirerss.com>
- NetNewsWire (Mac)  
<http://ranchero.com/netnewswire>

### 2. PLUG-IN NEWS READERS:

An alternative to consider, if you're an Outlook user, is "NewsGator," which integrates into Outlook. You view RSS feeds as though they're another folder in your e-mail. A lot of people also seem to like "Pluck," an Internet Explorer plug-in.

- NewsGator (Outlook plug-in)  
<http://www.newsgator.com>

### 3. WEBSITES

"NewsGator" also offers a nice web-based service, so you don't have to install software on your computer at all. Just log into your account (it's free) to read your feeds. (<http://www.newsgator.com>).

"Bloglines" is another Web-based service (<http://www.bloglines.com>).

← Have you ever been faced with the situation where employees may be interested in five out of 20 e-mails but because the other 15 aren't relevant to them, they don't read any of the 20? RSS can help. By offering several different RSS feeds on different subjects, you give employees the choice of receiving what they feel is important to them specifically. That way, they're more likely to read at least some of those messages, rather than dismiss them all. RSS isn't as intrusive as mass e-mail can be, and it can help drive traffic back to your corporate website or intranet.

Up until recently and because of the common need for an RSS reader, not too many people use RSS. But they will. With Internet Explorer version 7 now here, plus Firefox 2 – both of which heavily feature and promote the use of RSS – it's likely to become an intrinsic part of how people use the web, and use of it has already grown from 0.2% to 2% of web users in the last two years. Internet Explorer 7 also does away with the "RSS" moniker and simply calls RSS feeds "webfeeds." Thanks to the widespread use of this web browser, which many people were updated to automatically when it was launched, 2007 could really be the year RSS breaks through to mainstream use.

Out of all the new, Web 2.0 tools, it's RSS that comes across as the most innocuous, yet it's RSS that could ultimately have the biggest impact in the way we consume information.

## CASE STUDY

### SIEMENS USA:

#### Using RSS to streamline information for employees

All the various RSS feeds available on the Siemens USA intranet are available in two places:

1. The page associated with the feed: For example, the main "employee news" page offers an RSS feed where employees can subscribe to that page, so new stories are delivered to them whenever they're uploaded by the communication team.
2. An RSS landing page that contains an inventory of all the RSS feeds from across the whole Siemens intranet: This page also includes explanations of how RSS works, links to news readers that employees can download and other pertinent information.

Siemens USA offers two types of feeds from its intranet content: blog and non-

blog feeds. We'll talk about intranet blogs in the next section. The non-blog feeds includes one from IT. This feed synchs up with a page that lists IT news. It's on this page that an employee can learn that a server upgrade is planned for 2am. Thursday morning. In many companies, this information is pushed via e-mail to every employee – whether they care or not. With RSS, Siemens USA lets employees who want to know about server outages (and other IT updates) subscribe to the feed.

Ultimately, Siemens USA hopes employees throughout the organization will set up their own feeds. The only centralization of the process will be the listing of available RSS feeds on the main RSS landing page. The philosophy: Anybody who has knowledge or information to share can offer it as a feed.

**Siemens USA:** Using RSS on the intranet

## RSS: Resources

### GENERATING RSS FEEDS

There's other software out there to make life easy with RSS. For example, with an application called "FeedForAll" to create the XML pages ready to post. You just fill in a few fields and push a button; the file is built on the fly. "FeedForAll" is a terrific program, and it's relatively inexpensive at US\$39.95.

<http://www.feedforall.com>

Alternatively, you could get the "RSS Channel Editor" for free:

<http://www.xml.com/pub/r/103>.

Another free feed-generation program is available at:

<http://hunterdavis.com/ssrss.html>

Another feed generator you can buy (for US\$29.95) is at:

<http://www.castlesoftware.biz/NewzAlertComposer.htm>

### UNDERSTANDING RSS AND LEARNING TO USE IT

- First, a few plain-English explanations of RSS (just in case this one was incomprehensible, or you want to share knowledge):

<http://www.commoncraft.com/archives/000528.html>

<http://rss.softwaregarden.com/aboutrss.html>

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/help/3223484.stm>

<http://www.alexandrasamuel.com/rsstocracy/10steps>

- Articles on RSS and RSS feeds (this site also provides targeted feeds of content that could be of value for publication on some websites):

<http://www.allrssfeeds.com>

- An RSS tutorial for content publishers and webmasters:

<http://www.mnot.net/rss/tutorial>

- A video introduction to RSS:

<http://www.rssdomination.com/video.htm>

- Finally, if you're interested in having a company develop, manage, and measure your feeds, take a look at *Nooked*:

<http://www.nooked.com>

## 3. Podcasts

**Podcasts have gained traction in the last two years as fantastic ways to get messages, opinions, news and even new music out to people for very little cost. In this section, together with a description of what podcasts actually are, we look at a case study of one organization that has implemented podcasting, blogs and RSS to create one big learning network for internal innovation. Plus, some further resources for podcasting.**

### **What is a podcast?**

A podcast is essentially an audio file, usually in MP3 format, which is a digital format and the most commonly used one for personal music players such as the ubiquitous iPod.

The word podcast comes from “iPod” and “broadcast.” It was coined by a Guardian newspaper journalist back in 2004 and has stuck. It’s also good and bad, because people assume you need an iPod to get a podcast (you don’t). The word “cast” is good, however, because a great way to explain a podcast is that it’s like a mini radio show, but you can listen to it as and when you want to.

If you want to, you can subscribe to podcasts (this is done using RSS), thereafter each update is delivered to your computer automatically. Most users listen to podcasts away from their computer – in the car, running, walking the dog etc – but people also listen to them at desks or at home on a stereo. The key point to remember is that you can listen to them when and where you want to.

At its most basic, podcasting is cheap to set up and provides you with a valuable, powerful communication channel.

### **How can your organization use podcasts internally?**

Imagine a CEO’s podcast where the senior leader talks candidly with employees about issues the company is facing – be that a major acquisition and growth – to something more delicate, for example, a rough set of financial results or expelling rumors of downsizing. Listening to the CEO is far more effective and more believable than reading a blanket e-mail from him or her.

Another way to look at podcasting: how much time does a town hall meeting, or a CEO briefing, or a series of branch/site walkabouts take to organize? What about a podcast each week or fortnight where again, your CEO sits down and speaks to employees through a podcast. It’s a leadership tool, it can invite conversation (invite questions via e-mail or a voicemail number that can then be answered out loud by the CEO in the next podcast). It shows they’re interested, that the message hasn’t just been crafted for approval by the internal communication department.

Again, beyond the realms of senior leadership, project work, weekly updates from management or other speciality podcasts can be of great use to transmit news, knowledge and messages around the company for very little outlay.



## Using blogs, podcasts and RSS for learning networks

### How a social media mix can work in business

In 2006 a global financial services firm will run the sixth year of its innovation initiative in which teams of participants have conceived and developed business plans for a host of products, services and process improvements that continue to make money for the firm.

The program has provided nearly 200 employees with the unique opportunity to present a new business idea to senior executives.

Supporting the firm's Global Markets Innovation Program, a learning network links faculty, executives, and participants through blogs, RSS aggregators and podcasts (see Figure 3.1, overleaf). In 2004 the company shifted the communication around the program from a central bulletin board and e-mail to a distributed learning network built on blogs.

"When we made the switch, we found that both the quantity and quality of the discussion dramatically improved," says Glen Mohr, the learning network director.

He attributes the improvements to the transparency in the network – people participate and see their ideas "published" and visible to their peers and to the senior executives involved in the program, enhancing the recognition they receive for their work.

#### **BLOGS AND INNOVATION**

As teams work on their business plans for innovative new products, they use blogs to document their process from idea

generation to final presentation and follow-up. Teams have a convenient central repository and communication channel. Employees with necessary expertise can easily be brought into the development process.

Participants support one another by sharing insights, resources and contacts. Program managers gain a window on the innovation process that they use to provide assistance.

A portal blog aggregates status reports, ideas, problems, requests for assistance and other news from the participants' blogs. The learning director seeks out all of these and feeds them back out to all participants, stimulating discussion and cross-cohort collaboration.

#### **PROFILE PAGES**

Personal profile pages, built on blogs, give participants a way to document their expertise and accomplishments and lay the social network foundation for the learning network.

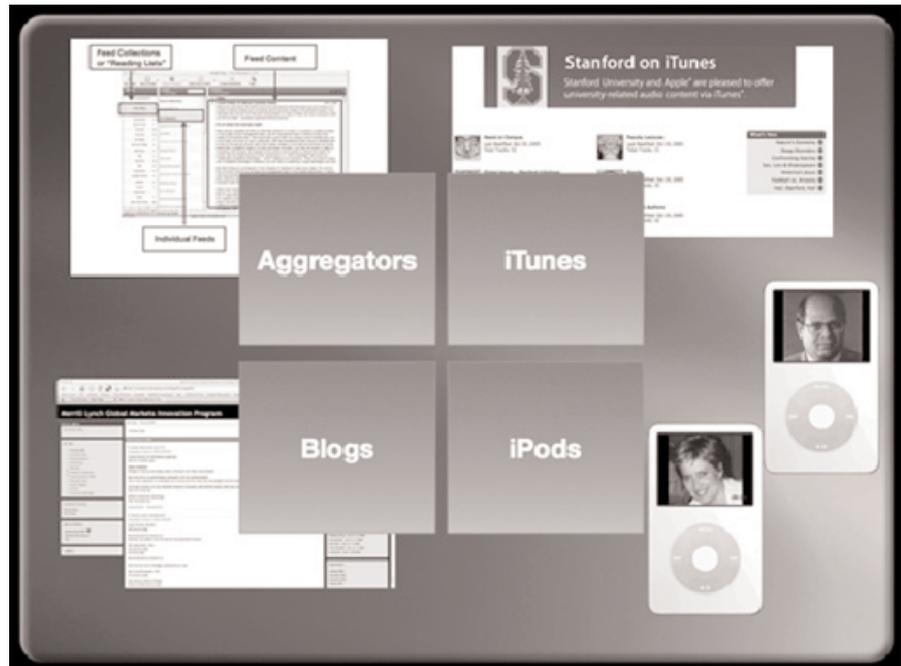
Mohr says: "When we reposted issues on the main blog that teams were experiencing with their projects, members of other teams were able to provide feedback and assistance.

"Someone might know that something had been tried in the past and who did it. Or, someone might know of a particular legal or regulatory hurdle that a team hadn't foreseen. It took these people only a moment to scan the blog and post

Using blogs, podcasts and RSS for learning networks

CASE STUDY

Fig 3.1: Learning networks at a financial services firm



comments that actually were quite valuable.”

**ADDING PODCASTS TO THE MIX**

The latest addition to the program is podcasting, through which senior executives will lay out the firm’s areas of strategic focus. Experts from within and outside the firm will provide market overviews and competitive intelligence to help participants define opportunities. Discussion of the issues raised then continues on the learning network with

continued input by executives: “This year we are giving each participant a new video iPod for collecting and viewing all of the program materials,” says Mohr.

“It turns out that it’s less expensive for us to buy iPods for everybody than to give them thick binders filled with printed materials and CDs. They much prefer the iPods, and once they’ve got them, we have a direct distribution channel for all kinds of multimedia materials – all of which is mobile – a huge advantage and time-saver for this group.”

Using blogs, podcasts and RSS for learning networks

## ← How you can use podcasts

Here are some suggestions for how your organization can use podcasts:

- **The CEO podcast:** Any senior leader can become the leadership voice of the organization, talking candidly and openly with employees about the issues of the day.
- **A weekly newscast:** A pair of hosts could review company news, conduct interviews, and talk about company issues on a weekly basis. Even employees who don't read a word of text communication could stay up-to-date by listening, assuming the show was engaging and entertaining enough.
- **Speeches:** Employees could subscribe to get executive speeches.
- **Departmental updates:** Any department could record a podcast, providing an update into the goings-on within that unit. Only those employees with a real interest in such updates would subscribe, but those employees would get useful information and stay in touch with the department's progress and activities.
- **Speciality podcasts:** organizations that employ a large number of specialists could deliver content aimed at those specialists (for example, engineers, chemists, IT staff).

### PODCASTING: Resources

- iPodder: A resource on all things podcasting, from how to record to a directory of podcasts. Set up and maintained by podcasting pioneer, Adam Curry.  
<http://www.ipodder.org>
- The Podcast Value Chain Report: An overview of the emerging podcasting marketplace  
<http://www.digitalpodcast.com/podcastchainvalue.pdf>
- Podcasting Tools: A superb resource on podcasting, from soup to nuts and with a regular podcast too.  
<http://www.podcasting-tools.com>
- Podcast Alley: The most popular podcast directory along with a voting mechanism that produces a ranking of the most popular podcasts.  
<http://www.podcastalley.com>
- Podcasting news: A site that keeps you up-to-date on the world of podcasting.  
<http://www.podcastingnews.com>

## 4. Wikis

**What's a "wiki" and what makes them so special? As with other social media applications, it's the aspect of giving "power to the people" that gives the tool itself such potential. In this section, we look at the basics of wikis, where the word "wiki" originates from, the New PR Wiki and a case study of wikis at the BBC.**

A wiki is a website that lets anyone edit the site's content and add content as well. The term also refers to the software used to create such a website. Wikis were invented in 1995 by Ward Cunningham, who adopted the term "wiki," which means quick, from the wiki wiki shuttle buses that run between terminals at Honolulu airport. Below, Shel Holtz explains how managers can use wikis to facilitate swifter and wider distribution of news and information.

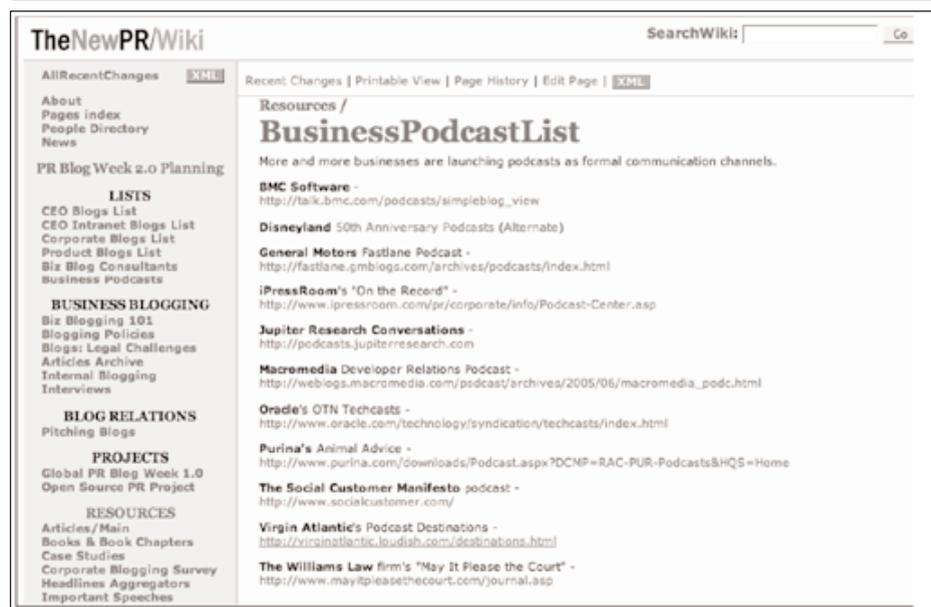
The idea of a website that anybody can add to or edit may seem dangerous. However, wiki sites are introduced as stand-alone entities for efforts where group collaboration is desirable. Wikis, as displayed in a web browser, are just websites. The source code is in standard HTML, but clicking an "edit" link introduces a text-editor-like element to the page.

### How wikis work: The New PR wiki

The New PR website (see Figure 4.1, below) is designed for early adopters of new online communication technology to share their knowledge with others of the same inclination, by publishing the content themselves to a wiki. Using a wiki turns the effort of standard uploading methods into a group collaboration project.

A wiki looks like most web pages, but what distinguishes it is the menu that appears horizontally across the top of the page, offering recent changes, page history and edit page. Clicking "edit page" produces the view of the page seen in Figure 4.2, right.

**Fig 4.1:** A New PR Wiki web page showing the podcast directory



The text then becomes available for edits and additions. The formatting marks are far simpler than they are in HTML. Anybody can contribute or add a new category by editing the menu bar.

### Wikipedia's reign

The most popular wiki on the web – and the one that has generated the most publicity – is Wikipedia. Here, anybody can add or edit an article, which has boosted the volume of content in Wikipedia to over 1 million articles in over 100 languages. By contrast, Encyclopedia Britannica has about 98,000 entries.

The advantages of a wiki are evident on Wikipedia:

- Instant addition of new knowledge. The day after Pope Benedict XVI was elected, a listing about him appeared in Wikipedia. It took longer for the other encyclopedias to add the listing, because of their usual editorial processes.
- Diversity of information. Enthusiasts add topics to Wikipedia that would be unlikely to find their way into mainstream encyclopedias.
- Group editing. Many question the accuracy of Wikipedia, given that there is no traditional accountability for the information it contains and its articles do not undergo the rigorous fact-checking of a Britannica or Encarta. However, the peer-review process undertaken by the community usually results in a highly accurate entry. The articles are routinely updated and enhanced as readers share knowledge.

Fig 4.2: When you click to edit a wiki page, you can update or amend any of its content



CASE STUDY

# BBC Collaborating with wikis

*Here's how wikis are being used to spur integration and collaboration at the BBC.*

"We see [wikis] largely as a business tool," says David Reeves, lead internal communications consultant. This business tool is available to all employees – anyone can join an existing wiki or initiate their own – and there's a couple of hundred on the go at any one time.

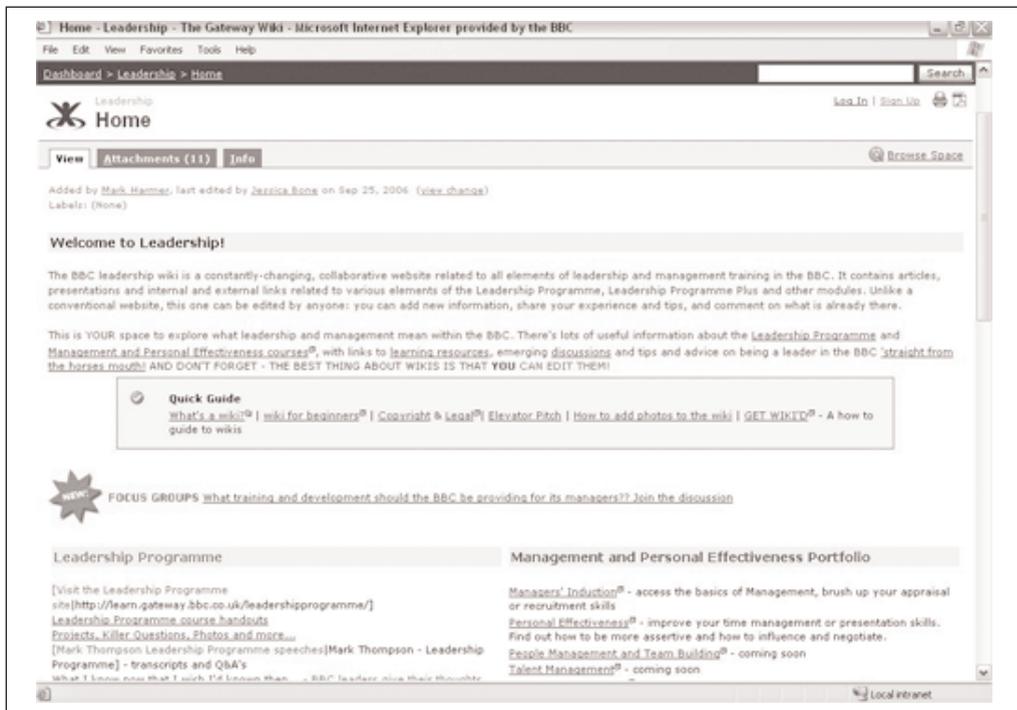
Nic Price, who manages "Gateway," the BBC's intranet, says the popularity of wikis among employees has grown purely from their availability and usefulness as a collaboration tool, as they were never officially "launched."

Price explains how the wiki was originally set up by a BBC team called Digilab. "Their function was to find out what people wanted to do, find some technologies that would answer their needs and then just plug them in and make them available."

As a centrally managed system, this is now nurtured by Price's team, but it's very devolved. "Anyone can set up a wiki. There's no governance in place in terms of how it's used."

Much like discussion forums and blogs, wikis have grown organically within the BBC. "They're being used in all sorts of

Fig 4.3: The BBC's leadership wiki



BBC: Collaborating with wikis

different ways; for collaboration space, for teams to use on an ongoing basis or for specific projects,” says Price.

#### **WIKIS IN ACTION**

Reeves cites an example of how his own team have made use of them. “When I came into leading the team, we had an internal communications process manual based on word documents, which were hard copied. It seemed obvious to turn the manual into a wiki because it allowed us to make changes on the fly and embed hyperlinks. So with one click you’re straight to where you want to be.”

Another dedicated wiki arose directly out of the BBC Leadership Program as an

ongoing resource for leaders (see Figure 4.4, below).

The leadership wiki is a constantly changing, collaborative website related to all elements of leadership and management training in the BBC. It contains articles, presentations and internal and external links related to various elements of the program. Users can add new information, share their experience and tips, and comment on what’s already there.

Figure 4.4, below, is an excerpt from a Q&A the BBC offers internally to new users of wikis.

**Fig 4.4:** *Excerpt from a Q&A the BBC offers to new users of wikis*

#### **WHAT IS A WIKI?**

A wiki is a sort of website. But what makes it special is that people can easily write new text, as well as read what other people have already written. You use a normal web browser, such as Internet Explorer, to read and edit the wiki pages. Most wikis let you attach files and images to pages so they can be shared.

#### **WHAT MAKES WIKIS USEFUL?**

Tim Berners-Lee, when he invented the World Wide Web, saw it as a way for scientists to collaborate together – this involved writing as well as “publishing.” Indeed the early web browsers had the ability to edit pages as well as display them. Wikis go back to this idea of collaborative creation, putting the tools back into the hands of everyone. This is why it is sometimes called the “two-way web.”

#### **WHAT IF SOMEONE DELETES SOMETHING [BY ACCIDENT]?**

The wiki we use keeps track of every change that is made to a page. If needed you can undo the deletion (or addition) and go back to an earlier version of the page. If someone deletes a page accidentally, it goes into a “trash can” and can be recovered by the administrator for that Space. Only Space administrators can delete whole Spaces. Daily backups are kept of Spaces so they can be restored with little loss of information.

*(Courtesy of the BBC)*

**BBC:** Collaborating with wikis

## 5. Resources

This final section provides a list of websites, services, blogs, research reports, journals and books to help you further your knowledge of social media.

### Blogs

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Blog Write for CEOs  
Corporate blogging blog by Debbie Weil  
<http://www.blogwriteforceos.com>

The Obvious  
Social computing blog By Euan Semple  
<http://www.theobvious.com>

The BlackBelt Dojo  
Internal communication blog by Sue Dewhurst and Liam Fitzpatrick  
<http://www.blackbeltdojo.co.uk>

Neville Hobson.com  
Social media, PR and marketing blog by Neville Hobson  
<http://www.nevillehobson.com>

Change and Internal communication  
Change and internal communication blog by Hill & Knowlton employees  
<http://blogs.hillandknowlton.com>

The Melcrum Blog  
Internal communication and general blog by Melcrum employees  
<http://www.melcrumblog.com>

### Blogging service providers/software

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Technorati  
“The Google for public blogs” provides a directory of nearly every public blog and a number of RSS search options and blog-related services  
<http://www.technorati.com>

Wordpress  
Free software download and blogging service  
<http://www.wordpress.com>

Typepad  
Hosted service from basic to enterprise level  
<http://www.typepad.com>

Blogger

Free or paid for blogging services from Google

<http://www.blogger.com>

### Wiki software

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Wikimedia

Free software download and the software that's used for Wikipedia

<http://www.wikimedia.org>

Confluence

Enterprise standard wiki software as used by BT and the BBC

<http://www.confluence.com>

### Melcrum Journals

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Strategic Communication Management

The Business Communicator

Knowledge Management Review

<http://www.melcrum.com>

### Melcrum Research Reports

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Transform your Intranet

Top Ten New Technologies for Internal Communicators

Developing a Communication Toolkit for Managers

<http://www.melcrum.com>

### Melcrum Online

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The Hub for Internal Communicators

<http://www.internalcommshub.com>

The Source for Internal Communicators

<http://www.sourcecomms.com>

### Books

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The Corporate Blogging Book: Everything you need to know to get it right

By Debbie Weil

The Long Tail

By Chris Anderson

Naked Conversations: How blogs are changing the way businesses communicate

By Robert Scoble and Shel Israel

The Cluetrain Manifesto

By Christopher Locke, Rick Levine, Doc Searles and David Weinberger