Foreword

A book about wikis!
That's what people need.
Because with wiki technology, lots of people can freely work together – they can even generate very large works in the intellectual realm. See for yourself:

Today, we still marvel at our massive church buildings, each constructed over a period of centuries, requiring an immense amount of labor and often bearing the cultural stamp of all of the epochs during which it was created. Someone just has to begin by placing stone upon stone and motivating the people nearby to help out a bit. In places where such enthusiastic fellow men and women lend a hand and donate materials, great things can emerge. And where they are absent? Either scant ruins remain, or the iron will of a pharaoh is required, an army of drivers, the sweat of a people and a mountain of gold. Great things can also be created in that way – take the Pyramids: a clear concept, no blending of styles, pure will.

Those are two very different paths. The one entails passionate people devotedly building something together for the common good; the other: A single will manages a variety of resources to achieve a set goal.

Wikis are tools with which lots of people with a minimum of organization, planning, money and time can create something together and communicate with each other from several scattered computers or over the Internet. Wikis are the technology for that first path of volunteers with a common idea.

This book introduces wikis and provides you with enough tools to create your own wiki; your own work platform. Yet the book will also invite you to join the animated discussion on what one can do with wikis and where it is better not to "abuse" them. It is the intriguing question of those two stimuli: enthusiasm and will.
Allow me to explain by using an anecdote. Some time ago, I received a letter from a reader regarding my books. Someone wrote

that he had inserted my name in the Internet lexicon 'Wikipedia'. He wrote that he initially only added a bit of preliminary data on me and would continue to work on it. I was mighty proud that I was now to be listed in an encyclopedia, and checked on the Internet right away under "Gunter Dueck," but I could'nt find anything. I found strange messages indicating that there had been an article related to my name but that it had been deleted. The reader I mentioned was angry, and he tried posting his article again, but it again was deleted. Days later, another "person" wrote something reasonable. That remained on the Internet for a few days, but disappeared again, ostensibly due to violation of copyright laws. Now wide awake, I then attempted to find the email address of the person deleting everything. I wrote: "Hey, why?" The answer: "The image most likely violates copyright, and the text presumably as well. I am one of the authorized persons assigned to quality and legal issues". I argued: "The picture of me was taken by my daughter Anne in our garden; I give it to everyone. And the text is taken from the cover of one of my books. I grant my permission to use that." Three hours later, "my" entry was back online again. Now I get nervous wondering if the article has been defaced or deleted. Do you understand what I mean? Anybody can do with me what he wants! If that is the case – is everything true that is listed in Wikipedia? Can I treat the information as being just as authentic as what I find in a book? Will anyone award me damages if, through a false entry in Wikipedia, I lose a bet or my reputation as a scientist? Questions abound regarding a variety that grows on its own power! Of course, you could also see it positively. "Wiki lives!" It changes, develops, grows – however, it needs to be weeded, and its garden protected from thieves (lexical vandalism).

Wikipedia is one of the truly colossal wiki projects. Ten thousand contributors are at work on a single intellectual monument. A number of masters run around and find out when someone has cheated. Controllers verify whether the building code is being followed. Anyone can participate whenever and however he or she likes. No time pressures, hardly any regulations, and no pay for the volunteer work – only a profound sense of accomplishment. "One stone of that pyramid is from me!" – That might be something a Wikipedia contributor might exclaim.

Wikis are exceptionally suitable for all such projects of several volunteers. Would you like to connect the parents of students of the Bammental grammar school? All of the members of a sports association? All of the astronomers of the world? All Linux freaks in your company? Do you want to create something in a community

with others? To maintain a community? Then you need a wiki! But which one?

The best one! As of today – I just checked – the German Wikipedia homepage reads: "We have just converted the software to MediaWiki 1.4. Please report any problems here …" This book also presents the wiki technology with the aid of the open source software MediaWiki, which you can download from the Internet. So, if you would like to use MediaWiki for your project, then you are in good hands – several volunteers are working on follow-up versions of "your" software – of that you can be sure! However, if you really want more, or if you perhaps even want it *all*, so to speak, then you'll enjoy the detailed description of the high-end software TWiki. This program can do much, much more – it can do it all, anything currently technically possible – it offers a cornucopia of supplementary functions, from presentation to drawing to calculating. And as such, up in the technical heights, where anything is possible – you'll have a bit more difficulty in the installation process, I believe, and will have to be more accomplished in its operation. What is the best wiki? "The standard!" call some, "Extreme wiki!" shout others. And, as usual, both sides are right.

So it's got to be a wiki? Well, that's no problem with this book! However, the book will also seriously discuss what a wiki cannot currently accomplish and what it should not even attempt. A wiki should not be "abused" for the "second path" of accomplishing things. The second path would be "finally" turning a community endeavor of spontaneous enthusiasts into "a real project". We need a plan! We have to organize who is going to do what! We keep lists on how much each person has accomplished! We check progress and define goals! We do everything efficiently and do not waste money! Does it always have to be the newest software? Can't we save more money?

Imagine if a company were building Wikipedia. Then there would be the equivalent of the pharaoh's will. A plan of necessary words would be generated. The words would be prioritized according to the importance presented by experts, and to the difficulty in writing new entries. Managers would fervently search for new sources where something could be copied or used more than once. They would set the pay for entries and monitor the rapidity of the work. The once volunteers would make sure they got everything done quickly – without paying attention to details – just quickly, according to plan and the respective remuneration.

That would be the path of the "project" and of efficiency. A pyramid is built according to plan and schedule. It is made to be

completely uniform and flawless – nothing about it is spontaneous! Nothing is voluntary. Everything bends to the central will: the project goal.

However, MediaWiki only invites volunteers to work on it! The wiki technology does not assign jobs or assess performance. It does not dole out punishment for insufficient output or errors. It does not organize workflow. So, if you create a wiki for yourself, you should know what a wiki will and will not be able to do. It can take a great deal of spontaneity and create something beautiful, common, or great. Yet it cannot truly be used as a tool to efficiently assert someone's will.

The authors of this book offer a fresh introduction to the topic. They are not afraid to take part in the discussion of the pros and cons of wikis. They discuss the current dialogue using several charming details. The book's style is inviting – it is very factual, but somehow charming nonetheless. While reading it, I imagined the authors as the most passionately motivated of all wiki enthusiasts.
They write: a book about wikis!
And they are confident: That's what people need.

Gunter Dueck

Foreword, Take Two – Into the Blue … almost

A second foreword for the second edition – because I now know a lot more about the subject. This is how it happened:

As a fan of Wikipedia, I repeatedly told people at IBM that we have to have an internal setup something like that. IBM has millions of pages on its intranet, in which, theoretically, we can find anything. But an access page offering a simple encyclopedic entry with a couple of links? That would be perfect. And everyone said, "Yeah, yeah". In late 2006, an IBM executive told me he didn't find the idea so bad. "Would you give me some money to program it?" I replied, and got the answer: "If I only knew whether or not the IBM people really wanted it, perhaps." – "People want it." – "Can you prove it?" So I wrote an article on the IBM intranet with the title *I'd really like a Wikipedia*, and in it, asked for feedback. Wow, it was the first day in my life in which I received so many emails that I could only thank everyone collectively but not answer them individually – that is how much enthusiasm flooded my mailbox.

"So, can I have a little money for a project?" – "And how are you going to achieve it? Can I see a plan?"

At IBM, I am known as *Wild Duck* or *Wild Dueck*, kind of like a strange fellow. My projects are good, but they have no plan because plans bother me. I'd much rather work according to a vision instead of a plan. I already indicated as much indirectly in the first foreword. I want to start! But start with a grand vision! Then others will come along and help. I'm certainly no pharaoh, ordering people to lug around stones for the pyramids. That is not how a Wikipedia is made! Just read my first foreword! … So I received the project financing to get started. But who was going to install MediaWiki for me?

Of course, I hadn't forgotten that I'd written a foreword for this book. So, I thought, I'll just call up the authors of the book. With

a little luck, they'd still be working on the finishing touches of their dissertations, and I could "soon hire them at IBM". Or they would launch a company and we would build an IBM Wikipedia together, subsequently supplying Wikipedias professionally to all companies, thus establishing an entire Web 2.0 business in Germany.

So I rang them up … They had already launched a company, Hallo Welt!, which supplies everyone with Web 2.0 as a business. For the first time ever, we sat down together for a project in my living room in Waldhilsbach – bubbling with ideas – and soon began constructing. How? Well, exactly like "you are supposed to".

After sending out an appeal for assistance on the IBM intranet, about thirty volunteers offered to help during their free time. Once a week, we discussed everything via telephone conference. We talked about who wanted to do what, we assigned people tasks. A ruler, manager or pharaoh says when something IS to be done and by whom. In Web 2.0, one is asked when one would like to do something. (At the risk of sounding extremely obtrusive, let me repeat: We are talking here about the other work model 2.0; do you know what I mean? Volunteerism adheres to other laws than does a managed project.) Together, we thought of some nice names for Big Blue IBM's encyclopedia. We ultimately voted to adopt the name *Bluepedia*.

Bluepedia was installed in March and April of 2007. We started out as a small team, entering exemplary articles. In addition, we told any and all IBM colleagues we could reach that we were working on a strictly secret Wikipedia project. We garnered lots of comments: "We already have that sort of thing in 100 different places, and now we've got another one? I made a suggestion for something like that two years ago, and I've also already written a page! What is the meaning of this? Can just anybody contribute, even if it's complete crap? Isn't that dangerous? Where are the controls? What is the plan? Who is doing it? Why in German and not in English? Whaaaat? *Both* languages? Why? That is such a waste! Don't you have to ask IBM USA what they think of the English? Are volunteers allowed to do things on the Intranet? Who gave them permission?" – And my question in return was: "If there are already 100 of them, why can't I do one, too?" If you want to implement an innovation, you are captured by the company's immune system. The white blood cells come along. Pioneers are initially fended off with "You can't do that" and later with "We already have one." However, we also collected enthusiastic emails from co-workers who supported and sometimes even helped us. In fact, we determined that individual IBM employees had already begun working on Web 2.0 projects

in various places. The software was okay, their plans nice enough, but none of them had actually conceived the schemes to be a complete IBM community project. Web 2.0 is big and for everybody! "Bluepedia is successful because EVERYONE contributes, not just a few familiar writers or a single department," I repeatedly proclaimed. "We aren't doing something different, we're doing the right thing once and correctly as a community project. Correctly – not differently!"

Every morning, the small Bluepedia team checked the counter on the homepage: "Bluepedia now has 213 entries." We worked out an entire catalogue of topics suggesting everything we wanted Bluepedia to contain. "Everything." Hardware, presentations, site plans, abbreviations, consulting methods, everything. Who wants to serve as the honorary custodian of what topics? ("Wants to!!")

450 entries. At the end of May, we were very satisfied with the way things looked. We began to rouse the interest of our respective nearby co-workers for Bluepedia. They contributed, somewhat hesitantly, and provided us with valuable suggestions for improvement that the *Hallo Welt* Team immediately implemented. Bluepedia matured and grew. 567 entries. In July of 2007, I called on "everyone" on the intranet for their help (which is read by perhaps 2,000 colleagues, of which a few hundred actually take action). Once again, there was another wave of "Are you allowed to do that?" Still, my appeal cranked up the number of entries fairly rapidly, until it had approached 2000 by the beginning of August.

One morning in mid-August, I gave a speech at a conference and demonstrated our Bluepedia online. Shortly before an afternoon discussion, I took a quick look – the counter had in fact increased by 25! One percent growth per day? How would it continue to develop?

I cannot say. The Springer Publishing Company wants my foreword tomorrow. Today, on August 19, 2007, we have 2,768 entries. During the past week, we formed a German-American team to expand the project across the international IBM presence. Enthusiasm is growing everywhere. I first "have to" (as we often say at IBM) take my vacation, and in September, we will then officially announce the project via my General Manager. (Up to that point, it has not officially gone public!) Then it will really take off!

Well – I can't tell you how this will ultimately end, but you can surely feel the excitement that we were able to transfer to IBM with the aid of the authors of this book and the instructions contained in it. You could do the same! But please remember: It has to be a commu-

nity project, and not one with supervisors and counters. The article counter on the homepage alone is enough to excite us. When we see that number, we want to be happy and not stressed out!

Thus, take this book, a community, and lots of enthusiasm and enter the world of the Web 2.0 … with wikis of all kinds, for a new era in your company or your environment.

Gunter Dueck

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