



Integrated Workforce Experience Case Studies

CDO Information Development Community

“Sharing information and generating ideas are constant activities among the technical writing community, and IWE provides the collaboration tools and environment to help us generate more relevant documentation and expand our scope to post other types of writing about the same products and technologies in one place, including marketing documents, configuration guides, etc.”

- Sandra Durham, CDO IWE
Information Development
Community Owner

Key Benefits:

- Consolidation of evolving best practices and updated information
- Fast and efficient communication of the latest product news
- Collaboration and camaraderie promoted within the community

Business Value:

- Scale
- Replicability

Executive Summary

With the ability to integrate a wide array of tools, resources, and Web 2.0 collaboration technologies all in one community, technical communicators have good reason to join the Central Development Organization (CDO) Integrated Workforce Experience (IWE) Information Development Community. Providing a forum for sharing best practices and good ideas across Cisco, it allows individuals with specific expertise to serve as resources to colleagues throughout the world. The community is thriving, and community owners see tremendous benefits from different project tiger teams easily sharing information within the community, eliminating redundancy, sharing lessons learned, and promoting alignment and consistency in technical documentation.

About the CDO Information Development Community

Technical writers, editors, and illustrators in many different business units have come together in the CDO IWE Information Development Community, where members can share information, ideas, and best practices, and collaborate on the creation of documentation that informs and assists Cisco customers about Cisco products and solutions. With nearly 500 members, the community was previously organized based on email aliases, wikis, and websites, which made consistency and scalability of information difficult.

Business Situation and Challenge

Technical writers, editors, and illustrators working on teams across 15 divisions within CDO are dependent upon tools and evolving best practices to keep documentation on Cisco products and solutions accurate and up-to-date. Shared best practices help increase efficiency and limit redundancy.

Previous resources available to this community of communicators were spread among many websites and Web 2.0-era tools, including blogs, wikis, and discussion forums. Team members also received information via email aliases, and then had to maintain separate files of documents and presentations.

About IWE

Integrated Workforce Experience (IWE) is Cisco's internal collaboration initiative encompassing business process, culture and technology.

IWE allows you to more effectively connect, communicate, and collaborate with people and communities, as well as share information to help accelerate growth, encourage innovation and create sustainable productivity.

In addition, Cisco WebEx Social, the underlying platform for IWE, is our very own product, which is being sold to customers and partners.

Solution and Benefits

Members are professional communicators who are comfortable collaborating, so it is understandable that the CDO Information Development Community was one of the first communities to launch when IWE was first introduced to CDO in February 2010.

With IWE, these technical communicators found an environment where information, dialogue, and collaboration could be integrated and consolidated for faster communications and more efficient use of resources.

The CDO IWE Information Development Community grew rapidly among technical documentation professionals. Resource links were quickly added, and the community owners and 10 other active members began initiating discussions and posting information and links on technical writing projects best practices, and issues faced by technical communicators.

The community's Dashboard page was kept relatively simple, with IWE help and training links to get members quickly comfortable with using IWE; a Quick Links portlet with websites that the technical communicators frequent; the Electronic Document Control System (EDCS) and Cisco Defect Tracking System (CDETS) portlets developed by the CDO IWE core team; and other portlets commonly found on the Dashboard.

The most popular feature is the discussion forums, which provide members with real information that they need to do their jobs. The community owners created a custom Tab called "Writer Workflow," with sub-tabs that encompass:

- Research:** Research on product features, caveats, and how to obtain information about product releases; resources to develop and improve documentation
- Write & Edit:** Links to templates, standards, authoring tools, and best practices
- Review:** Links to Cisco review tools and process documents
- Publish:** Resources to print and publish documents and to understand and improve user access to published documents
- Develop Online Help:** Place to discuss online help; post questions, tips, and ideas
- Improve Quality:** Resources to improve and maintain the quality of documents and links to engineering-related and technical documentation resources

A Page Comments portlet on each of these pages captures members' suggestions for improving content or making necessary changes.

Another custom tab entitled "Wiki Links" was added to the community, integrating wikis from 15 different technical documentation and technical support groups across Cisco, from the Access Routing Technology Group (ARTG) to the Wireless Network Business Unit (WNBU). Another custom tab, "Initiatives," is a special area for discussions on technical documentation initiatives that include Customer Feedback, Web 2.0 Innovations, Learning Initiatives, and Writing and Process Improvement.

In certain situations, the Announcements portlet has replaced sending email, which has been particularly useful for disseminating information about tool downtime.

Community members are encouraged to:

- Launch WebEx meetings from My View
- Rate content, reply to posts, and boost their community participation ranking
- Subscribe to message board categories to get posts in email
- Make My View their home page
- Tag content

Through these activities, the CDO IWE Information Development Community helps keep technical communicators in CDO and across Cisco informed about evolving best practices, tools, publications, and opportunities in their field. Community members gain a sense of camaraderie, get a chance to express their views, and share their expertise. The community environment integrates document management, collaboration, and communications tools, making it easier for members to find specific content and colleagues with similar or complementary skills and experience. The overall goal is to reduce redundancy, speed the flow of up-to-date information, and ultimately produce better technical documentation more efficiently.

Looking Ahead

Community Owner Sandra Durham has developed a long wish list of items she would like to see included in IWE. "IWE powered by Cisco WebEx Social has so much potential; however, it will take time for true adoption and understanding of the richness in the tool. Status updates, for example, will be very helpful and can foster discussion, but people aren't used to that kind of interaction. It will be a learning curve that needs strong support from upper management."

Durham also admits that cross-community collaboration is hampered somewhat right now "because so few of our engineering, TAC, and marketing project teams are on IWE. So that would be another wish list item, to draw those people in so they can share their knowledge and status in an open venue."

Another hope Durham has is that the community's owners engage more managers as active members. "Managers formulate their fiscal year plans and include them on open-access wikis," says Durham. "I'd love to have them do a blog and share their plans within our community."

The good news is that all of the items at the top of Durham's wish list will be addressed in the very near term as IWE powered by Cisco WebEx Social continues to release new capabilities and functionality over the next few quarters. With the help of the C&C Board and the addition of the Boards and Councils community, and the future Management Central community, there will be much opportunity for leadership at Cisco to lead the way.



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