

It's more than technology: how environmental resources management has embraced web 2.0 to address environmental issues

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Abstract

Environmental Resources Management (ERM), the world's largest environmental consulting firm with 3000 staff in 40 different countries, has invested in a global knowledge-sharing programme to support the delivery of world-class environmental consultancy services to our clients.

Minerva, ERM's global intranet and collaboration portal, offers all ERM employees access to a range of web 2.0 tools (for example, My Profile, wiki, blogs, collaborative workspace) with the aim of supporting continuous business growth, improving work productivity and supporting staff development. Appendix 1 outlines the four objectives of the knowledge-sharing program.

In this session, Dr Bonnie Cheuk shares these lessons learnt during the development and implementation of the programme:

- How we helped our senior executives overcome the initial resistance and embrace web 2.0 in their day-to-day work.
- What tricky issues we faced since the rollout in May 2007.
- What benefits ERM has reaped as a result of a new way of collaboration and communication enabled by web 2.0.

The speaker argues that 'leadership 2.0' is a critical success factor to roll out 2.0. ERM's senior leaders have demonstrated their commitment, capability and attitude to embrace 2.0 to run the business:

- In June, the senior partners jointly established an agenda for a two-day strategy meeting using a wiki page. Altogether 47 partners were involved in setting the agenda and contributing their thoughts from 40 different countries. Most partners are not familiar with web 2.0. They found wiki extremely easy to use once they were shown examples of how others are using it in a business context.
- In May 2007, the CEO's blog was launched with the aim of allowing all employees to have a direct conversation with the CEO. No anonymous posting is allowed, and all comments are visible to all users. The CEO, who was new to blogging, was given personal coaching to explain the power of blogging. He is now posting at least one blog a week.
- In July 2007, ERM launched a campaign to seek input from all staff about how we should address climate change as an organisation. On the homepage, employees had access to a video clip, a blog post from our climate-change expert and a poll to allow all staff to comment and have a genuine discussion with one another and with the senior leaders to address this issue.

Applying Snowden's narrative technique, post-launch research was conducted in October 2007. Over 1300 stories were collected, revealing further insights. A major benefit of 2.0 is its ability to 'turn ERM into a truly global organisation' in which all employees are empowered to identify others who care about specific environmental issues, to learn from one another, and to jointly develop solutions to serve our clients' needs.

Leadership 2.0 is ultimately about senior managers letting go of top-down control and encouraging an environment in which employees can easily find, learn and work with one another. Web 2.0 drives as well as supports this cultural change.

Appendix

THE FOUR OBJECTIVES OF THE KNOWLEDGE SHARING PROGRAM



Reference

'Environmental Resources Management: Enterprise 2.0 in action',
Inside Knowledge, Oct 2007 issue.
Available at www.ikmagazine.com.

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