CORANTE RESEARCH
Real-Time Insight, Long-Term Impact

Dark Blogs: The Use of Blogs in Business

Case Study 01
A European Pharmaceutical Group

A Corante Research Report
by Suw Charman

"About a month ago, just after launch, I was presenting the system to our executive committee, some of whom had not yet seen the blog or received the email digest. I was two or three minutes into the demo when they started to focus on the content and talk about the business issues brought up by the material they were reading, which from my point of view was great. That's exactly what you want — forget about the application and focus on the content that it delivers."
   — *Chief Information Officer*

Sponsored by

traction® software

13 June 2005

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Blogs, or weblogs, are websites which allow users to easily post information of any type, with each post categorised by topic, time-stamped and displayed in reverse chronological order. Blogs usually allow readers to leave comments on individual posts, encouraging conversation between blogger and commenter. Permanent links, or 'permalinks', allow readers to bookmark individual posts within the blog.

Blogs are being increasingly used in business instead of large, unwieldy content or knowledge management systems, for enabling business processes and engendering communication, but few examples of real-world usage have been made available to executives interested in assessing the suitability of blogs for their own projects.

This case study examines how a European pharmaceutical group used Traction Software's TeamPage (www.tractionsoftware.com) enterprise weblog software to create a competitive intelligence (CI) knowledge base to replace previous platforms such as Lotus Notes databases and static websites.

The CIO chose Traction TeamPage for a number of reasons:

- the format was ideal for the type of competitive intelligence material they were collating
- it was easy to implement and could be tightly integrated with existing business systems, such as the LDAP corporate directory, Lotus Notes and Microsoft Office
- it supports unlimited, individually permissioned blogs within a single, integrated installation
- it supports user permissions across reading, authoring, editing and commenting functions on a blog by blog basis
- the publishing process allows for collaborative editing
- it was easy to use and required minimal training, thus lowering the bar for adoption
- it was low cost to buy, deploy and manage

The CIO put together a small team which began examining the CI problem in late 2002, beginning development with Traction Software in 2004 and soft launching that autumn. They decided that, due to the nature of the material being published, an editorial committee was needed to ensure content had been validated before publication. They created a clear publishing process, with a private editorial blog to which readers could submit potential content via email or a web form. This content would then be assessed by a member

of the editorial committee and posted to the appropriate blog. This semi-open publishing process is balanced by a fully open commenting system which allows any reader to post comments on any article.

The blogs were promoted via word of mouth, coverage in the company's internal magazine and viral marketing, with the CIO and his team mentioning the project in any presentations they gave. The initial user group was drawn from a pool of employees already active in the competitive intelligence field. Users were introduced to the software in informal face-to-face meetings where they could explore it at their own pace. Formal training procedures were deemed unnecessary due to the simplicity of the user interface.

Traction TeamPage has had a very good reception from users, who found it to be easy to surf and navigate. The project as a whole has also been received very well, with feedback from users indicating that they find the content relevant and valuable. Although the jury is still out, early reaction is very encouraging.

The blogs were promoted via word of mouth, coverage in the company's internal magazine and viral marketing.

The CIO is now examining the possibility of increasing the number of blogs from the six currently in place, for use in more project-based work across the group. He is working with Traction Software on enhancements to the current system including further integration with third party applications. His experience with blogging has been overwhelmingly positive, and the company are keen to see the project grow.

Background

A European pharmaceutical group with nearly 4,000 staff, the company has a global presence and develops products in several targeted therapeutic areas with more than 20 products currently on the market.

In addition to Information Technology, the CIO is also responsible for supporting the company's competitive intelligence function, 'assisting in the collection, analysis, evaluation and dissemination of competitive intelligence material that is pertinent to our business'. It was proving difficult, however, to find a way to effectively keep people up to date with important events and news, and encourage discussion around this information.

Previous CI initiatives had been 'somewhat uncoordinated', relying on technological solutions that proved to be insufficient, such as static web sites

and Lotus Notes databases. Indeed, CI wasn't recognised as a cross-functional discipline and didn't have the necessary level of management support until two years ago. The CIO therefore decided to start afresh with an installation of Traction Software's TeamPage enterprise weblog software.

"I wanted to put in place a corporate repository for competitive intelligence material, a way to capture and share a knowledge base of relevant information about our competitive environment. We had had a number of smaller projects before and some of that content has been imported and subsumed by Traction TeamPage. Other projects will probably follow suit in the coming months or years — we have a number of Lotus Notes based applications that are not widely used and I think it would behoove us to replace them and include that content as part of our blogs."

Why Use Blogs?

There were a number of reasons to use blogs rather than either a more formal content management system (CMS) or knowledge management (KM) software. Firstly, the flexibility of the blog format was ideal, allowing for short and long items, the inclusion of links, and the sorting of data using categories.

Ease of implementation and use were also important, and the ability to integrate the Traction TeamPage software with existing business systems. Cost was also a factor — enterprise weblog software such as Traction TeamPage is significantly less expensive to buy, deploy and manage than solutions offered by KM or CMS vendors.

Traction TeamPage provides much the same categorisation and content management functionality as other KM solutions, but is more granular, allowing users to label and comment on individual paragraphs within a blog post. It also has a strong collaborative authorship capability, with an almost wiki-like group editing facility.

"The blog format lends itself particularly well to the type of material that we're producing," said the CIO. "Competitive information is always very unstructured and comes in lots of different ways — through the internet, internal sources, and various other ways. Using blogs to organise the data is quite effective because it doesn't impose too rigid a structure where we need some inherent flexibility.

"The ease of implementation was also important. It didn't require a huge ERP-type project to get the blog up and running, but what it did require was that we spent time amongst ourselves to really think about how best we wanted to use it, what capabilities should we exploit, how do we want to

structure the blogs, what kind of classification schemes do we need, and what kind of search and output capabilities do we require. In terms of the technology, it was really a piece of cake to put in place and that really was a significant element in our decision making process.

"Another factor was the possibility of integration, for example, producing an RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feed, or integration with Internet Explorer and internet content, as well as the ability to reasonably easily import Microsoft Office content. It was quite appealing from that point of view. And finally, it was a very inexpensive solution to put in place as well."
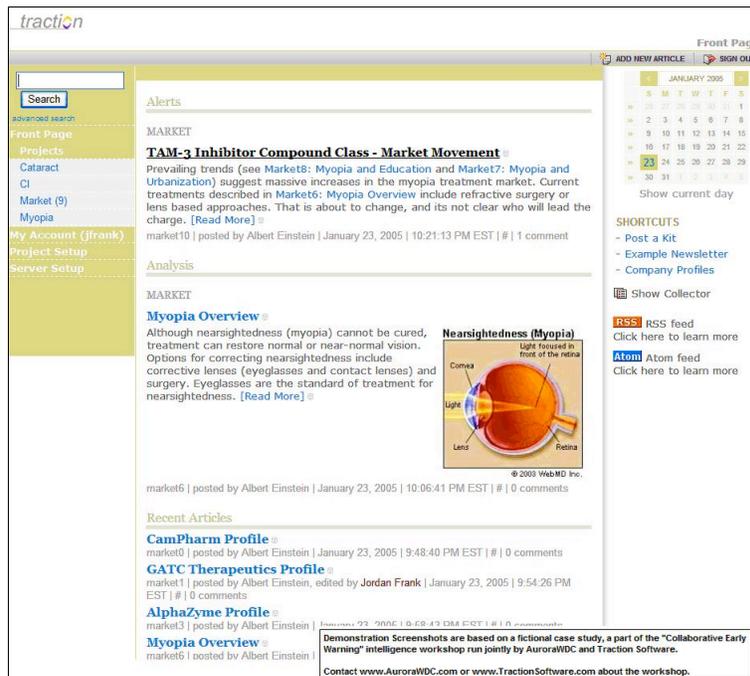

Figure 1. Example of integrated home page, from a fictional case study.

Within a single installation of Traction TeamPage on a single server, the CIO and his team have been able to set up several integrated blogs, targeted at different user groups. Each blog draws from the same database with posts directed to different blogs through the use of labels, e.g. one post can be published in two different blogs simply by applying two labels to it. Thus if a user has permission to read multiple blogs, they do not have to visit each blog in turn, but instead see all relevant posts on one integrated home page.

"Using Traction TeamPage we could potentially set up different installations on different servers, but today we have one on one server. Within that installation we have four blogs organised according to our therapeutic areas of interest such as oncology and endocrinology. These blogs are restricted to

a named user population of approximately 150 people at the moment, comprising marketing, research and development, operations and senior management.

"In addition we have a blog for more general industry news, which is open to any intranet user. And then we have a private blog for the editorial committee, for the review and analysis of new content, which is limited to about 10 people."

The blogs are organized thus:

- General news — anyone within the company can read and comment, but only the CI editorial team can post new articles directly. Comments and email submissions are reviewed and moderated by the editorial team before they are published to the blog.
- Therapeutic blogs — access to these blogs is restricted to a named community of about 150 people, who can read and comment. Content and comments are again moderated by the editorial team.
- CI Editorial Board — visible only to the editorial team.

Planning and Implementation

The project began in late 2002 with a CEO mandate to improve the competitive intelligence function and the CIO was charged with the task of identifying the key problems and potential solutions. Within a newly assembled competitive intelligence task force, he put together a small team of three — himself, his Editor in Chief and the Associate Director of R&D Knowledge Management — who were responsible for planning and implementation of a new technology platform for competitive intelligence.

Because of a lack of external expertise to draw on, such as published case studies or papers discussing best practice, the first phase of the planning process saw them work from first principles on outlining what the project should achieve and how. It was important that they define the exact business problem they needed to solve in order to find a suitable solution.

"First of all, it was not a very formal process, because we were learning as we went along and I don't think we would have been able to find a lot of external help to support us. I worked a good deal on the structure of the blogs and all the capabilities we needed. For example, we had to define a nomenclature for the labelling of information and consider how best to support advanced search capabilities. We defined the requirements, not in a very rigorous fashion, but we created a 'vision' of how we should use the

software and what we ultimately wanted to get out of this application.

> **"We created a 'vision' of how we should use the software and what we ultimately wanted to get out of this application."**

"Our Editor in Chief provided a usability perspective, drafting the rules and procedures for the publishing process. She addressed the questions that a day-to-day user might have, such as 'How do I contribute?', 'How do I post new articles?', or 'How am I going to categorise and classify the content?'."

They started discussions with Traction Software in spring 2003, and together they worked on defining requirements, and designing and building an example installation for presentation to the Executive Committee for approval. In March 2004, the company engaged Traction Software to start development and, after further consultation, they began to customise certain aspects, including:

- the user interface, to better match the existing intranet environment

- a simple web form for posting intelligence information to the private editorial blog

- an advanced search function, including a drill-down search capability
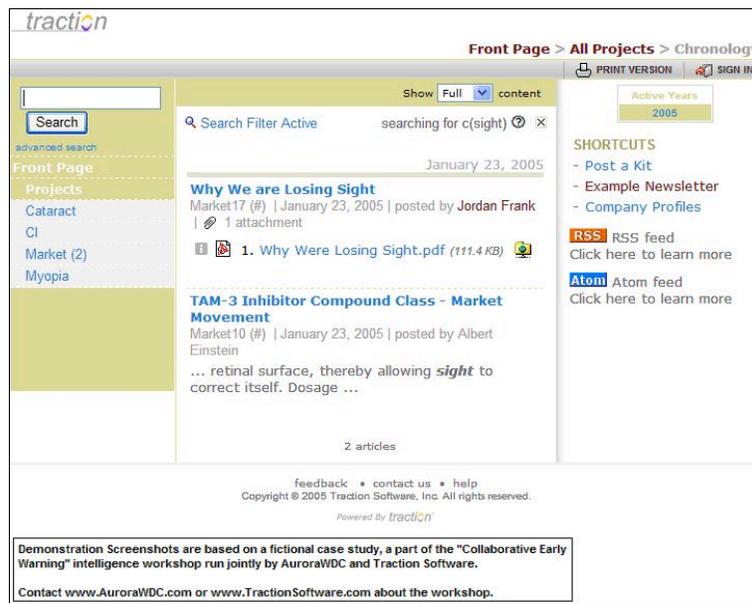
Figure 2. Search results page from a fictional case study.

"With respect to deployment," says the CIO, "we rolled out over a reasonably long period of time. For all intents and purposes, the blogs were operational by the summer of 2004, but we built it up gradually, starting communication around it during the fall period whilst we were implementing some of the last bits of functionality that we needed.

"IT-wise, it went very smoothly. I have to say that the team from Traction Software was extremely responsive and it's been really very nice to work them, they've been very professional and extremely helpful."

Integration with Business Systems

To maximise the functionality of the blog, it was essential to integrate Traction TeamPage with existing business systems and software.

"We worked very closely with the team from Traction Software around various issues," says the CIO, "such as the adaptation and implementation of a particular skin that we needed, and integration with an external search engine which could search attachments as well as blog content.

"We have also created an interface with Lotus Notes in both directions, with email digests being sent to subscribers on a daily basis and an email address to which users can send potential content which is then automatically imported into the editorial blog."

The biggest challenge that faced the team was the integration of Traction TeamPage with the company's corporate directory system.

"Integration with our LDAP corporate directory was essential to avoid multiple logons. From a technical point of view this was the hardest part, and it required quite a few iterations to get it right, partly because our implementation of LDAP is probably not as straightforward as it could be. But that eventually worked out nicely — the blogs are now fully integrated so people can use their corporate ID when they log in to Traction TeamPage."

Other Social Software and Collaborative Tools

There are a variety of other social software and collaborative tools that can complement the use of blogs in a business context, such as instant messenger, wikis (openly editable web pages), or collaboration software. These tools, along with blogs, help streamline the way that people communicate, ensuring that they use the method best suited to their immediate needs.

Blogs and wikis are often paired together — blogs for the time-based interactions such as commenting on news or information, and wikis for time-independent interactions such as collaborative editing of a document. Traction Software have built many wiki-like features into their software, including a comprehensive edit history and group editing.

"Whilst we are not using wikis, we have implemented a collaborative project management platform called Andromeda, which we are using to facilitate communication in various projects from development to IT projects to functional or transverse business re-engineering projects. It's a good way of gradually doing away with email."

Increasingly in business, he believes, email is becoming a communications problem rather than a solution.

"Email is getting out of hand and people use it in suboptimal ways. They write back and forth, sending documents over and over again, with the end result that nobody knows whether they are working on the correct version of a document and everyone has lost track of where they stand and what the last resolution was on a particular issue on a particular discussion point.

"It has come to the point where individuals are receiving anything up to 200 emails a day, yet a lot of it is just copies of content that is of absolutely no interest whatsoever to them. It's becoming counterproductive and it's not an appropriate medium for many types of communication, so we need to find a way of replacing email. Clearly blogs and collaborative platforms are two key ways of doing that."

The CIO hopes that between them Traction TeamPage and Andromeda will lead to a better use of email across the company.

Editorial Process

The strength of external blogs, and one of their key features, is their unmediated nature — transparency, honesty and authenticity creates trust in the reader and that improves the company's standing in the wider community. However, in an internal business context it must be decided whether an open publishing process is appropriate.

The nature of the competitive intelligence information and its potential effect on employees' work meant that a clear editorial process was required for all blog content.

"We formed an editorial committee headed by the Editor in Chief, which included the five or six people who are the most active in posting new articles

to the blogs. For example, they would be the ones to break the news about a drug being pulled out of the market by a pharma company, including analysis of what it means for that manufacturer, for that particular franchise and their competitors. That information is then available to the intranet users who can react and respond through the comments, which is the main way of establishing a dialogue."

The editorial team utilised Traction TeamPage's wiki-like functionality to support collaborative editing, with a complete change audit trail providing a clear record of who made which edit and when. The permissions system also allows them to specify who has access to edit which blog posts.

"In competitive intelligence you need some level of control and sanity checking to avoid misinterpretation or even rumour being treated as true."

"At this point, we are not aiming at opening up the publishing function beyond the existing editorial team. People outside of that group can still contribute to the blogs — if they hear something that they think is very interesting they can submit it directly by email or via some semi-structured web forms. It is then automatically posted to the private editorial blog for review."

The content is then reviewed by one of the editorial team and is transferred from the private editorial blog to whichever CI blog is appropriate.

"We created this interim step for content validation in order to ensure that the information we published had been properly evaluated, reviewed and deemed appropriate. In competitive intelligence you need some level of control and sanity checking to avoid, as much as possible, misinterpretation or even rumour being treated as true."

Although this prevents the publication of unsuitable posts, the comments system is open and is where there have been some cultural hiccups.

"The issue with appropriateness is in the comments: How do you make sure these comments are appropriate? Even though we have an editorial team, they cannot spend all their time monitoring everything that's happening. We don't have at this point a very explicit process for dealing with inappropriate comments, so either I or the Editor in Chief will deal with any problems. In a couple of instances we have had to remove a comment altogether, but we have to remember that it's also an educational process for the users.

"Some people thought that they were responding only to me or to the author, but when they posted the comment they realised that everyone could

see it. Gradually we'll come to a point where people truly understand the ins and outs of the medium and how best to use comments. They will understand when to pick up the phone or send something by email, rather than directly commenting on the blog."

An editorial process also helps to keep the bloggers' work load under control. The temptation with blogging in a corporate environment is to assume that people can blog in addition to their existing responsibilities, but in reality this can prove problematic because of the amount of reading and research that can be required in order to write meaningful and useful posts.

By implementing a flexible model for contribution — where for some members of the editorial group contribution is a part of their job, but for others it is optional — the company has ensured that expectations are made clear. For users who are not a part of the editorial group, the simple, optional submission process ensures they can contribute without additional pressure on their time.

"We defined a fairly formal publishing process because one of the concerns with blogs is if it gets totally out of hand you can get postings and entries that are not necessarily in the best interests of the company. Equally, do you want a lot of people spending their entire work day either chatting via the comments, or contributing a large amount of unnecessary material."

Launch and Promotion

The CI team had the blogs up and running by late summer 2004, soft launched in the autumn, and hard launched in February 2005. They have taken a muted approach to raising awareness, preferring to slowly increase the user base over time via word of mouth than attempt to get sudden widespread adoption through a concerted internal marketing campaign.

"The analogy that I use is that this is an online version of your favourite newspaper or magazine."

"We relied on word of mouth and viral marketing," says the CIO. "Myself, our Editor in Chief and our Associate Director of R&D Knowledge Management talk about the project every opportunity we have. As part of my CIO function, I often give presentations to our affiliates, with a good deal of emphasis on the IT side of things, but I always try to spare maybe half an hour or 45 minutes to talk about what's being done in CI and to tell people about Traction. We have regular management conferences and meetings at which I give presentations and talk about the CI function.

"In terms of the message, the analogy that I use is that this is an online version of your favourite newspaper or magazine, the difference being that instead of sports, business, or politics sections, you will find sections on each of our therapeutic areas, plus other general pharma news, and people instantly relate to that.

"Additionally, we have an internal magazine that's published every two months and at the end of last summer the cover story was a two page spread about competitive intelligence, including one full column on Traction TeamPage. So when it came time to do the official launch quite a number of people knew that the project was already underway."
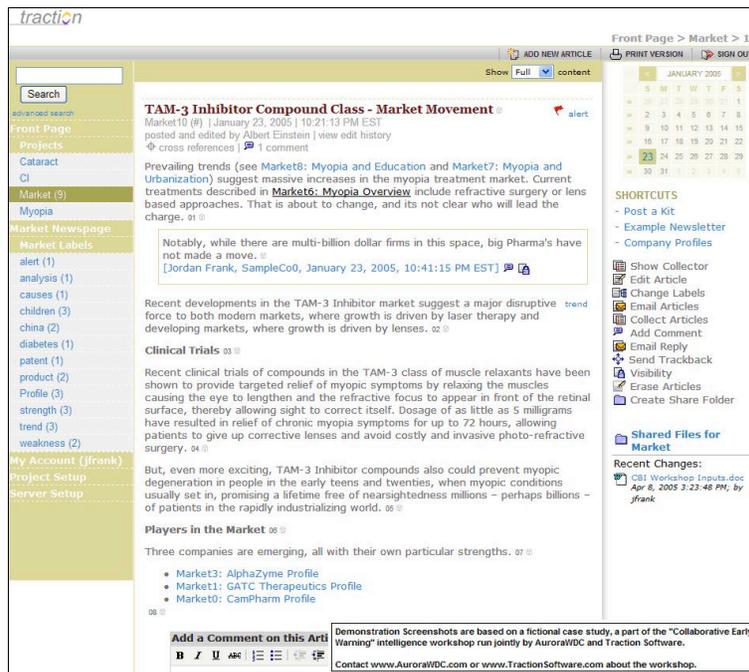
Figure 3. Article from a fictional case study, showing paragraph level comments.

One key element in Traction TeamPage is the ability to control user access — it's possible to create tightly defined user groups who have permission to read only specific blogs. Blog content which a user is not authorised to see is completely hidden from view so only information which is relevant to the individual is presented to them on their Traction TeamPage home page. This allowed the CI team to create clearly delimited initial user groups, selected from those already involved in competitive intelligence initiatives and those with a direct interest in the competitive environment.

"For the pre-launch phase, we focused mainly on the editorial group and people who had been involved in the CI workgroups that I was leading. Then

when the official launch came we created an initial set of about 150 named users based on availability, awareness and interest rather than through a formal selection process."

This ensured that initial users were more likely to find the blog content directly relevant to their jobs, thus bolstering interest in the project and encouraging people to explore the new tools and climb the (helpfully shallow) user learning curve.

Training and Support

Traction's simple and intuitive user interface meant that there was no strong need for either a conventional training program or a complex user manual. Instead, the CIO arranged small meetings where he could introduce the new project and system informally.

"We ran small face-to-face meetings," he explains, "where we spent one or two hours presenting Traction TeamPage, explaining the principles and philosophy behind it and how people should be using it. We showed users the key principles such as how to navigate, how to create a comment, how to send something to another person, the publishing process, search, labelling and so on.

"I probably wouldn't even qualify these meetings as training sessions — it was really just showing people the tool and what can be done. We didn't take them by the hand and have them do exercises or follow a script, we just said 'Here it is, this is how you access it on the intranet, this is how you get the newsletter on a daily basis'.

"If you're used to surfing on the web then you have no problem using Traction."

"For basic needs such as getting the daily summary, reading articles and posting comments, I don't think training is required. If you're used to surfing on the web then you have no problem using Traction TeamPage."

In terms of user manuals, the team designed a full colour, one page reference card as the primary documentation which was sent to all users, both electronically and in paper form, together with an email introducing the system. Although this effectively covered the main functionality and features, they are planning more in depth user support.

"We most likely will go for a second phase, however, to demonstrate the more advanced functionality because at this point I am sure the users are

only scratching the surface in terms of capabilities. As a minimum we will probably have to go through another round of these meetings, but I think we can get by without a lot of formal training."

Reaction and Adoption

In most companies, 'blog' is a word that means nothing to the majority of people and this pharmaceutical group is no exception. As the CIO says, "If we were to do a poll in our company and ask people 'What is blogging?' we would probably get about 80% blank stares."

But this lack of existing awareness is in many ways irrelevant. For the company and the users, what matters is not the name of the software, but how well it works.

"Many people don't even realise that they are using a blog, and we haven't heavily advertised it in this way — it's just a new tool. It has got a very good reception, however, and all the people I've talked to are positive about it. They welcome the ease of use, the user friendliness, and the fact that it's just like any other website that they can surf and navigate. I don't think they realise that the underpinnings are based on a quite different paradigm."

The software is only half the story, though. What is more important in the long term is the content that's being published and advantages conferred by raising awareness of the market in which the company operates.

"User feedback has been good. People think that the material we are publishing is relevant and they are beginning to use it. About a month ago, just after launch, I was presenting the system to our executive committee, some of whom had not yet seen the blog or received the email digest. I was two or three minutes into the demo when they started to focus on the content and talk about the business issues brought up by the material they were reading, which from my point of view was great. That's exactly what you want — forget about the application and focus on the content that it delivers.

"The other thing that was extremely popular — and probably the top feature in terms of user acceptance — was the daily digest."

The daily email digest includes the title and first paragraph of new posts and comments, organised by project and importance — articles labelled 'Alert' or 'Analysis' are listed prominently. Users can also subscribe to real-time email alerts which let them know when new articles have been published.

"That was probably the single most important feature in terms of getting the interest and awareness from the user community. They get an email in their mailbox every morning when they log in which is basically a concise summary of all the news that had been posted since the previous day and then they may decide to go deeper into the details on the blog itself, or maybe the headline view is sufficient and gives them the good overview they need."

This method of disseminating the most recent content from the blogs is popular because it's comfortable and familiar. Everyone is used to receiving emails, so the digest forms a bridge between old and new technologies. Blogs are based on a new, unfamiliar paradigm which, if it were explicitly explained, many people would find discomforting. Using email as a conduit, instead of an RSS aggregator for example, allows people to gradually become familiar with the new system.
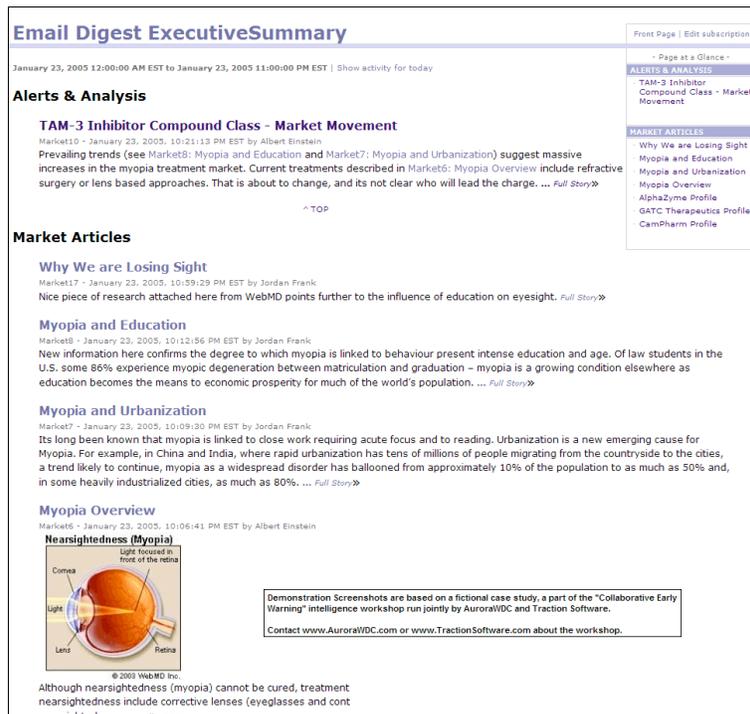
Figure 4. Example of an email digest from a fictional case study.

"Culturally, certainly there is a bit of a shift for some people who tend to think that knowledge is power and that it should not be shared because it's confidential. Clearly adoption depends on the individual character of each person. But our executive committee was very supportive and our CEO was the first one to discuss CI as very much a collaborative process. This is a competitive landscape and things are happening in the outside world which

people have to be aware of, and they have to be able to engage in a dialogue on any particular piece of information. From that standpoint we got very strong support from top management which certainly was very useful throughout the development of the project.

"Of course, there is still a lingering scepticism amongst some users as to whether, for example, someone who is reading an article on our competitive strategy for a particular product line should be able to react to and challenge it, even though it has been endorsed and approved and we are moving forward based on that strategy. This more open communication environment which encourages dialogue can be a bit disruptive to these people.

"I am sure we will have to adapt and fine tune our message to make sure that people do understand that this is a very powerful medium. It's very easy to publish and communicate, therefore you need to think quite hard about what you publish, because if it's on the blog people will take it at face value, and that may lead to actions or activities that might not necessarily be in the best interests of the company. So there is a need to ensure people understand how best to use this dialogue capability in a business setting."

Results

In the absence of similar projects against which to compare results, it is difficult to know how to define success let alone measure it. Because this project only launched a few months ago it is premature to be looking for clear results, yet early indications are positive.

"On the IT side there has been a good impact in that the perception of some people with respect to IT and what it delivers has changed and evolved to a more positive opinion. Again, the ease of use, the user-friendliness, and the fact that it's not yet another item for which there is a 300-page user manual and three days of training to sit through was well received.

"On the business side, what we are trying to accomplish is to gradually build a knowledge base of competitive intelligence material and have Traction TeamPage become our central repository for that information. But it's very early in the process and it's hard to measure the impact or find some sort of ROI yardstick, so I think it's probably quite premature to assess it.

"Blogs are now something that people are using on a daily basis as a part of their normal work environment"

"That said, it is now something that people are using on a daily basis as a part of their normal work environment, which for me is already quite a positive point."

According to anecdote, companies that use blogs internally also see a drop in email, but in this case the project is too early to be sure if this will occur.

"I wish I could say yes, we've seen a drop in email, but I can't at this point. The ratio of original articles to comments on these articles is still very high, I am hoping again that as the system develops that people will get their heads around it and they will get more in the habit of using it for social communication and ongoing dialogue, but we are taking it very much one step at a time and it's going to be a fairly long journey to that end."

Future Directions

The flexibility of blogs and software such as Traction TeamPage means that no blogging project need remain static. It is a simple matter to expand use, to take account of and build upon unpredicted emergent user behaviours, and to react to changing needs and environments. The CIO is keen to expand the use of blogs into new areas

"After about three to six months," he says, "once we have accumulated enough experience, we will start to think about our results from that period, and analyse the statistics we collect in a bit more detail to see in which directions we want to take it.

"There are a couple of possibilities. The first one is to offer departments and affiliates the ability to start their own blogs for their own purposes, in the context of CI. The other area that I'm looking at is whether we could use blogs for more structured communications around, for example, project management. That's something we've already begun to discuss with the team from Traction TeamPage to see how potentially we could use blogs for those purposes.

"I think what is nice is that we have a platform that is very flexible, where it's quite easy to envision a number of different uses for it, and we just need to find the time to sit down and reflect on where could we get the biggest bang for our buck."

The CI team are also want to develop additional functionality.

"We've discussed certain enhancements with the team at Traction Software. One area of possible evolution would be how to integrate asynchronous communication, represented by the blogs, with the more synchronous

applications such as instant messaging and voice over IP. That is an interesting area of convergence."

An important area for development is the use of RSS. Traction TeamPage produces a dynamic RSS/Atom feed of both posts and comments which users can customise according to their own preferences and access permissions. The feed can include the contents of specified blogs, posts by a given author, or the results of a search across single or multiple blogs. At the moment, the installation does not fully utilise RSS, but the CIO would like to change that.

"We are looking at ways of more fully exploiting RSS capabilities. We are testing some meta-search engines to keep an eye on the number of sources on the web, and these engines can export some RSS content so it would be useful to have that linked directly to Traction TeamPage. It could also prove beneficial for some users to be able to have an RSS reader on top of Traction TeamPage, so we are investigating that as well.

"Additionally, tighter integration with Lotus Notes, which we use for scheduling, would be valuable, and also the incorporation or integration of enterprise wide search capabilities."

Overall, the CIO's experience of using blogs in the corporate environment has been positive.

"So far we've been extremely pleased with the use of blogging and Traction TeamPage," he says. "The system is running smoothly and users are satisfied with it, so we will undoubtedly work on expanding and exploiting it in other areas over coming years."

Conclusions

Despite a lack of prior art or external expertise regarding blog-based projects in enterprise to draw upon, the CI team have created a project which successfully addresses a clear business need, and which in many ways begins to define internal blogging best practice:

- The blog's aims were clear and precise and had been defined after comprehensive examination of the problems

- The project had the full support of the CEO and the Executive Committee

- There was a well constructed project plan, which included consideration of high level issues such as structure, taxonomy and search requirements as well as day to day user requirements

- A clear, semi-open editorial process was defined

- The open commenting system allows for dialogue with users

- Integration with existing systems and technologies created a more seamless user experience

- Read permission control means that potentially sensitive information can only be accessed only by those who need it

- A slow roll out to a focused user group ensured word of mouth evangelisation and gradual build up to hard launch

- Training has been kept simple and minimal, reducing barrier to entry for new users

- Integration with email allows users to access content that's important to them via a familiar application

In terms of problems, the oft-expected problem with user adoption did not materialise. However, there have been minor issues around cultural change which fall into two categories: Firstly some users have not clearly understood the ramifications of posting a comment, thinking that their comments would be visible only to the blog post author, rather than the whole user community. Secondly there has been some scepticism regarding the value of allowing users to push back on company decisions that have already been made and are being acted upon.

These issues are being dealt with on a case by case basis, and as people come to understand more clearly how the tool works and become more comfortable with the cultural changes that blogging engenders, these problems should be ameliorated.

Other areas where problems could have been expected, but did not appear, was implementation and integration. Traction TeamPage's ease of implementation and use, and the support given by Traction Software, has been instrumental in the success of the project. Apart from some work required to ensure integration with LDAP, there have been no real IT problems. Compared to setting up a similar project on a more traditional CMS or KM platform, the project has been simpler, faster, more effective and less expensive to implement.

Appendix A: Questionnaire Data

The first part of the research for this case study took the form of a questionnaire. This provides a standard dataset which will, insofar as is possible, be consistent across all Dark Blogs case studies.

Business details

Business type:	Private
Industry sector:	Pharmaceuticals
Size (approx. no. of employees):	Nearly 4,000

Blog details

Date blogs implemented:	Second half of 2004
Purpose of the blog(s):	Internal comms, knowledge sharing event logging, effective organization & dissemination of Competitive Intelligence material with support for feedback and discussion
Number of blogs:	
Individual blogs:	None
Group blogs:	6
Number of bloggers overall:	Approx. 150
Frequency of update:	Twice or more a day
Time spent blogging each week: (hours)	Difficult to estimate. Most postings contributed by an editorial committee of 6-10 people.
Time spent reading and researching each week: (hours)	Figures not consolidated but average length of visit per our logs is approx. 13 minutes.
What priority is blogging?	Optional/if have time for most people.
How much software training have bloggers had?	Some (overview presentations, quick reference card).
How much training have bloggers had re: writing?	Comprehensive
Traffic statistics gathered by:	Combination of standard W3C log analysis tool (NetTracker) and reporting capabilities of our blogging application
Page views:	Approx. 50,000 per month

Technology used

Blog software:	Traction TeamPage
RSS aggregator:	None at present
RSS feed version:	RSS 2.0 ATOM
Other social software used:	Web-based collaborative software
Blog 'furniture' used:	Permalinks Comments Archives Search Calendar Categories/Topics Email link

Appendix B: Figures

All figures are taken from a fictional case study created as part of the Collaborative Early Warning intelligence workshop run jointly by Traction Software and AuroraWDC.

Figure 1. Example of an integrated home page

Figure 2. Search results page

Figure 3. Article, showing paragraph level comments.

Figure 4. Email digest

Email Digest ExecutiveSummary

Front Page | Edit subscription

January 23, 2005 12:00:00 AM EST to January 23, 2005 11:00:00 PM EST | Show activity for today

Alerts & Analysis

TAM-3 Inhibitor Compound Class - Market Movement

Market10 - January 23, 2005, 10:21:13 PM EST by Albert Einstein

Prevailing trends (see Market8: Myopia and Education and Market7: Myopia and Urbanization) suggest massive increases in the myopia treatment market. Current treatments described in Market6: Myopia Overview include refractive surgery or lens based approaches. That is about to change, and its not clear who will lead the charge. ... *Full Story*»

^ TOP

Market Articles

Why We are Losing Sight

Market17 - January 23, 2005, 10:59:29 PM EST by Jordan Frank

Nice piece of research attached here from WebMD points further to the influence of education on eyesight. *Full Story*»

Myopia and Education

Market8 - January 23, 2005, 10:12:56 PM EST by Jordan Frank

New information here confirms the degree to which myopia is linked to behaviour present intense education and age. Of law students in the U.S. some 86% experience myopic degeneration between matriculation and graduation – myopia is a growing condition elsewhere as education becomes the means to economic prosperity for much of the world's population. ... *Full Story*»

Myopia and Urbanization

Market7 - January 23, 2005, 10:09:30 PM EST by Jordan Frank

Its long been known that myopia is linked to close work requiring acute focus and to reading. Urbanization is a new emerging cause for Myopia. For example, in China and India, where rapid urbanization has tens of millions of people migrating from the countryside to the cities, a trend likely to continue, myopia as a widespread disorder has ballooned from approximately 10% of the population to as much as 50% and, in some heavily industrialized cities, as much as 80%. ... *Full Story*»

Myopia Overview

Market6 - January 23, 2005, 10:06:41 PM EST by Albert Einstein

Nearsightedness (Myopia)

Demonstration Screenshots are based on a fictional case study, a part of the "Collaborative Early Warning" intelligence workshop run jointly by AuroraWDC and Traction Software.

Contact www.AuroraWDC.com or www.TractionSoftware.com about the workshop.
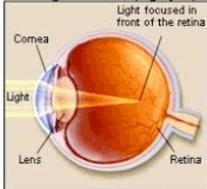
Although nearsightedness (myopia) cannot be cured, treatment nearsightedness include corrective lenses (eyeglasses and cont nearsightedness ...

- Page at a Glance -

ALERTS & ANALYSIS
· TAM-3 Inhibitor Compound Class - Market Movement

MARKET ARTICLES
· Why We are Losing Sight
· Myopia and Education
· Myopia and Urbanization
· Myopia Overview
· AlphaZyme Profile
· GATC Therapeutics Profile
· CamPharm Profile

About the Author

Suw Charman is a blog consultant, researcher and journalist specialising in business blogging, social software and digital rights. She blogs regularly about these and related subjects at Strange Attractor (www.corante.com/strange/), and has blogged professionally for a number of businesses in the UK and the USA. She has worked as a consultant for companies in the UK and the USA, advising on the use of blogs in both external and internal contexts.

Suw has spoken at the London School of Economics about the effect of blogging on journalism, at the Northern Voice Blogging Conference about how to increase blog traffic, and will speak at the Supernova technology conference in June 2005 about business blogging, and the New Media Knowledge seminar on blogging and marketing. She has also written features about blogging, digital rights and copyright for publications such as *The Guardian* and design magazine *Design In-Flight*. You can contact Suw by email: suw.charman@gmail.com.

About the Sponsor

Traction Software provides enterprise weblog software that allows groups and teams to communicate more effectively. Traction's TeamPage™ software creates a secure communications hub for business information and working communications that collects, organizes, links and shares sources of information in context over time. TeamPage is used for business applications ranging from product development and project management to marketing field communication, competitive intelligence, and sales.

Based in Providence, Rhode Island, Traction Software is a privately held corporation with financing from investors including In-Q-Tel (the venture arm of the Central Intelligence Agency) and Slater Interactive. For more information, visit www.tractionsoftware.com.

About Corante

Corante, founded in 2000, is the world's first blog media company, is a leader in the emerging social media market and is helping to pioneer the emergence of blogging as an important and influential form of reportage, analysis and commentary. Corante's contributors include many of the sector's most respected and closely read experts and thought leaders, and

Corante's readers, who number more than 300,000, aren't just casual observers of the sector — they're the entrepreneurs, executives, financiers, influencers and other individuals on the cutting edge, the early adopters and innovators who are creating the technologies, building and running the sector's best companies, and dreaming up the applications of the future.

Licence

This document is released under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.5 licence.

You are free:

- to copy, distribute, display, and perform the work
- to make derivative works

Under the following conditions:
Attribution. You must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author or licensor.
Noncommercial. You may not use this work for commercial purposes.
Share Alike. If you alter, transform, or build upon this work, you may distribute the resulting work only under a license identical to this one.

- For any reuse or distribution, you must make clear to others the license terms of this work.
- Any of these conditions can be waived if you get permission from the copyright holder.

Your fair use and other rights are in no way affected by the above.

The copyright holder for this work is **Suw Charman** (suw.charman@gmail.com).

More information at:
http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.5/
http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.5/legalcode