

Social Media bite 4: Improving group collaboration and productivity

Whatever your occupation, it is likely that part of your job is to create information and knowledge in the form of academic papers, reports, minutes, etc, jointly with others. A common method for sharing such documents with collaborators is to send them around as email attachments. However this can be problematic as you end up with multiple versions. A better way is to use tools that allow version management across multiple authors, as well as allowing for better team productivity.

The aim of this session is twofold:

1. to introduce social media tools (e.g. wikis, Office type suites, video conferencing, etc.) and practices that can help you collaborate better with colleagues and be more productive.
2. to enable you make effective use of these tools for your own purposes.

Reflecting on your current practice

ACTIVITY - In pairs, think of a situation when you have to work collaboratively with colleagues (e.g. co-authoring a document, organising a meeting, planning an event, etc). How do you do it? What tools do you use? What challenges and problems do you encounter?

4 ways to improve collaboration and productivity

1. Use Yammer instead of email to facilitate team collaboration and communication

Yammer is an enterprise social collaboration tool (a hybrid of Facebook and Twitter) that provides a portal where all employees can connect, message and work together. This gives employees a platform where they are allowed (or even encouraged) to be more publicly social, informal and inventive without the intrusion of emailing everyone.

A team Yammer group is a great place for both formal and informal team collaboration and communication. It is particularly useful for sharing ideas and knowledge, asking/answering questions, organising events (such as your team Christmas lunch!).

See connect.mit.edu/blog/37-ways-mit-uses-yammer for more ways of using Yammer.

ACTIVITY - 1) Go to www.yammer.com and login with your University email (vwxyz@bristol.ac.uk) and password and click on the group 'Social Media bite 3' on the left. 2) Type in a new post to introduce yourself. 3) Reply to someone else to welcome them.

2. Use a wiki as a shared collaborative space for your team or project

A wiki is a website developed collaboratively by a community of users, allowing any user to create and modify content, and to discuss this content.

Wikis are very versatile and can be used for many different purposes including (but not exclusively):

- documentation space – to create and manage documentation;
- team space – to collaborate and share resources within a team;
- knowledge base – to capture and share best practice and solutions to common problems;
- collaborative writing – to co-author an academic paper;

- personal space – to keep your own notes, task lists, etc.

The University hosts its own wiki service. It is called Confluence and can be accessed at wikis.bris.ac.uk. Anyone with a UoB account can create a wiki space and invite users (including external). Read the [Confluence User Guide \(goo.gl/XzRKvR\)](http://goo.gl/XzRKvR) to get started

ACTIVITY - 1) Go to wikis.bris.ac.uk and login with your University username and password. 2) Follow the instructions given by the tutor.

3. Use a cloud storage service for collaborative writing

Cloud storage allows you to keep your files remotely and to access them from anywhere and (almost) any mobile device. Other benefits include the ability to share files with others and to co-edit them, version control, etc.

At the University you currently have the choice between Google Drive for Work, which comes with your UoB email account and Microsoft OneDrive for business.

Both offer similar features (including online office suite, easy file upload, etc), but the main benefit of MS OneDrive over Google Drive is that it integrates seamlessly with Microsoft Office for Windows/Mac. This means you can edit a Word, Excel or PowerPoint document in the stripped down online version or in the desktop application if you require more functionality.

ACTIVITY - 1) Go to portal.office.com and log in using your University email (vwxyz@bristol.ac.uk) and password. 2) Select the OneDrive icon and follow the tutor's instructions.

See www.bristol.ac.uk/it-services/applications/office for further information.

4. Video calling and conferencing using Skype for Business

Skype for Business is Microsoft's Instant Messaging (IM), calling, video calling, and sharing and collaboration all rolled into one package. It is not yet available at the University, but will be soon.

ACTIVITY - Watch the quick introduction video: goo.gl/zvP6Ma.

Further information

A list of links related to this Social Media bite is available at goo.gl/gfKi0h