

Business wikis

E-bay has just launched a wiki for its customers. What is a wiki, and what advantages could wikis hold for businesses?

1 Which of the following things have you done / do you do? Compare your answers with a partner.

take part in projects at a distance	give Power Point presentations	maintain a company website
decide meeting agendas	write up the minutes of meetings	write or edit reports

2 Study the home page of a new wiki. Then match the six headings (1–6) to the correct postings (a–f) below.

Home	Help	Contact us	Log-in	Search
Wikis for business	(1) Wikis: an introduction → () (2) Business communication → () (3) Project management → ()	(4) Issues and concerns → () (5) Companies → () (6) Editing wikis → ()		Topics Articles FAQS

(a) Note that placing your document in a wiki does not necessarily make it editable by everyone in the company! The marketing department can make a Power Point slide available to the sales team, for instance, without allowing them to change it.	(b) I am still concerned about security issues. How accurate are the postings? Is there someone in the company with the time to maintain the wiki? Wikis are not for every company – although the fact that they are free or inexpensive to set up seems to favour smaller companies.	(c) Wikis have been around since 1995. They are just now beginning to take off for business. What is a wiki? It is a collaborative website. A wiki allows anyone to edit, delete or modify content. The aim of this wiki is to promote ideas for businesses which use ... wikis! So please, send your thoughts to us at ...
(d) I found it was easy to share ideas with the whole project team using a wiki. I used the wiki as a place to store all the project documents. They were accessible by anyone. We could track back over the different stages of the project. Collaborating on projects via a wiki is much more efficient than sending around email attachments with lots of revisions.	(e) Kodak, Disney, Motorola, SAP are all companies which have wiki success stories. E-bay has just added a wiki for its customers, so they can take part in 'social commerce'. This means that members of the e-Bay community can write articles. Future buyers may then come to recognise a particular writer as an expert on a subject.	(f) One of the major challenges facing companies is to ensure that information flows between groups. A wiki is an effective means of ensuring this. Post up an editable agenda for your next meeting! Or post the draft minutes so that everyone can change them before the final version. Brainstorm Power Point presentations on a wiki page ...

3 Read the six postings. What are the applications of wikis? What problems are there connected with wikis?

4 Find words in the postings from the following definitions.

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|--|-------------------|
| (a) allowing changes to be made | (posting a and f) |
| (b) involving people or groups working together to produce something | (posting c) |
| (c) to start something | (posting b) |
| (d) easy for anyone to obtain and use | (posting d) |
| (e) follow or find something by looking where it has gone | (posting d) |
| (f) things that need a lot of skill, energy and determination to achieve | (posting f) |

Some definitions from or based on *Macmillan English Dictionary*. Text © Bloomsbury Publishing 2002

5 Discuss the following questions in small groups. Be ready to report back your ideas to the class.

- How would you rate communication in your company? Could it be improved? If so, how?
- Would a wiki be useful in your company? If yes, how would it be useful? If not, why not?