



# Seven Wiki Essentials

An Executive Guide to the 7 Must-Have Elements of Every Successful Wiki Initiative

# Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>THE SEVEN WIKI ESSENTIALS .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>WIKI ESSENTIAL #1: RAPID TIME TO VALUE .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>WIKI ESSENTIAL #2: FLEXIBILITY .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>WIKI ESSENTIAL #3: A 360-DEGREE VIEW .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>WIKI ESSENTIAL #4: REAL-TIME VISIBILITY .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>WIKI ESSENTIAL #5: NO MORE INFORMATION OVERLOAD .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>WIKI ESSENTIAL #6: HIGH ADOPTION .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>WIKI ESSENTIAL #7: A BROAD COMMUNITY .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>11</b>

## Introduction

It's no secret that internal collaboration is one of the keys to business growth and success. But that's no small feat given the dynamic and ever-increasing demands that companies face today, as well as the difficulty of implementing and enforcing processes to effectively support your interactions between employees and with prospects, customers, and partners. Fortunately, wikis can help companies manage those critical relationships.

To thrive, companies must focus on collaboration and knowledge management. For the most successful companies, collaboration is an area of continual innovation and assessment. And your collaboration processes and technologies must keep pace with—or ideally stay ahead of—changes in your market and customer base.

If you are searching for the right collaboration solution for your business, re-evaluating your current use of wikis, or looking to derive more value from an existing investment, understanding the essential factors of wiki success can help you get the best results.

This guide to seven proven wiki essentials distills best practices, lessons learned, and collective insights from PBwiki's 30,000+ business customers—as well as industry experts—across various company sizes, geographies, and vertical markets.

### ***The Seven Wiki Essentials***

1. Rapid time-to-value
2. Point-and-click customization
3. A 360-degree customer view
4. Real-time visibility
5. No more dirty data
6. High adoption
7. A broad community

Whether you are a Fortune 100 company or a one-person outfit, if your business cares about cultivating strong relationships, these essential elements of successful collaboration provide valuable guidance for your own wiki initiatives.

## Wiki Essential #1: Rapid Time-to-Value

Instant messaging, 24/7 customer service, shorter development cycles... today, businesses and their customers move at a rapid clip. Buy decisions are made quickly, and in fact entire businesses can succeed or fail in a matter of weeks. That means that no one has the luxury of waiting months or even years to install a traditional, expensive, client/server wiki application and retain the necessary staff to maintain it. The competitive advantage today is on-demand wikis.

On-demand wiki solutions are better suited to today's fast-moving businesses. You can be up-and-running with an on-demand wiki in a matter of hours, so you can focus on delivering greater value to customers, rather than worrying about installing and maintaining hardware and software.

Unfortunately, many companies do exactly that—spend too much time managing IT infrastructure and not enough time on the business. According to Gartner's Mark Raskino, "Eight out of 10 dollars you spend in IT is dead because, while it is keeping the lights on, it isn't directly contributing to your business growth or to enhancing your competitive advantage." (The 2006 Gartner Symposium Keynote: IT Must Think Differently, Act Differently and Be Different to Drive Business Growth) With no software to install or upgrade and no hardware to house and manage, on-demand wikis free IT to be more innovative, responsive, and strategic for your organization.

By leveraging an agile, on-demand platform, you begin seeing the benefits of wikis immediately.

- Concentrate on your business initiatives. There's no hardware or software to buy or install.
- Let your users get started right away. Born-on-the-Web wiki solutions are as easy to use as the consumer Web—anyone familiar with My Yahoo! or Wikipedia will be comfortable with the Web interface of on-demand wikis.
- Get a custom solution for your specific needs quickly. With a few clicks of the mouse, you can make departmental, regional, or global changes or add custom CSS, new users, and finely grained access control rules.

With the on-demand model, employees—and strapped IT teams—no longer have to get embroiled in complicated, time-consuming, high maintenance technology projects. Not only do on-demand wikis deliver numerous business benefits, it does so quickly and with minimal distractions and hassles for your busy teams, so they can focus on your business, not on technology.

**"On-demand is driving faster implementation times and quicker ROI."**

The average CRM implementation using SaaS takes less than two months and ROI is realized in less than six months.

*The Software as a Service Buyer's Guide, Aberdeen Group*

**"We can concentrate on our core competencies rather than maintain systems."**

*Scot Stoney, VP of IS and IT at Select Business Solutions*

## Wiki Essential #2: Flexibility

No wiki solution is going to fit like a glove right out of the box, because the reality is that no two companies' knowledge management and communication processes are exactly alike. However, because many traditional wiki solutions are difficult and expensive to customize, some organizations are forced to alter their business processes to fit the capabilities of their wiki technology. The key to success is a highly flexible wiki solution that allows you to keep pace with your evolving business environment.

On-demand wikis are uniquely suited to adapt to changing needs in real time. No matter what type of business you're in, how big or small your company is, or how unique your business needs are, your organization will benefit from the flexibility that the on-demand model provides.

- Create new pages on-the-fly for meetings, on-going tasks or anything else you need to document.
- Create custom templates for your unique processes—without programming anything.
- Instantly roll out wikis to internal teams, external resources, clients, customers – and tightly control access to any critical information.

The ease with which we can point and click our way to customizing consumer Web pages has dramatically raised everyone's expectations for implementing changes even in business applications. Only the on-demand model can accommodate quick customizations on an ongoing basis, making the weeks or months it takes to make even simple changes to traditional software seem hopelessly old-fashioned.

**"SaaS...frees up resources to focus on critical business needs.** Speed of deployment helps users be more productive sooner."

*SaaS: A Peaceful Coexistence, CMP Media LLC*

**"Ease of deployment continues to be the leading reason businesses subscribe to online software,** cited by 69% of respondents."

*InformationWeek Research SaaS survey of 250 business technology professionals*

**"Configurability of the look and feel is something SaaS providers are much better at."**

*Nikki Baird, Principal Analyst, Forrester Research*

## Wiki Essential #3: A 360-Degree View

The quality of the knowledge management makes and breaks companies. Employees and other contributors are becoming increasingly demanding and sophisticated, and they'll store their documents elsewhere if you don't deliver a fully integrated, easy to use solution for them to centralize their knowledge on.

Too often, sales, operations, marketing, customer service, help desk support, professional services, and other organizations use disparate systems, so no one has a complete picture of the knowledge contained within your business. With a multi-tenant, on-demand wiki solution, information and activities are easily unified and shared so that every department has a 360-degree view of the overall business and can provide quicker, better decision making capabilities.

1. Marketing gets real-time visibility into the Sales team activities and plans appropriate customer marketing campaigns.
2. Service and support organizations get visibility into items the Engineering teams are working on for immediate release, and can alert the sales team to potential cross-sell and up-sell opportunities.
3. Back in sales, reps get insight into any information they need from the internal teams so there are no unpleasant surprises during their sales call.

Wikis enable a 360-degree view for clarity of communication and easier cross-team visibility. With a common collaboration system, each department can be more effective and productive in every interaction, and each employee can put his/her best foot forward and provide superior, consistent service to internal and external stakeholders.

**"Knowledge workers spend 15% to 35% of their time searching for information."**

Searchers are successful in finding what they seek only 50% of the time or less."

*Susan Feldman,  
Research VP,  
Content  
Technologies Group,  
IDC*

**"IT Managers spend two hours a day looking for information they need, and almost half the data is useless once they get it."**

*Accenture study of  
1,009 IT Managers*

## Wiki Essential #4: Real-Time Visibility

To stay competitive, businesses must harness the power of their business intelligence. Constantly monitoring the health of the business, determining what's working and what's not, and making adjustments to improve operations and increase revenue are essential to surviving and thriving in today's competitive market. As easy as it sounds, every executive knows that too often, it's difficult or impossible to get the timely information you need to effectively run the business.

With traditional enterprise software, getting information usually requires IT involvement and potentially days or weeks of waiting. With on-demand wikis, business intelligence is democratized. Executives and managers finally have instant visibility into all aspects of the business—everything from a bird's-eye view to microscopic details. No more consolidating disparate spreadsheets and working with data that's days or weeks old. Executives in every department can get the total insight they need to build a stronger, more profitable business.

- Sales executives get better insight into internal product information and sales activities and finally have instant access to up-to-date information.
- Marketing executives can obtain the freshest feedback from the Sales team. Finally, marketing can make quick decisions based on immediate feedback directly from the supporting teams.
- Customer service and support executives have access to up-to-the minute information about global service activities—such as agent tasks and service issues—so that they can make the right adjustments and implement changes that will have a positive impact, quickly.

Information can be addictive, and there are literally hundreds of ways your wiki can be leveraged to encourage the addition of information. Your wiki should include your organization's other financial and business objectives. The key is to get good insight without becoming a slave to the information. To avoid that, it's best to implement wiki best practices such that business intelligence is properly recorded in the right places at the right time.

**"Detecting problem-signaling events at the moment the events occur** is a characteristic of the "real-time enterprise."

*Ken McGee, Group VP and Research Fellow, Gartner Inc.*

"The main benefits [of the real-time enterprise] are **faster implementation of strategies** needed to meet changing circumstances."

*The Real-Time Enterprise, Gartner Inc.*

## Wiki Essential #5: No More Information Overload

Almost every company suffers from “information overload” syndrome, and few have any idea what to do about it. Consider the findings of the IBM Global Data Management Survey of 600 major enterprises: 75 percent of the respondents reported significant problems as a result of defective data, including violated contract terms, failure to bill or collect for services or products delivered, delays in or abandonment of new systems projects, and extra accounting costs.

You can't be successful with wiki until you find a remedy to the information overload problem that is prevalent in organizations of all sizes and in every industry. A three-step approach to quality data management can address this issue so that your wiki initiative will be free of information overload.

1. **Capture.** If you don't capture it, you can't share it. In order to capture all the information, you need everyone in the company to use your wiki rather than store data in unintegrated or offline sources such as spreadsheets. To get quality information, high system adoption is critical.
2. **Clean.** Once you have the information in your wiki, you need to continually clean up the information by removing duplicates, centralizing pages for various projects, and updating information.
3. **Share.** Merely cleansing your information and making it available is not enough. Maintaining high data quality also means encouraging others to use it. For example, PBwiki uses a combination of high-tech and low-tech approaches to encourage wiki collaboration: In meetings, PBwiki employees take notes directly a new meeting page to capture what's been said. Employees also use “This should be on the wiki” stickers for extraneous emails/paper that should be centralized on the wiki.

A centralized information repository is the critical foundation of any wiki initiative. As with any data-driven application, the quality of the data determines the achievable level of success. The creation of an accurate, timely, information-rich, centralized view of the business across departments and lines of business is a key enabler for reducing costs, managing risk, and increasing revenue and profitability in all organizations.

Research shows CEOs around the globe are demanding this single view of business intelligence. Savvy executives know that clean, fresh information is much less costly than not having enough insight to make intelligent business decisions or losing hard-earned experiential knowledge when an employee leaves. So what better time to kick off a project to whip your business data into shape?

**“Most enterprises don't fathom the magnitude of the impact that data quality problems can have.”**

*Ted Friedman,  
Principal Analyst,  
Gartner Inc.*

**“2/3 of firms surveyed... struggle to turn [data] into information they can act on.”**

*The Economist  
Intelligence Unit*

## Wiki Essential #6: High Adoption

There's nothing worse than investing in wiki and having no one use it. Too many wiki projects fail due to poor user adoption. After all, technology is only as good as the people who use it. To ensure that people do use your wiki, it must be easy to use, accessible, and scalable, and significantly enhance productivity, efficiency, and visibility. On-demand wiki solutions that are delivered via a Web browser encourage adoption by replicating the familiar point-and-click interfaces of popular consumer Web sites, where everything must be user friendly.

A look at successful wiki initiatives uncovers several best practices for driving user adoption.

- **Build support for wikis early on.** You should communicate your wiki strategy and timeline to key stakeholders well in advance of the implementation to set expectations.
- **Go top down, bottom up, and sideways.** After securing an executive sponsor, have him or her send a communication to the company to reinforce the importance of the initiative and encourage participation. You should also cultivate active and vocal advocates/end users to drum up support among the troops and identify team project members from all affected areas of the organization.
- **Focus on people and processes.** You need to recruit people who know the day-to-day activities of your users, work with them to thoroughly document business processes, and customize the wiki application to reflect those processes via predefined templates.
- **Make your users' lives easier.** Integrating with LDAP or Active Directory allows your users to immediately use the system without having to remember yet another password.
- **Keep it simple.** Provide users with information relevant to their everyday tasks. Don't overburden them with excess information that will distract them and impact productivity. Customize the views that each team and user sees, so that an individual user sees only the information relevant to his/her role or project.
- **Train your users in advance.** You should develop online and custom training to reinforce your unique processes, roles, and terminology. Even the easiest-to-use wiki system benefits from custom training to show users how the system relates to your company.
- **Give executives—and other decision makers—a bird's-eye view.** Give every executive access that provides instant visibility into all the information he/she cares about. Empower every user to create his/her own pages without having to wait for the system administrator or IT team.
- **Reinforce adoption with carrots and sticks.** Build wiki usage with incentive programs such as spiffs, contests, etc. ("carrots"). And for those who are more motivated by fear,

**"Wikis are most successful when they are allowed to grow from a grass-roots effort.** The value of wikis becomes clear through exposure to the tool and its benefits."

*Wikis at Work,  
Information  
Week*

**"Identify two or more executive sponsors,** ideally from those who are open to new challenges and opportunities."

*Knowledge  
Management  
Implementation  
Best Practices,  
Talisma  
Corporation*

reinforce the importance of using wiki with “sticks,” such as executive communications and programs that tie usage to highly desirable results, the most popular of which is to include wiki adoption as a performance review metric.

- **Give everyone a voice.** Encouraging wiki-usage creates a sense of collective ownership and investment in the business. Users can see what anyone is working on at any given time – and can even add their ideas to someone else’s page at a moment’s notice.

Investments in encouraging wiki adoption reap big rewards. Not only will you enforce your business processes and increase productivity, but the more your teams use wikis, the more valuable the data and knowledge it produces will be.

## Wiki Essential #7: A Broad Community

Community-building Web technologies and sites are some of the most popular and fastest-growing areas on the Internet today. Through blogs, wikis, social and business networking sites, and much more—people are increasingly engaging with each other online. At the same time, companies are realizing that nurturing their employee communities and engaging with employees can yield dramatic results in terms of employee loyalty. At the cross section of these two trends are on-demand wikis: the perfect enabler of community growth.

On-demand wiki solutions can help build and manage interactive, online communities. The interaction and feedback that are generated in the online forum can flow back into the business for analyses that can guide decisions on improving the overall customer experience.

You can facilitate the growth of a strong employee community by providing online forums for a variety of topics of interest to your customers, including:

- Best practices. Encourage employees to share tips, tricks, success stories, and ideas, etc.
- Ideas. You and your employees can share ideas on the future of your products and services. Providing the opportunity for employees to contribute ideas is an excellent way to get feedback, drum up participation, and help employees feel invested in your company's future.
- Employee groups. You can set up local or geographically diverse employee groups and provide an online forum for communication and planning among the members.

The power of the community is growing every day. Using an on-demand solution to help you build stronger relations with your various stakeholders is an easy way to harness that power to benefit your business.

**“Assign a person or team to manage the wiki, especially at the beginning.** They can be on hand to answer questions, which will help drive user adoption.”

*Wikis at Work, Information Week*

**“Once people start using the wiki, they become part of the system it creates.** The wiki becomes part of the dynamics of the office.”

*Wikis at Work, Information Week*

## Conclusion

No matter how large or small your company, these seven wiki essentials help you understand what successful wiki looks like. By considering these seven essentials in all stages of your project—from selecting a vendor to planning your implementation to tuning your solution and processes—you can enjoy the same level of success that tens of thousands of companies have already experienced with on-demand CRM.

To try your own free, on-demand wiki, go to:

<https://secure.pbwiki.com/signup.wiki?r=7essentials>

## About PBwiki

PBwiki is the world's largest provider of hosted business and educational wikis. We host over 500,000 wikis, serve millions of users per month, and 94% of business users would recommend PBwiki to a friend. Leading companies and organizations like Oracle, DePaul University, and the FDA choose PBwiki to help them with knowledge management, collaboration, project management, and a host of other business processes and workflows. PBwiki's investors include Ron Conway and Mohr Davidow Ventures.

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