

Climbing the Levels of Collaboration

Or, How to Harness the Power of Crowds (or your Coworkers)
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STC Webinar, September 2009



My Story

Senior technical writer at ASI
Blogger at Just Write Click
Started researching wikis at BMC Software
Working on the FLOSS Manuals wiki and community



Information Sharing

Co-location, email, IM, interviewing
The classics of collaboration. Follow the rules. Be on time. Be professional. Share.



Cooperating

Agile development practices : iterations involve retrospectives – what went well?
What would you change?
Crowdsourcing
Computer supported (social web enabled)



What's a wiki?

Created in 1995
Makes web pages quickly
Cross-platform, cross-browser



Wiki growth

Enables simultaneous edits
Give customer a voice and view point
Living, breathing, changing documentation



Collaboration benefits

Encourage crowdsourcing
Scalability goes up and up
Online identity



Wiki matching

Return on investment by reducing customer support calls
Sometimes a customer forum isn't enough
Open source products often use wikis



What a wiki can't do

Don't go on wiki suicide missions (Wiki for Dummies)
Don't put off collaborating with wiki engine research



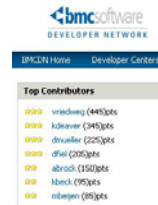
Motivating community contributions

Reputation
Reciprocity
Attachment
Efficiency



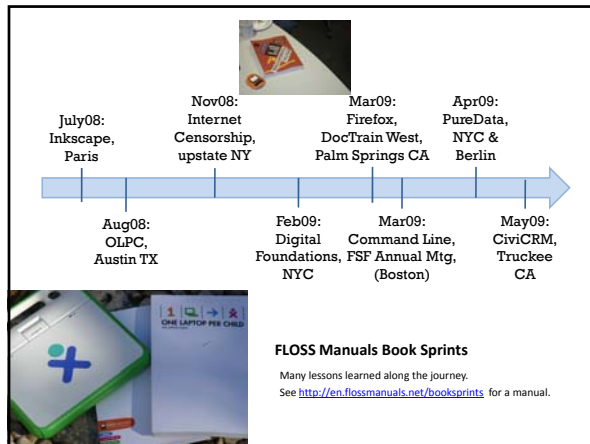
Reputation

Will your customers appear expert in your product if they contribute to your wiki?
This type of motivation is especially important to consultants.
Make their contributions shine so that they will return with more scenarios.



Reciprocity

What will customers receive in return?
Can you borrow a point system?
BMC Developer Network example: points can be traded in for t-shirts



Wiki Patterns

- Stewart Mader's website and book of the same name are extremely helpful for spurring wiki adoption.
- Patterns describe a certain solution to a problem in a context.
- To avoid problems, you want to follow a model pattern or be on the lookout for anti-patterns.



Best Practices

- Establish a working draft area and a "published" area (or wiki)
- Write a wiki style guide
- Give training on the wiki and a sandbox area
- Maintain rules for arbitration
- Offer original content, update content
- Beware of spammers, and back up often
- Join the community, be a genuine contributor
- Recruit reviewers
- Maintain categories
- Watch recent changes
- Expect small percentages of contributors and value them highly (90-9-1)

Resources

- Wiki tools research at wikimatrix.org
- Wikipatterns website for adoption and people patterns
- Meatball wiki
- Anne Gentle's podcasts on TechWriterVoices.com
- fefeathers.wordpress.com - technical writer at Confluence
- JustWriteClick.com - wiki category
- FLOSS Manuals at flossmanuals.net



Discussion

- Questions?

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www.conversationandcommunity.com

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