

Web 2.0 Inspirations: Collaborative Chapter Event Planning Using Wikis and Google Docs



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Background



- Founded in 1919
- ~ 300 Members
- Includes greater Philadelphia region (aka the Delaware Valley): Philadelphia, southeastern Pennsylvania, northern Delaware, and southern New Jersey.
- Chapter members serve large (QVC) to small (CFAR) companies, universities (TJU), hospitals (Chestnut Hill) and everything in between.
- Active student chapter at Drexel University (DUSLA). We also draw library school students from Clarion.



Events

Traditionally, the Chapter has held 5-8 events per year.

Three of these are Chapter traditions:

- Annual Banquet (Spring)
- Wine & Cheese Reception (Fall)
- Holiday Party/Silent Auction (December)

We also include 1-2 "professional development" programs (lecture style w/networking time) and 1-2 Continuing Education programs with hands-on learning in the spring and/or fall.

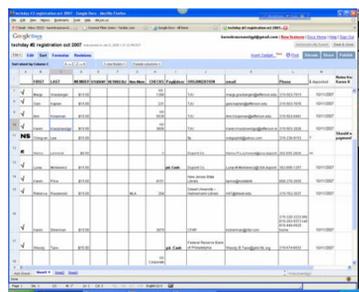
The TechTopics Series

- In the Fall of 2007, Karen Krasznalgyi in her role as Professional Development Chair organized a series of hands-on TechTopics workshops. The goal was to provide an overview of new technologies, such as wikis, blogs, office applications, etc and how to apply them to your organization. The following 3 very popular and successful programs were scheduled:
- The 2.0 Office: More Than Just Wikis & Blogs (Sept.)
 - Second Life (Oct.)
 - Firefox Plug-ins (Nov.)

All 3 sessions were well-attended with an average of 15 people. Sessions 1 and 3 were also simulcast. Session one (2.0 office) had almost the same amount of people on simulcast as in person. The nature of the Second Life session did not lend itself to being simulcast. It was, however, probably the most lively session held for our chapter librarians ever!

Trial Run: Sharing Registration Information using Google Docs

After learning about Google docs at the first Tech Topics session, Karen K. uploaded a spreadsheet containing registration and payment information to Google docs to share with Karen S. and the registrar (yes, also a Karen: Karen P.). *Main Advantage:* no emailing of various versions/iterations of the document. Just log into Google Docs to always see the latest version.



- Very easy to implement -- just need (free) gmail accounts
- Karen S. found it easy to edit spreadsheet to add payment information
- Allowed ease of collaboration for designing the style to fit each user's need going forward

Issues:

- While it is very similar to Excel, the Google Docs spreadsheet does not have ALL the same functions and features. You may find it easier to create your initial document in Excel and simply upload it into Google Docs for sharing.
- Sharing with persons behind a firewall, i.e. most companies, may be problematic or impossible (access to Google Docs may be blocked for security reasons).

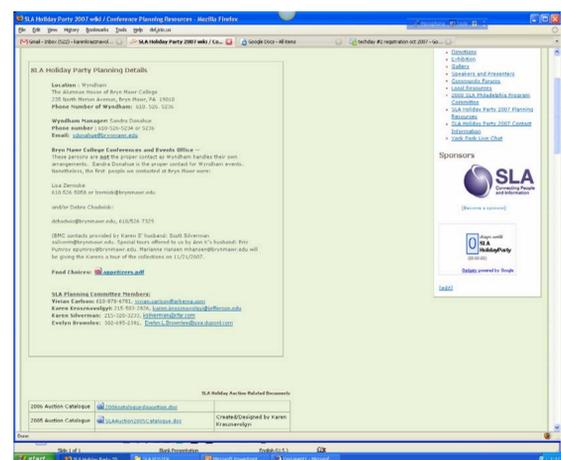
Lessons Learned/Challenges

- Wikis are easy to create and edit!
- Pulling readers/contributors in is always a challenge.

Our First Wiki!

Due to scheduling difficulties, Karen K. and Karen S. stepped in to plan the SLA Philadelphia Holiday Party/Auction beginning our planning relatively late. We decided we needed to work quickly and efficiently and came up with the idea to build a wiki using PBWiki to plan the meeting. Karen K was especially concerned about not re-inventing the wheel and worked hard to gather material developed in previous years.

Private Planning Wiki



Features

- PBWiki very easy to implement. Take advantage of templates already offered and modify according to your needs. (*Note:* 2 classes of wikis: Educational and Business. Templates vary in each of these. We used "educational.")
- We set this wiki to "private" so that only planners or board members would have access.
- Using PBWiki's "event" template, we were able to easily add extra features, such as the "countdown clock" which told us how many days we had left to plan before the event
- We found it easy to divide up tasks by creating a "to do" list which we could check off as we went.
- Previous year planning documents, catalogs, pictures, etc. are easy to upload into the wiki. There is a limit of 10MB for files in the free version (we did not hit the limit for our purposes).
- Email notifications (or RSS) updates you whenever the wiki is modified.
- No need to fear making changes as previous versions are only a click away. You can easily convert to an earlier version.

Sharing with our membership: Wiki #2: Holiday Party Wiki

We had so much fun and success with our planning wiki that we decided to build a public wiki to announce the event. We enhanced the site by adding a vehicle for registration (interactive PDF form), uploading the Auction Catalog, and adding many descriptions and pictures about the party, location, directions, vendor sponsorship, silent auction, book drive/charity, the history of the Knower Fund and any other pieces of information a potential attendee would want to know. As you can see, this is a traditional chapter event with many potentially complex pieces, all well-handled with the wiki.

Public Wiki homepage:



Silent Auction Catalog - TOC (Uploaded PDF document)



Thanks!

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For more information on:

- The Philadelphia Chapter of the Special Libraries Association: <http://units.sla.org/chapter/cph/>
- Planning wiki: <http://slaholidayparty2007.pbwiki.com/>
- Holiday party public wiki: <http://slaphillyholidayparty2007.pbwiki.com/>
- Pbwiki: <http://pbwiki.com/>
- Google Docs: <http://docs.google.com>

The TechTopics Series:

- The 2.0 Office: More Than Just Wikis & Blogs SLA Philadelphia Chapter, Philadelphia, PA, *September 18, 2007*
Link to presenter: <http://www.web2learning.net/publications-presentations>
- Your Library in Second Life: Taking the Virtual Plunge, *October 9, 2007*
- Firefox 2.0: Customize, Automate, and "Rediscover the Web" with Add-ons *November 13, 2007* http://docs.google.com/Present?docid=dhdxvtzj_27gw69r3

Further Reading

- "[Interviewees] indicated that they started with a small step into the social world, by blogging, chatting or contributing to wikis -- by participating. And discussing what they learned." De Rosa, Cathy, et al. Sharing, Privacy and Trust in Our Networked World. Dublin, OH: OCLC, 2007, p. 8-8.
- "Social software does an excellent job of overcoming the barriers of distance and time, giving people a chance to communicate and work together wherever they are... Using wikis, people can collaborate on a project online without having to be in the same room together or work on it at the same time." Farkas, Meredith G. Social Software in Libraries: Building Collaboration, Communication, and Community Online. Medford, N.J.: Information Today, 2007, p. 7
- "Although the Internet has made workers more independent, it has also led them to create communities built upon collaboration. In other words, our degree of separation from our customary work like has increased, while at the same time, we have never been so widely connected." Libert, Barry and Jon Spector and thousands of contributors. We Are Smarter Than Me: How to Unleash the Power of Crowds in Your Business. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Wharton School Pub., 2008, p. 144.
- "Technology is now making global collaboration not just possible but easy and productive. And the value of working across not only universities but nations is clearly immense, while limiting yourself to the skill set found in your immediate department or working group seems self-defeating. It's perhaps not surprising, then, that researchers who spend a lot of time working with researchers in other nations are significantly more productive than researchers who don't." Surowiecki, James. The Wisdom of Crowds: Why the Many Are Smarter Than the Few and How Collective Wisdom Shapes Business, Economies, Societies and Nations. New York: Doubleday, 2004, p. 163.
- "...profound changes in the nature of technology, demographics, and the global economy are giving rise to powerful new models of production based on community, collaboration, and self-organization rather than on hierarchy and control." Tapscott, Don and Anthony D. Williams. Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything. New York: Portfolio, 2007.

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