

Cyber Threats and Security

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Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental Wiki - One wiki for EPA

Purpose

Environmental Wiki would support the Agency's knowledge management strategy and enterprise architecture by providing a tool for knowledge acquisition and access for all EPA staff in an easy-to-operate and convenient online encyclopedia of agency and environmental knowledge.

Two Concepts of Proposal

1. Environmental Wiki would be an enterprise wiki designed for EPA employees to collaborate on this one knowledge base and shared the wealth of information among Agency employees. Parts of this wiki could eventually be moved to a public space for national information consumption.
2. EPA is harnessing Web 2.0 technologies tools to adapt to individual office and regional business requirements to meet open-collaboration needs with government transparency, audience engagement, response, and information sharing and access. These mission-oriented applications/technologies interact, share, respond, and collaborate among two or more parties. One of these ever-increasing tools is the wiki, with more than 75 deployed wiki applications within EPA and a growth rate of 8% per month. This growth also increases our overall infrastructure hosting cost, support needs, and presents a management and standardization dilemma.

Impact

How can we apply a wiki tool to our daily EPA business practices effectively, keep it manageable and affordable, and use it with our infrastructure and architecture? The solution is to establish an Agency-wide wiki, called Environmental Wiki. This "One Wiki Concept" has many benefits:

Benefits and Improvement

- Lower cost in infrastructure, wiki deployment, and wiki application management,
- Unified management on implementation, communication, and wiki implementation,
- Collaboration on, communicate and discover agency information among offices
- Establishment of EPA University for new employees to learn about EPA businesses,
- Agency knowledge acquisition from staff knowledge and expertise,
- Standard approach of knowledge search, access, and presentation
- Integration with other enterprise applications
- Cost savings from application improvements and integration with added values

Applying Web 2.0 technology, such as a wiki, may affect the Agency and may change its business methods, its procedures, and even its culture and practices. A wiki tends to flatten the vertical workflow/process hierarchy, which may prove to be challenging given that traditional government organizations are hierarchal. However, the final benefits outweigh the cultural impact. We need a versatile, unified, and easy-to-use framework, extending to social networking practices within EPA. When a portion of the Environmental Wiki becomes publicly accessible, the public will be better served and informed and will have a tool to respond or interact with EPA, which will

promote trust and transparency to its audiences and stakeholders.

Deployment

The Environmental Wiki would become a collaborative Web space, such as Community of Practice forum, for the various program offices, partnered governmental entities, and trusted environmental organizations to access and contribute their knowledge on particular subject matter, collaborate, and integrate their staff expertise works onto a single "blackboard," with a series of dimensional sub-blackboards of wikis to accommodate the various different programmatic needs, congressional mandates, and judicial decrees.

As a starting point, we may use EPA OEI's taxonomy and glossary as seedlings; ask each of the program offices to include their programmatic regulations, knowledge, subject matter, and deliverables; and work with other government agencies to learn and deploy the Environmental Wiki. It is important to have a standard governance body to establish, modify, and maintain policies and guidelines for the Environmental Wiki.

Hopefully, Environmental Wiki will become a "living knowledge base" for EPA staff to access and will become a future reference for all federal government agencies to use on environmental subjects. Environmental Wiki may be a gateway for environmental information access for all and may reap the benefits of collaborative works/effort, components, shared experience, a social network for contribution, and knowledge management. Eventually, Environmental Wiki may become the source and clearing house of environmental information similar to Wikipedia.

Steps

1. Partner with various program offices, partnered governmental entities, and trusted environmental organizations.
2. Establish an Environmental Wiki project team with initial funding.
3. Establish a governance body for Environmental Wiki to establish policy and guidelines.
4. Prepare plans and strategy for Environmental Wiki development.
5. Develop Wiki Pilot with supporting blog, Web sites, and portlets.
6. Encourage all Agency offices to build and collaborate on OEI's taxonomy and glossaries of terms to seed the Environmental Wiki.