

# PROCESSOR

## Tech & Trends

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### General Information

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## Technical vs. Social Controls

### SMEs May Find Success With More Social Techniques

Imagine for a moment that your company has been commissioned to compile a Web-based encyclopedia that encompasses almost every topic imaginable, from the Second Punic War to vitrification, among more than 1.5 million other items; that you have five years to complete it; and that anyone in the world may contribute to this project.

As CIO of your company, what would be your roadmap for this project? What sorts of hierarchical control systems, security management technologies, user privileges, and reporting strategy would you include? Who in the company would have the authority to make revisions on the project? Would you need to allow shareholders to approve this project? How many attorneys would you need? And could the project reasonably be completed within five years?

Under traditional IT thinking, such a project with its many processes and procedures would be an infinite project that would soak up infinite resources and money—and would still be vulnerable to such organizational issues as how to integrate an acquired company into this schema or what to do when three divisions merge. In contrast, the development and evolution of Wikipedia occurred within a five-year period, explains Gartner Group Vice President Tom Austin.

Austin contends that socially mediated spaces such as Wikipedia have advantages over technology-based managed systems. Rather than rely on technology to keep employees in line, adopting social controls has the potential to regulate employees' actions and ethics—and lead to innovation, in many cases.

"We get in trouble because in IT, [CIOs and IT managers] apply technology because they can, not because they should," says Austin. "We need to start asking ourselves what is the least we can do."

#### ■ Reward People For Wasting Time

Part of the problem is the gap between traditional views of what constitutes work and the ways in which people, particularly those whom Austin calls "digital natives," work. According to Austin, people's work lives and personal lives are intruding on one another, so one cannot assume that an employee who has been surfing the Web for the past three hours is doing nothing beyond buying books on Amazon.com and checking out porn.

Blane Warrene, director of investment technology at ValMark Securities ([www.valmarksecurities.com](http://www.valmarksecurities.com)), a firm specializing in wealth transfer and business insurance, says the nature of research has changed dramatically from the past. "In the past, you would talk to someone, do the research, and then get approval from your [boss]. The first thing people do now is they hit the Internet, do a Web search, and tune down the results. It's hard to separate personal research and [what is considered] company research because it's become part of people's

behavior. They're connected nonstop," he says.

For his part, Austin believes that it is in a company's interest to encourage such Web 2.0 technologies as forums, wikis, or personal Web pages. "They encourage employees to share a bit of themselves. Allowing employees to upload personal Web pages, where they might share information about their dogs or hobbies, develops relationships based on trust," Austin says. "Companies that successfully lubricate social dialogue lubricate the efficiency of communication of interests and practices outside of the company hierarchy."

If anything, Austin says companies ought to reward people for wasting work time. "It's about meeting objectives, not activities."

### ■ What Parameters To Set

For social technologies and controls to work, companies must delineate parameters for employees to follow. Austin says policy on unacceptable use, such as sexual harassment or racial slurs, is the same for the Internet or cafeteria. Other more Internet-specific actions also need to be spelled out. "People cannot go around anonymously. They need to sign in and provide credentials for internal blogs, internal community spaces, and Web pages," he says.

According to Warrene, these limits circle back to clear and concise human resource policies that are well communicated. "It's about setting expectations, not handing out a 90-page manual that only says, 'You can't do this,' or 'You can't do that,'" he says. "By effectively communicating [these parameters], employers have a chance to use social engineering to innovate policy. And IT needs to stay in tune with new technology and initiatives" to keep abreast of the innovations in the social technology realm. ■

*by Robyn Weisman*

## Three Parameters For Content Exchange

Paradoxically, Gartner Group Vice President Tom Austin asserts that you cannot trust your employees and other people accessing your network from a pure technology point of view. At the same time, many of the present rules that companies put forth, such as prohibiting workers from using personal equipment on corporate networks, are unenforceable. Instead, Austin offers these three steps for intelligent content exchange between users and networks:

1. Anytime someone uploads anything to the network, check it for malware.
2. Adopt DRM (digital rights management) technology whenever possible and appropriate. Don't just give people downloads. Make sure these downloads are protected, locked, and encrypted in the database.
3. Do not assume that a user does not have keyboard retention technology. Instead, use a hardware-based security token so that passwords are constantly changed.