

can make comments, providing the company with immediate feedback. In addition, this blog (like most) includes a search option, a sign-in feature for receiving email alerts, and an RSS feed option (RSS stands for “really simple syndication” and is also known as a Web feed or a news feed). Nonprofits and government organizations, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Wildlife Federation, also use blogs aimed primarily at external audiences and designed to keep the public updated on timely topics.

WIKIS

► Identify the uses of internal and external wikis

Definition of wikis

A wiki (from the Hawaiian phrase wiki wiki, meaning “quick”) is a type of Web site used to collect information and keep it updated. Most people are familiar with Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia that allows anyone to write and revise its content. Companies and other organizations also use wikis to update content in a wide variety of technical and scientific areas. As with blogs, organizations maintain both internal and external wikis, depending on the project and need. But unlike blogs, which typically have only a few people serving as authors, wikis encourage everyone to contribute to the site’s content.

Internal Wikis

How internal wikis enhance access to technical information

In the workplace, internal wikis can be used as a “knowledge management” tool—a way to keep important technical information updated and provide one-stop access for employees who need the latest data, specifications, guidelines, and so forth. Each person with access may log on to the wiki and make changes to content, overwriting previous versions, in order to keep the data current. Despite the potential for error created by such alterations, a well-managed wiki can quickly become a collaborative digital space where content experts contribute to the broader knowledge base. Many companies, from banks to information technology firms to engineering organizations, are finding that wikis are a valuable resource among trustworthy contributors. To ensure that readers can see the history of how changes were made, and by whom, copies of the original entry along with each subsequent edit are saved for later reference.

External Wikis

External wikis related to your field of study

While some wikis are used only internally by a company or organization, others are used by external audiences in specific scientific or technical areas. Because these wikis are open to countless people with knowledge in the fields, these sites can be excellent external sources of information. But as with Wikipedia, the lack of gatekeeping by a central editor also creates the potential for inaccuracy. A well-managed

wiki, on
If you se
gineeri
that a W



- Use
and
wor
- Kee
tion
- Wri
ence
expl
- Thir
work
both
- For
frien
- Chec
was la
- Befor
you s
aren't

WEB PA

- Explain
- Most organ
These sites
services; to
ware updat
links to rela
do not. For
sumer upda
a resources

wiki, one that balances open access with editorial control, can be a valuable resource. If you search for a wiki related to your undergraduate major (nursing, chemistry, engineering, technical writing), you may find some useful resources. Or you may find that a Wikipedia entry on this topic contains a link to a more specific external wiki.



GUIDELINES for Writing and Using Blogs and Wikis

- ▶ **Use standard software.** Readers expect blogs and wikis to have a certain look and feel. Tools such as Blogger and Wikispaces can be adapted to confidential workplace environments.
- ▶ **Keep content brief, to the point, and concise.** Avoid wordiness and repetition. Use hyperlinks to direct readers to additional information.
- ▶ **Write differently for internal versus external audiences.** Internal audiences do not require as much background. External audiences may require more explanation.
- ▶ **Think carefully before posting comments.** An internal blog is considered workplace communication; an external blog represents the organization. In both cases, keep your ideas factual and tone professional.
- ▶ **For an external blog, focus on the customer's priorities and needs.** A friendly, encouraging tone goes a long way in good customer relations.
- ▶ **Check blog and wiki entries for credibility.** Check the content to see when it was last updated (on a wiki, this information is usually under the "history" tab).
- ▶ **Before editing or adding to a wiki, get your facts and your tone straight.** If you spot some type of error, be diplomatic in your correction—and be sure you aren't creating some other type of error.

WEB PAGES

- ▶ Explain the purposes of Web pages

Most organizations, whether private or public, large or small, have a Web site. These sites serve many purposes, including to advertise and market products and services; to provide downloadable user manuals, reports, technical data, and software updates; to educate and inform via up-to-date information; and to provide links to related topics. The Web offers a level of interactivity that print documents do not. For instance, the FDA Web site shown in Figure 24.1 contains a list of consumer updates, questions readers can click on for more information, a search box, a resources section, and a PDF fact sheet.

Purposes of Web pages