

Technology Bureau under the guidance of Gaston Barban, Chief Information Officer.

But these new tools must not be mistaken as a technological initiative. As Gaston explains, "The main purpose of the e-collaboration initiative is to change the way we communicate and share information within the department. These tools will enable us to improve the way we build our knowledge base and develop networks. The technology is merely the catalyst and platform for the change."

Web 2.0 is a simple concept: users generate the content. Individuals can discuss and communicate facts, ideas, reference sites, experiences, knowledge and any other matter of interest. Web 2.0 technologies rely on collective intelligence rather than on the knowledge of a few individuals.

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Overview of DFAIT's e-collaboration tools

Wiki@DFAIT: The wiki will enable us to collectively and simultaneously work on a document. For example, you will be able to prepare briefing notes, mission reports and other documents, or develop policies in collaboration with various departmental staff, regardless of where they are. Within a few hours, all experts could have been reached and could each have contributed their respective content.

The wiki's rollout, anticipated to happen by December 2008, is the responsibility of Helen Jelich, Director, Information and Knowledge Management. The wiki is already available at http://10.20.20.108/index.php?title=Main_Page.

Social networking: Personal profiles will replace the existing employee directory. These profiles will offer employees much more latitude by allowing them to include their photo, interests, knowledge, skills, and their professional networks. In short, the new directory will be a type of "departmental Facebook." This directory will help us quickly find the expertise we need at any given moment and on any subject. Using keyword searches (China, hurricanes, French politics, etc.), you could find all of the contact people within the department who have the expertise you require. The result would mean less research, and fewer meetings and emails.

Internal blogs: This practice, which is a part of social networking, is already widely used on Parliament Hill, and numerous ministers and deputy ministers have blogs. All departmental employees will be able to have their own

blogs, where they can discuss professional issues, projects, initiatives, programs and services. Updating blogs is left to the discretion of authors, since the purpose is to exchange ideas, knowledge and expertise with others who are interested. Blogs can also be used to update employees on how certain projects are evolving. This technology allows people to provide feedback and, consequently, it can help employees become more engaged on various issues, regardless of their roles in the department.

Nora Chow, Director of Corporate Information Systems, has been delegated with launching these social networking tools within the next year. Seminars and courses will be held to help employees adapt and make the best use of these tools.

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"NetGens" now make up the majority of the workforce that the department wants to attract and keep. This generation of individuals under 29 years of age grew up with the Internet, and they are therefore very active on the Web, where they collaborate and participate in discussions on an almost daily basis. Just look at Facebook, Wikipedia, Flickr, YouTube, Blogger, etc. By the year 2010, NetGens will make up 40 percent of the workforce. Our U.S. and British counterparts have already reacted by adopting Web 2.0 technologies to reach this segment of the population. We must follow their lead.

The champion of the e-collaboration initiative, Pierre Sabourin, Assistant Deputy Minister, International Platform Branch, is enthusiastic. "E-collaboration gives us the incredible opportunity to connect everyone and to build solid networks within the department, while placing the expertise of each and every person within the reach of all employees," he says. "We invite all those who are interested in taking part in this initiative to contact Gaston Barban. We need the greatest possible number of employees from all areas, communities and offices of the department to participate in order to make the tools work successfully."

The times call for change and revolution. These new tools are going to revolutionize the way we work at DFAIT. Are you ready?

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