Blogging and Project Management Survey: Preliminary Findings

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Background

- My project management experience includes use of blogs and custom web sites as tools for managing communications related to project management.

- In 2007 I conducted a dozen exploratory interviews via phone and email to explore how project managers are using blogs as project management tools.

- This presentation contains a brief discussion of my preliminary findings & conclusions.

Caveat

- Small sample size
- May not be representative of larger populations
  - Most interviewees have IT project or program management (PMO) responsibilities
- Findings should be viewed as exploratory

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Overview

- Even among technical project managers, there is ignorance about blogging.
- Distinctions need to be drawn between publishing and collaboration functions.
- Some assume blogging is incompatible with dedicated project management software.
- Some blogging functionality is already being provided by other tools.
- Reduction of email and meetings is seen as a major benefit for project communication
- Opportunities and challenges are experienced when multiple groups are involved in the project.

"Ignorance about blogging"

- Many project managers have only a rudimentary understanding of blogs
  - No personal experience building or maintaining a blog.
  - Frequent association of blogs with public and personal information.
  - Little experience with "standard" blog features such as RSS feeds, index search, and tagging.
  - Lack of knowledge of self-hosted and remotely hosted options that are available to support corporate blogging.

"Publishing vs. Collaboration"

- Effective project management includes support for communication, publishing, and collaboration.
- Distribution of information (publishing) is not the same as collaboration.
- Blog supports both "push" as well as "pull" models for information distribution.
- Dedicated tools (such as wikis) may be more appropriate for certain types of collaboration.
- Collaboration involves getting people on the same page – and centralized publishing supports that.

"Versus Formal PM Tools"

- Dedicated tools include project management, time reporting, bug tracking, issue management, testing, version control, and help desk.
- Blogs should only be used in lieu of such tools in very simple or low volume situations.
- Blogs can be used as a way to provide centralized access to reports generated by such tools, especially in situations where discussions or review of such reports occur regularly.

"Availability of Other Tools"

- Enterprise content management and records management tools may be better at some project related document management functions.

- Some remotely hosted project management tools already incorporate discussion and collaboration features.

- Modern blogs employ standard web publishing features that can simplify integration with external sources.

"Reduces Emails & Meetings"

- Reduction in emails and meetings is cited repeatedly as a benefit of adopting blog based project communications, especially in projects where multiple documents and groups need to be managed.

- Convincing some managers to give up their email and desktop "office" tools can be a challenge.

"Usage by Multiple Groups"

- The more groups or "communities" whose project involvement needs to be managed, the more important centralized or coordinated communications becomes.

- It cannot be assumed that all project participants will understand or accept a single method for communication or collaboration.

Conclusions

- Blogs provide one of the simplest ways to provide centralized web access to a project's structured and unstructured data.

- Blogs don't replace task, resource, and workflow management tools.

- Blogs are not the only way to promote collaboration.

- Blogs take time and effort to promote and manage, especially when multiple groups are involved in adoption.

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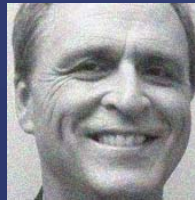
Dr. McDonald is an an experienced consultant and project manager with research and consulting interests in the following areas:

- Planning & managing the adoption and use of technology, social media & social networking.
- Innovation, project management, emergency communications, & strategic planning.
- Professional communications, associations, & content management.
- Copyright & intellectual property rights.

This presentation includes information already published in the author's web site "Dennis McDonald's Blog." A list of related articles is here:

http://www.ddmcd.com/managing-technology/category/project-management