



Social networking tools like LinkedIn or Facebook and tools like wikis and blogs dramatically enhance the way that firms work. Major corporations like Morgan Stanley, Pfizer and Reuters are not alone in having discovered this. So have prominent law firms including Allen & Overy, Linklaters, Kilpatrick Stockton and Fenwick & West.

These tools are driving emergence of a new model of business some call “Enterprise 2.0.” Less bound by restrictions of geography or time, they free people up to concentrate more on serving clients. Using a wiki to collaboratively produce a document significantly cuts down email traffic. (Some report savings of several days per person per year.) Instead of continually mailing updated iterations and having to track the latest version, everyone updates the one document ‘in situ,’ and the system tracks who changed what. Email still has its place in “one-to-one” dialogue but “one-to-many” communication is more efficiently handled with Enterprise 2.0 tools, especially when multiple feedback is required.

Social networking also helps track the expertise needed for a particular matter and manage other information more effectively too. Deployed properly, these tools “connect the firm to itself,” dissolving barriers between “silos” like practice groups and geographically dispersed offices. Firms can also share information externally (e.g. with clients) easier than before.

Edge International has partnered with Blogtronix (www.blogtronix.com), a technology company from Colorado

Springs, to offer a unique service to law firms. Blogtronix’s offering is the most comprehensive platform of its kind. It includes blogs, wikis, document management, social networking and RSS feed aggregation. The product is built on “CIO friendly” technology architected using Microsoft .NET and SQL Server, rather than open source components like PHP or MySQL. Compared to other similar platforms, it is also surprisingly inexpensive.

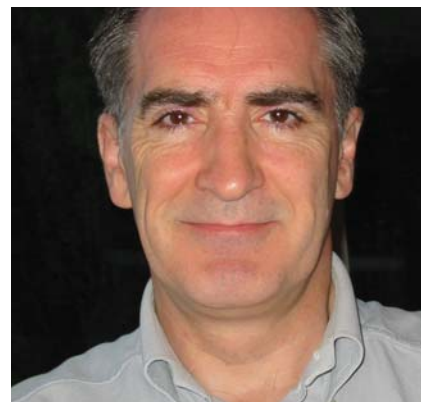
Reuters use the Blogtronix platform to support ReutersInteractive, the public community site first showcased back in June. Anybody can sign up for ReutersInteractive’s pilot project, currently limited to providing information and resources for investors interested in Clean Technology and green investments. It gives an excellent overview of a world class Enterprise 2.0 collaborative platform.

Besides improving internal corporate collaboration and reducing email traffic, we’ve also discovered another very specific way to use this technology, that we call “brainstorming.” Like a hive of bees, highly productive yet without central control, brainstorming unlocks the combined intellect of your firm and focuses it on specific business issues in an intense online dialogue lasting a couple of days. The concept originated with IBM, who call it “jamming.” Back in 2001 they used a “jam” to review their core values. Thousands of employees across the globe participated in an intense 72 hour moderated online dialogue. Without leaving their desks, the jam allowed

them to debate values and come up with a new corporate value statement. IBM has used jamming several times since, for other topics. Blogtronix and Edge replicate this process in any sized organization from around 100 employees up to the very largest in the world, for instance to obtain input into the firm’s strategy. Rather than taking people away from client work, people spend anything from a few minutes to an hour or so per day participating, from their desks, for two or three days. The process is participative, comprehensive and extremely cost-effective.

Imagine how productive your next partners retreat would be if the discussion revolved around the deep, highly qualitative results of such an intense and wide-ranging consultative exercise, rather than just studying the same old performance data and going through yet another SWOT analysis!

About the Author:



David Terrar is CEO of D Squared C Limited and represents Blogtronix in Europe. He has been in the software business for over 20 years. Following an Applied Physics degree at UCL, he spent 9 years with IBM. He then performed director and senior manager roles at various other IT firms. David writes the Business Two Zero blog and is a member of the Enterprise Irregulars and Social Media Collective blogging groups. Contact Dave at d2@d2c.org.uk.