Ten Tips: Leveraging Blogs & Wikis In Your Consulting Practice

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Questions for the Audience

- ☐ How Many Folks Here Are Consultants?
    - ■ Solo? 2-5 Person Firm? Larger Firms?
- ☐ Who works On-site? Who works remotely?
- ☐ Length Of Projects:
    - ■ Several Weeks
    - ■ A Few Months
    - ■ Longer

About SKMurphy

- ☐ We Use Blogs & Wikis In Our Practice
  - ■ We Are A Small Team Of Four
  - ■ We Work Face To Face & Remotely
  - ■ Projects Run Weeks To Months
- ☐ Business Development For SW Startups
- ☐ Focus: Early Revenue & Early Customers

Goals For Talk

- ☐ Better Understanding Of Blogs & Wikis
- ☐ How to Use Blogs to Promote Your Practice
- ☐ How to Use Wikis for Project Team Collaboration

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Two "New Technologies" …That Are 11 years Old

- **Blogs: Xanga (96), OpenDiary (98), Pyra (99), LiveJournal (99)**
  - "Weblog" Coined By Jorn Barger In 1997
  - Shortened To "Blog" By Peter Merholz In 1999
- **Wiki invented by Ward Cunningham (95)**
  - "Simplest Thing That Could Work"
  - To Enable A Group To Edit A Website

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What Are Blogs & Wikis

- ☐ Content Management Systems
  - ■ Requiring Only a Web Browser to Access/Edit
  - ■ Typically With a Built-in WYSIWYG Editor
- ☐ Server-Based Web Publishing Systems
  - ■ Edit in a Text Window vs. Local Application
  - ■ No FTP upload
  - ■ Obsolete FrontPage, Dreamweaver, GoLive

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Blogs -- Questions For Audience

- ☐ How Many Of You Read Blogs?
- ☐ Which Blogs Do You Find Useful?
  - ■ (Add to Feedback Cards; We Will Summarize)
- ☐ Who Is Currently Authoring A Blog?
- ☐ Who Has a Webmaster for Web Updates?
- ☐ When Did You Last Update Your Website?

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What is A Blog?

- ☐ Website with Permalinked Entries
- ☐ Typically Reverse Chronology: New at Top
- ☐ Entries Can Allow Visitor Comment
  - ■ Trackbacks (Reciprocal Link Mechanism)
- ☐ Lightweight Web Content Management
- ☐ Can Be a Website with Pages / Hierarchy

Use Blogs to Promote Your Practice

- ☐ Demonstrate Your
  - ■ Thought Leadership
  - ■ Domain Expertise
- ☐ Act As A Dial Tone For Your Website
- ☐ Join The Conversation In The Blogosphere
- ☐ Bring Traffic To Your Site

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Blogs - Advantages / Benefits

- ☐ Software Automates Web Publishing
  - ■ No Need for Technical Webmaster
  - ■ Lowers Cost, Cuts Cycle Time
  - ■ Website Can Be Fresher
- ☐ Allow for Visitors To Comment Easily
- ☐ Trackbacks Show Inbound Links
- ☐ Permalink: Posts Accrue Links
  - ■ Impacts Google Page Rank

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Blogs -- Good Example

- ☐ Point of View: Personal & Authentic
- ☐ Tone: Professional with Domain Expertise
- ☐ http://johnlevyconsulting.com/
- ☐ http://www.zoliblog.com/
- ☐ http://radar.oreilly.com/tim/
- ☐ http://www.skmurphy.com/blog/

Blogs -- Getting Started

- ☐ Read Blogs Before You Write Blogs
- ☐ Plan Your Topics For 1-2 Months
- ☐ Answer Prospect Questions / Issues
  - ■ E-mail URL Instead Of Detailed Answer
- ☐ Comment on Other Relevant Blogs
- ☐ Some Production Tools, There Are Many
  - ■ Wordpress, Typepad, Blogger

Blogs -- Tips & Gotchas

- ☐ Get to the Point / Stay on Topic
  - ■ Keep It Simple
  - ■ Titles are Important
- ☐ This is a Long Term Strategy
  - ■ Blogging Requires Ongoing Effort
  - ■ Pick a Pace You can Sustain
  - ■ Once or Twice a Week is OK
- ☐ Anticipate SPAM, Install Filter(s)

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Wikis -- Questions For Audience

- ☐ Is Your Email Inbox Your Filing Cabinet?
- ☐ Do You Deliver A Written Report(s) ?
- ☐ Ever Hear These From a Client?
  - ■ Who Has The Most Current Version Of A Project Document?
  - ■ I Never Got That Email?
  - ■ Why Do We Keep Revisiting The Same Decisions?

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What is a Wiki?

- ☐ Read/Write a Website Using a Browser
- ☐ Built-in Revision Control – Easy Undo
- ☐ Basic Editing Tools: Text, Tables
    - ■ Advanced: Spreadsheets, Workflow
- ☐ Can be Public or Private, Most are Private
- ☐ Single Simple Name Space for Pages

Using Wikis to Deliver Projects

- ☐ Cut Time Needed To Reach Consensus On Deliverables Against A Deadline
- ☐ Source for Specs, Status, Agendas, Issues
- ☐ Leverage Hypertext;
  - ■ Avoid E-Mail, Attachments, File Servers
  - ■ Now Documents Can Link to Other Documents
- ☐ Keep Final Report Clean
  - ■ But Still Track Issues, Arguments, Decisions

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Wikis -- Good Example: Wikipedia

- ☐ Shows Power of User Contributed Content
- ☐ Mediated/Managed by a Community
- ☐ Focus is Content, Not Author
- ☐ Single Name Space & Rev Control Useful for Encyclopedias & Dictionaries

Wikis -- Bad Example: Wikipedia

- ☐ **Most Teams Collaborate in Private**
- ☐ **No Deadlines, Consensus by Exhaustion**
- ☐ **Managed by a Core Volunteer Community**
  - ■ …There isn't a Team
- ☐ **Don't Install MediaWiki Unless You are Building an Encyclopedia**

Wikis -- Advantages / Benefits

- ☐ Private Searchable Shared Documents
- ☐ Group Edit / Social Process
- ☐ Browser Based: No App Compatibility
- ☐ Revision Control is Built In
  - ■ Changes Never Lost
  - ■ Facilitates Project Post Mortem Analysis

Wikis -- Getting Started

- ☐ **Specifications and Issue Lists**
  - ■ Separate Arguments, Decisions, Specs
- ☐ **Team Meetings**
  - ■ One URL / Page for Meetings
  - ■ Agenda Pages can become Minutes
- ☐ **Some Good Wikis for Consultants**
  - ■ Central Desktop
  - ■ EditMe

Wikis -- Tips & Gotchas

- ☐ **Deadlines Trigger Write Conflicts**
  - ■ Pick a System that Prevents Them
- ☐ **Don't Fall Out of the Wiki Into the Inbox"**
  - ■ Publish into Wiki, E-Mail a URL
- ☐ **Make Wiki "Source of Project Truth"**
  - ■ Attach Working Documents
  - ■ Attach Relevant E-mails (or Initiate Within)

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Summary: Five Tips for Blogs

1. Get To The Point & Stay on Topic
2. Have A Plan: This is a Long Term Strategy
3. Titles Are Important
4. Combine Multiple Posts into Articles & White Papers
5. Good For Creating & Referencing FAQs

Summary: Five Tips for Wikis

1. Start with Specs, Agendas, and Minutes

   ☐ Frequently Accessed & Updated

2. Add Roster: Membership & Contact Info

3. "Recent Changes" Offers Quick Overview

4. Turn on Change Notification Via E-mail

   ☐ Cuts cycle time & Entices Team Out of Inbox

5. Consensus On Content Not Formatting

Summary: Blogs vs. Wikis

- ☐ **Both Manage Web Content & Publishing**
  - ■ Requiring Only a Web Browser to Access/Edit
  - ■ Blogs: Complex Sites, Hierarchy, Chronology
  - ■ Wikis: Single Name Space + Full Rev Control
- ☐ **Blogs Preserve Authorship**
  - ■ When in doubt, this is probably the default
- ☐ **Wikis Require Shared Incentives**
  - ■ Vehicle for Team/Group Consensus

Thanks For Your Time

Any Comments or Questions?

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Backup Slides

I Don't Feel Ready To Blog…
…But Maybe I Should Be Reading Them

- ☐ How Do I Find The Good Ones?
  - ■ Technorati Rank
  - ■ Blog Rolls of Blogs You Like
- ☐ How Can I Keep Up When They Change
  - ■ Most Blogs Offer "Feeds" via RSS/ATOM
  - ■ Use Netvibes or Other RSS Reader

Why Now

- [] Why Now: Lowered Barriers to Adoption
  - Added Browser Based WYSIWYG Editors
  - Templates / Rich Starting Points Available
- [] Don't Need to Learn HTML or WIkiMarkup
- [] Not Just Programmers or Webmasters
- [] Real Business Use: Real Impact