

Bringing Wikis to the Enterprise:

TWIKI.NET



www.twiki.net

If you've been looking to leverage the Internet to improve your productivity anytime during the last few years, you've probably heard of a wiki. It's a Hawaiian word meaning "quick," and an Internet phenomenon and cultural touchstone that is becoming as common a tool as using Google to find a Web page. If you are seeking a quick burst of encyclopedic information, chances are you will head to Wikipedia, the wiki-based project which has become the world's largest encyclopedia and one of the most visited sites on the Internet. The concept of wikis was invented by Ward Cunningham, who created and launched the first wiki in 1995.

The simplest way to understand a wiki is as a web page that anyone can edit. Wikis are web sites that permit users to create and change content and pages collaboratively. The organization of teams working on a wiki and frequently the content itself is inherently nonhierarchical: it is based on the collective actions and contributions of its users. Navigation is web-based and intuitive rather than rigidly structured. It makes creating, storing, archiving, and retrieving information much easier than traditional relational databases or patched-together networks of emails and spreadsheets.

Wikis have already become wildly popular, as they have been deployed through social networking tools such as Facebook, Friendster, and MySpace. Wikis make working together a pain-free process, and their ease of use is creating a culture of collaboration that is literally changing the way the world works.

TWIKI.NET is a company devoted to leading enterprise adoption of wikis. *TWIKI.NET* provides a certified, professional version of TWiki, the leading open source wiki, which already has two million users and 60,000 installations around the world.

Until now, the first wave of enterprise use of wikis has been dominated by technology companies and other early adopters. *TWIKI.NET* offers a fully supported version of TWiki, the most prominent open source wiki for enterprise use. Just as Red Hat shrink-wrapped Linux for businesses by adding elements such as installation scripts, documentation, support services, and a partner network, *TWIKI.NET* has productized TWiki. The result is a business wiki that can be used in companies large and small that are looking for new and flexible ways to communicate and collaborate across teams, functions, and locations in real time. In other words, *TWIKI.NET* will help TWiki cross the chasm defined by Geoffrey Moore in his famous analysis of technology adoption.

Chairman Rod Beckström and CTO Peter Thoeny founded *TWIKI.NET* to assist the growing number of companies that are looking for new ways to foster internal communication and collaboration, and that are seeking to overcome the challenges involved in successfully optimizing wikis for enterprise use.

Thoeny created TWiki as an open source project under the GPL license in 1998. Under the stewardship of Thoeny, TWiki's community site, TWiki.org, has grown into a thriving community-driven open source project with 30,000 developers. Sensing that this community had powerful implications for the future of the enterprise, Thoeny, coauthor of *Wikis for Dummies*, joined forces with Beckström, an expert in the use of collaborative techniques in distributed organizations. Beckström coauthored *The Starfish and the Spider: The Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organizations*, a best-selling book that explores the implications of the recent rise of decentralized organizations such as Skype and YouTube.

TWIKI.NET productizes the TWiki open source in the following ways:

- Through **Certified TWiki**, an easy click-through install of TWiki and all related software. Certified TWiki is delivered as a virtual machine bundle from the *TWIKI.NET* web site
- Through the **TWIKI.NET Subscription**, a fee-based service that provides various levels of support services as well as a regular stream of updates to keep your TWiki installation running smoothly
- Through **professional services** for implementation and configuration of TWiki
- Through the creation of a **partner network** to deliver services for custom development, training, and other services needed to take advantage of the full power of TWiki in an enterprise environment

Just as Red Hat converted the open source Linux operating system into a viable enterprise offering that can be used by any company regardless of its internal IT capabilities, *TWIKI.NET* ensures that wikis achieve the same level of acceptability—and indispensability—as an enterprise tool.

The World of TWiki

<i>TWiki</i>	The open source wiki engine that is used to run 60,000 installations supporting millions of users in over 100 countries
<i>TWiki.org</i>	The open source community that creates TWiki
<i>Certified TWiki</i>	A supported TWiki offering from <i>TWIKI.NET</i>
<i>TWIKI.NET</i>	The company founded to productize and support TWiki

The Enterprise Wiki

Although their popularity with the general public is well-documented, perhaps less well-known is the fact that wikis are in widespread use at major corporations such as Google, Yahoo!, Sun Microsystems, Intel, IBM and Motorola.

At IBM Research, 1,200 researchers distributed across 8 worldwide laboratories actually stopped using Lotus Notes—an IBM product—in favor of using a wiki, enabling open access, contribution and discussion of its research agenda throughout its lifecycle. The result is a new climate of collaboration: 236 individuals created pages, but 346 individuals edited them.

Why a wiki instead of Notes? Wikis promote the same easy, organic style of growth that was the hallmark and surprise of the launch of the Web itself. Wikis fit the way people work rather than making people work in a certain way.

Increasingly wikis are replacing intranets. At WikiSym 2005, Google's Shashi Seth reported on Google's very large Goowiki (TWiki-based) intranet. At Google, documents that are to be edited by multiple people must be wiki documents. For single-author documents, traditional formats, such as Office tools are acceptable.

Wikis are successful in corporations because they fill a vital gap between unstructured and singular applications such as Microsoft Word and email, and highly structured applications such as enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems. People can create content in a shared space and it can be changed or reviewed by others. With this capability comes a culture of shared values and shared ownership that

brings a collaborative attitude to companies, ultimately releasing the potential of individual talents across the organization at a scale that was heretofore difficult to achieve. Wikis are used for:

- meeting notes
- project management
- documentation
- content creation
- intranets containing documents that need to be accessed by employees

Think of a wiki like an organization's brain—it is a neural network that grows along with your organization. This means the wiki is one of the most powerful tools ever created for the enterprise. Because information is accessible to all authorized users, people—and their laptops—do not become information silos.

Information does not get lost if an information creator is out of touch with the group. For example, if someone is out of the office and work needs to continue on a document that person created, a wiki can allow that to happen without having to access that person's computer or search through files. With version control and archive protections built in to TWiki, there is a complete audit trail of activity so that when that person returns to the office or checks in remotely, they can see exactly what's been done. The latest version of an important sales presentation or spreadsheet is always available on the wiki; no more hunting through file servers. This is just one example of the enterprise wiki at work. The implications for wikis in the enterprise are virtually limitless. Within a few years, wikis will become as pervasive and indispensable as email.

Wikis even replace email for some applications. According to Chuck Parris, VP of interactive services at American Tire Distributors, speaking to *InfoWorld* in February 2007, "the IT team uses TWiki open source wikis to build editable documents about Sarbanes-Oxley compliance policy and IT processes instead of sending e-mails," creating an accessible repository of information.

TWiki: The Leading Enterprise Wiki

All wikis are not alike. The basic wiki is an open source tool that comprises a Web interface and a database of pages. There are two different types of wikis: publishing wikis and structured wikis. Most wikis like MediaWiki are focused on publishing content and allow users to publish text, images, or video. Structured wikis do what publishing wikis do, plus they allow the user to build applications and are designed for enterprise use. Many publishing wikis advertise themselves as enterprise wikis when in fact they do not handle data, forms, templates, and programming. TWiki is a structured wiki created by the open source community for enterprise use.

TWiki has features that enterprises need including the following:

- Easy-to-implement application functionality such as includes, sorting, and powerful automation capabilities
- The ability to run many wikis under one wiki engine
- Access control to restrict authorized access to a web or even to a set of pages
- Integration with directory services such as LDAP and Active Directory
- The ability to attach any file of any size to a wiki page
- Advanced link management
- A complete audit trail, since all changes, even meta data such as access control settings, are under version control
- A thriving plug-in architecture with more than 200 existing plug-ins

TWiki catches on like wildfire. At Thomson Learning, TWiki is being used to upgrade the staff's ability to communicate and its facility with Web 2.0 leading-edge applications. It caught on so fast among users—taking only a month and a half to become the main information source—that Thomson's TWiki use expanded. Asheesh Birla, a production tech director at Thomson, was quoted in a February 2007 *Publishing Times* article describing the exponential expansion: "We outgrew the server that we originally used, and are now using one in Mason, Ohio that supports 600-700 users."

TWiki is also the only wiki that fully realizes Peter Thoeny's vision for the Structured Wiki, a concept he invented that has changed the evolution of wikis. In a structured wiki, the basic wiki page is supplemented by simple application elements such as forms and database queries. TWiki even allows users to use individual wiki pages as databases so that they can be sorted and presented in multiple ways. The plug-in architecture lets users add new functionality quickly and easily, such as blocking malicious users, tracking action items, and obfuscating user e-mail addresses for spam deflection. Structure can be easily built-in; cut and paste one line and the wiki page features a comment box so that even those reluctant to edit pages can quickly weigh in by typing in the box and clicking a button. Structured features can be built into a template and then replicated by any user who creates a new wiki using that template. The result of using structured wikis is lots of programmatic power with little to no programming expertise required.

TWiki helps companies unite the far-flung teams that have become the norm today for collaboration. "We use TWiki internally to manage documentation and project planning for our products," says Eric Baldeschwieler, head of software development at Yahoo!, in a testimonial on TWiki.org. "Our development team includes hundreds of people in various locations all over the world, so web collaboration is very important to us. TWiki has changed the way we run meetings, plan releases, document our product, and generally communicate with each other."

Productizing TWiki—*TWIKI.NET*

In the beginning, TWiki was used in the same way Linux was used—experts and developers installed TWiki and used it for small applications and team projects. This pattern mirrors Linux's adoption; Linux was often installed by the IT department on a few servers and then began to spread across the enterprise. UK-based ARM followed this pattern. An article in the *Financial Times* describes ARM's TWiki deployment, where TWiki started as an IT effort that spread across the organization. TWiki adoption often starts with technical users, but then catches on across the organization: "It spread by word of mouth—people told their colleagues how great wikis are," says Dave Gwilt, engineering manager at ARM's fabric IP division. "It's extended away from the technical people to data release people, product managers, technical managers—people who are definitely not engineers or don't know any HTML," says Gwilt.

TWiki came to dominate the wiki marketplace because it contains the advanced, IT-friendly features that enable a wiki to be deployed in an enterprise quickly and easily. And unlike commercial companies, TWiki.org represents a thriving open source community of 30,000 developers and will not be closed off into a dead end by proprietary development.

TWIKI.NET, under Peter Thoeny's technical leadership, is already working with the community to develop the future roadmap for open source TWiki and intends to be one of many contributors to this vital and rich open source community. *TWIKI.NET* will both make investments in furthering the open source GPL code and also in developing and building software around the system that adds further value to business users, such as certifying, testing and combining TWiki along with other subsystems to make installation and maintenance easier for companies. Our research has shown that many companies love TWiki and would like to have more support services.

This means that there will be ongoing contributions from *TWIKI.NET* into the TWiki code base. (Some of the early contributions will be an enhanced editing toolbar and a new skin that *TWIKI.NET* has created that gives TWiki an enterprise-friendly look and feel.)

Like Red Hat, what *TWIKI.NET* is charging for are productizations to TWiki. *TWIKI.NET*'s mission is to spread TWiki to new users who require help to install it, upgrade it, integrate it with other systems, and keep it running as a mission-critical business system.

TWIKI.NET will make it easy to use TWiki in your enterprise by offering a tested, reliable, and supported version of TWiki. Before *TWIKI.NET*, TWiki's growth as an enterprise product was limited by what is known as the "productization gap," mechanisms provided by commercial software vendors, such as documentation, installation scripts, configuration mechanisms, and support services, which do not always accompany open source offerings.

Certified TWiki's features include:

- a free, downloadable bundle
- easy click-through installation in a matter of minutes
- a license for an unlimited number of users
- a user interface "skin" that is intuitive and visually appealing
- updates and upgrades through the *TWIKI.NET* Subscription

For the enterprise user, the *TWIKI.NET* Subscription for Certified TWiki offers all of the service and support standard for commercial software offerings, with the added benefit that comes from accessing the collective intellectual capital of the open source community.

The *TWIKI.NET* Subscription includes:

- automated installation
- automated updates
- LDAP integration
- certified plug-ins
- email support
- phone support (for installations of 50 or more user licenses)

TWIKI.NET was founded to cultivate, nurture, and advance TWiki as the leading open source enterprise wiki. Investing in a *TWIKI.NET* Subscription is not just a smart move for your company's future. *TWIKI.NET* is fully committed to collaborating with the open source community represented by TWiki.org and to subscribe to the company's services is to participate in the valuable ongoing development of technology in that community.

TWIKI.NET offers professional services for configuration, implementation, and best practices and is building a partner network that will bring customers even more value from the open source development community.

TWIKI.NET is closing the productization gap—enabling collaboration and revolutionizing productivity across the globe. Because of its intuitive interface, incredible ease of use and collaboration-enabling capabilities, TWiki is the leading wiki in enterprise use at major corporations, counting a total of 60,000 installations globally. *TWIKI.NET*'s easy click-through install has removed the final barrier to ubiquitous deployment of business wikis. Visit <http://www.twiki.net> to get started.

A Sampling of TWiki in the Enterprise

<i>Enterprises using TWiki</i>	<i>Enterprise Uses of TWiki</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ American Tire Distributors▪ ARM▪ Boeing▪ British Telecom▪ Circuit City▪ Disney▪ General Electric▪ IBM▪ InfoWorld▪ Michelin China▪ Motorola▪ Nokia▪ Novell▪ Orbis Technology▪ Reuters▪ SAP▪ TakeFive Software▪ Thomson Learning▪ Yahoo▪ Zone Labs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ CRM▪ Project management▪ Bug tracking▪ Inventory systems▪ SOX compliance▪ Contracts management▪ Customer service▪ Information sharing▪ Blogs▪ Integration with key business systems▪ Publishing▪ Documentation▪ Intranet replacement▪ Groupware replacement