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How to start a wiki in your business

Check 1: Find a (good) Maintainer!

Maybe you as the reader of this checklist are the future maintainer of your business wiki. Be prepared for the following tasks, or delegate them to more suitable coworkers.

- check this cceck list (when reading this item twice, beware of infinite recursion 😉)
- be encouraged!
- be a trainer!
- be a support center!
- be an editor!

Check 2: Find a good Reason!

Obviously, there are many good reasons for starting a wiki. But, which benefits do **your** business achive from a wiki?

Starting a wiki costs time, and to run it successfully likewise do.

- Which information systems in your business are affected from a wiki?
  - do you have a content or document management system running? You probably don't want to compllicate the workflows by introducing yet-another-information-system!
  - do you have fileserver/file shares? You probably want to share the knowledge about these contents in the wiki!
  - do you have an intranet running? You maybe have to split the content areas between intranet an wiki!
- which knowledge you want to share (see also: Check 5: Choose proper content areas)?
  - static information can be stored in a simple intranet application, too!
  - media files are usually better managed in a media/asset management system!
- how collaborative work is done in your business?
  - do there are certain workflows? Maybe a document/content management system is better for you!
  - do you have large, distributed teams? Keep in mind: you have to share the knowledge about the wiki, too!

Check 3: Find the best Engine!

There are a lot of wiki engines available, many of them can be compared in
http://www.wikimatrix.org.

But: how deep do you have to struggle in feature decisions, which features are relevant?

- Do there are solely IT professionals in the group of your wiki editors?
    - Congratulations: you are not restricted in choosing the right wiki syntax! Otherwise you probably need a wysiwyg wiki…
- Do you need a hosting service or maintain the wikiengine on yourself?
    - If you have confidential content, you probably don't want to put it outside your office…
- Do you want to run the wiki engine on existing servers?
    - Then you are restricted on the system requirements.
- Do your team is distributed?
    - RSS feeds are very useful to keep anybody up-to-date on changes of the wiki content. But: Maybe you have to introduce RSS in your business, too…
    - Email notifications about changes may be very useful for you.
    - The larger and the more distributed the team is, the more you probably want to regulate the access and edit rights. Check out the Security/Antispam section properties!

Check 4: Choose the right team!

The more content is stored in the wiki, the more people uses it.

So, how to unleash the power of the wiki virus? You stuck in the problem of producing the intiial content. When reaching the break-even point, the wiki users may turn into wiki editors - or maybe not.

If you dont want to build up the initial content alone, setup a team of trailblazers.

choosing them from different divisions may be clever: not only for having allies distributed in your organisation - especially the intial content will become more common.

Check 5: Choose proper content areas!

The main disadvantage of a wiki is the lack of structure.

If you dont want a clump of content, setup a initial structure. It can be useful to protecd the index pages from being edited by anyone.

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And don't forget to

- setup a playground
- setup a howto
- setup the documentation

Check 6: Choose a proper start time! (Take time!)

Setting up the wiki (namely the wiki's content) is time consuming.

be prepared to:

- convict your boss
- teach your allies
- setup content
- teach and support your coworkers

Check 7: Maintain!