

The Blogging Revolution in Government

Blogging finally comes to government. There's no doubt that the Internet has profoundly changed our work, our lives, our entertainment and our politics. Now the Internet itself is undergoing radical change. Since the dawn of the 21st century, how we communicate as a society has begun to change rapidly. Instead of going on the Web to read content, we can more easily create and share our ideas with consumer- or user-generated content. Many experts refer to this change as Web 2.0.

Blogging is at the forefront of Web 2.0 technologies. A blog is a web vehicle that is easy to create and update, typically by simply typing into a preprogrammed interface. Blogging is increasingly moving from the fringes to the mainstream, with intense interest from both corporate America and public offices as to how to join the conversation.

Increased pressure to join in. Government has been cautious about entering this new communication sphere. As blogging becomes more and more common, however, there will be both peer and public pressure to join in. Across the American public sector, some pioneering leaders are using this new technology to foster improved communications both with their constituents and within their organizations. Members of Congress, governors, mayors and police and fire departments are engaging directly with the public through blogging. In addition, blogging is being used within agencies to improve internal communications and speed the flow of information.

STARTCOM provides early case study. Pioneering public sector leaders are making use of blogging to improve communications. The U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM) has led the way in using blogging to transform the culture and flow of information, prompted by the need for speed in fighting today's challenges. In response to the threat of a rapidly evolving enemy that can sense and decide quickly, STRATCOM is seeking to implement 24-hour, real-time, secure communications from generals to warfighters. Blogging is central to the efforts to transform the culture and information flow at STRATCOM, where information, and specifically information sharing, is a key strategic success factor.

Other large organizations jump on board. For companies and other large organizations, including government agencies and nonprofit groups, blogging promotes a new sense of openness with an organization's stakeholders, including employees, customers, the public and the media. Blogging is an effective mechanism for improving internal communications and for managing knowledge, projects, shifts, and even corporate culture. There are potential downsides of blogging, in terms of personal productivity and employment issues, as well as security and liability concerns. And it is important to monitor the blogosphere for what is being said about you and your organization.

Return on investment. The impact and effectiveness of blogging in government is still unknown. It will be important to develop usable metrics to assess the utility and return on investment of blogging in the unique environment of the public sector.

This report contains an inventory of more than 400 hotlinks to government blogs. As such, it serves as a snapshot of the early advance of a tide of changes that will be coming about in all aspects of our lives, including government and governance in the age of Web 2.0. Although this new media is unlike anything that has come before, in it lies the potential and the very real prospect that these Web 2.0 tools can, over time, increase civic engagement and serve to strengthen our democracy for the 21st century. ■

Resources

David C. Wylde "The Blogging Revolution: Government in the Age of Web 2.0" (IBM Center for the Business of Government) 2007.



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