Dialogue through wikis:
A pilot exploration of dialogic public relations and wiki websites

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Abstract

Wikis, a form of website increasingly popular since the growth of Wikipedia, are breaking new ground. Little scholarly research has investigated wikis and the potential for public relations. This study investigates how two health wikis (wikihealth.com and health content on wikipedia.com) facilitate dialogic principles. The pilot study found that both wiki sites exhibited the principles of dialogic public relations. Additionally, correlations were found between dialogic content, website value, and commitment to future usage.

Introduction

It is a sign of the growth of user-generated content that, in 2006, Associated Press was scooped by a website without reporters or news bureaus in one of the biggest celebrity news stories of the year. An unknown individual added Anna Nicole Smith's death to her Wikipedia encyclopaedia entry before Associated Press reported it (Norris, 2006). At the time of Smith's death, Wikipedia, the user-created encyclopaedia, was in its fifth year of growth with five million articles in 200 languages and visitors doubling every four months ("The good and the bad of Wikipedia", 2006). By 2009, the number of articles had swollen to 9.25 million and almost 10 million users editing and adding content (Size of Wikipedia, 2009). Beyond being the seventh most popular website of any kind, Wikipedia is the most well-known example of a specific kind of website – a wiki (Most Popular Websites, 2009). What makes wikis different is that users are free to add and change the content and structure of the site, thus erasing the distinction between creator and viewer. Wikipedia is the

most visited wiki, but wikis are used in areas as diverse as cake design and CIA intelligence gathering (Weisman, 2006). Additionally, the spread of wikis can be seen in mainstream technology like the new wiki support in Microsoft Office and Google's launch of Google Sites, a wiki web service (Gibson, 2006; Arrington, 2008).

Wikis are now used in many companies for internal communication, but only 18 percent of public relations professionals report using wikis for public relations purposes (Hof, 2004; Eyrich, Padman & Sweetser, 2008, p. 413). The risks associated with creating an organisationally-sponsored website that users can change may be perceived as too great. Much scholarly attention has been paid to the Internet and public relations, especially blogging (Kelleher, 2008; Kent, 2008; Porter, Sweetser Trammell, Chung, & Kim, 2007; Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007; Sweetser, 2007; Trammell, 2006; Xifra & Huertas, 2008), but little scholarly research has investigated wikis, and none to date appears to have analysed the use of wikis in public relations.

As organisations began using the Internet for public relations purposes, these new technologies were treated as extensions of traditional communication forms – memos became e-mails and brochures transformed into websites (Gregory, 2004). The Internet's unique characteristics and opportunities for dialogue were largely ignored. Practitioners saw the Internet as an important tool, but one with a low priority – "a 'B list' task" (Hill & White, 2000, p. 38). A study by Porter and Sallot in 2003 suggested that most of the activity conducted on the Internet by public relations practitioners was either background research or internally focused. More recent

1

research (Eyrich et al., 2008) suggests that practitioners are not the technology laggards they were once thought to be and current trends show that on average they adopt six different Internet tools (p. 413). Additionally, practitioners are "very comfortable" with podcasts and blogs, but slower to use more complicated tools like social networks and virtual worlds (Eyrich et al., p. 414). The Internet has worked its way into the daily practices of public relations but some technologies have the propensity to be more quickly adopted and integrated into practice than others. Wikis may hold untapped potential for public relations practitioners who are comfortable with and open to using Internet tools.

In an effort to investigate the potential of wiki sites for practitioners, this pilot study examines two health wiki sites (wikihealth.com and health content on wikipedia.com). The wiki sites are examined in terms of their ability to uphold dialogic public relations principles as defined by Kent and Taylor (2002). If the sites do uphold Kent and Taylor's principles then it would suggest that practitioners ought to give more consideration to wikis as a tool, and that researchers should continue to investigate the use of this new technology in public relations.

Dialogic public relations

Kent and Taylor (1998) advocate using the web's unique characteristics to create, adapt and change relationships between organisations and publics (p. 326). They propose five principles to guide practitioners in using the web to create relationships. The principles are: having useful information; encouraging return visits; building an intuitive interface; keeping visitors on the website; and promoting a dialogic loop (Kent & Taylor, 1998). This study of wikis focuses on the principle of the dialogic loop. A dialogic loop "allows publics to query organisations and, more importantly, it offers organisations the opportunity to respond to questions, concerns and problems" (Kent & Taylor, 1998, p. 326). In short, websites should encourage dialogue. For a complete dialogic loop, organisations need to have public

relations staff who monitor and quickly respond to the organisation's website (Kent & Taylor, 1998).

Kent and Taylor (2002) further explicate dialogic communication by proposing five principles of a dialogic public relations theory.

These principles are
• *mutuality*, or the recognition of organisation–public relationships;
• *propinquity*, or the temporality and spontaneity of interactions with publics;
• *empathy*, or the supportiveness and confirmation of public goals and interests;
• *risk*, or the willingness to interact with individuals and publics on their own terms; and finally,
• *commitment*, or the extent to which an organisation gives itself over to dialogue, interpretation, and understanding in its interactions with publics. (Kent & Taylor, 2002, p. 24)

Mutuality takes place when the organisation and public are interconnected, collaborate, and have a climate of mutual equality (Kent & Taylor, 2002, p. 25). The second principle, propinquity, points to the need for both the organisation and public to be consulted in matters that concern them. This principle encompasses a need for immediacy when deciding issues where affected parties are consulted during the decision-making process, and not after. Propinquity also requires temporal flow, meaning that the organisation's and public's pasts, presents, and futures are recognised in building the relationship. The final feature of propinquity is engagement meaning that "participants must be willing to give their whole selves to the encounters" (Kent and Taylor, 2002, p. 26). Empathy is the third principle and refers to creating a climate of trust, understanding and support. Supportiveness, as opposed to competition or debate, is a key part of empathy. Also important to empathy is a communal orientation between organisation and public. Finally, empathy requires that all parties confirm their importance and contributions to the discussion (Kent and Taylor, 2002, p. 27-28). The fourth principle is risk. To truly be in

2

dialogue, both parties must risk rewards that could be both relational and material. Being vulnerable and allowing for vulnerability is an important part of risk. Also, dialogic communication must allow for unanticipated consequences that come from being unrehearsed and spontaneous (Kent and Taylor, 2002, p. 28-29). A final aspect of risk is the recognition of all parties' uniqueness and individuality. The final principle is commitment that stresses genuine, honest dialogue with all parties being committed to the conversation and the process of interpretation (Kent and Taylor, 2002, p. 29).

These are lofty goals and difficult to implement in a website. For example, the principle of propinquity suggests that discussions be held in a shared space. Even a website with a discussion forum does not fully become a shared space since users cannot interact without the lag time created by posting. Furthermore, the forum's hosting organisation holds more power than the public and thus does have pure mutuality. Also, the forum is not truly spontaneous – the host controls the structure of the forum and determines what can and cannot be discussed. Other common forms of website feedback, as in e-mail and surveys, may strive to become dialogic, but cannot fully meet this standard.

Kent and Taylor's dialogic principles have been widely used in studies of public relations and the Internet (Bortee & Seltzer, 2009, in press; Bruning, Dials, & Shirka, 2008; Gordon & Berhow, 2009; Kang & Norton, 2006; Kent, Taylor & White, 2003; McAllister-Spooner & Taylor, 2007; McAllister-Spooner, 2008; Park & Reber, 2008; Reber & Kim, 2006; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007; Taylor & Kent, 2004). This framework is useful for this study as the underlining tenets of wikis (i.e., being open, incremental, organic, and observable, see Chawner & Gorman, 2002) mirror the structural elements of Kent and Taylor's dialogic principles. In the 10 years since the first Kent and Taylor dialogic web article, numerous studies have built upon their original "strategic framework to facilitate dialogic relations with publics through the World Wide Web" (McAllister-Spooner, 2009, in press, p.

1). This pilot study extends Kent and Taylor's dialogic principles to an Internet tool thus far somewhat overlooked by practitioners and researchers alike.

Wikis and dialogic public relations

Traditional websites struggle to meet the principles of dialogic public relations whereas wikis offer great potential to encourage dialogue. A wiki differs from a traditional website because the content is user created and dynamic. This type of website allows any user to create and edit pages from the browser. Users can edit existing entries, add new entries, and even create new pages. The traditional tools of website design are available on the wiki; users can use hyperlinks, graphics, and photographs. All of this occurs in an observable manner with all changes being logged and publicly viewable. The most visited wiki is the user-created encyclopaedia, Wikipedia (Most Popular Websites, 2009).

Wikis are structured on the tenets of being open, incremental, organic, and observable (Chawner & Gorman, 2002). Wikis are open, meaning that any reader can edit any content at any time; incremental because pages can be created as necessary; organic as the structure evolves as required; and observable as any activity within the site can be viewed by any user. These four tenets interlock with the five principles of dialogic public relations. An open and observable website promotes mutuality and empathy. In addition, it is risky. Contributors to a wiki risk much by opening themselves up to public scrutiny. Additionally, incremental and organic websites allow for propinquity. Wikis allow for an immediacy of presence.

The tenets of wiki set up a system that is reminiscent of Grunig and Grunig's (1992) call for organisations to "set up structured systems, processes, and rules for two-way symmetrical public relations" (p. 316). A wiki "has some profound and subtle effects on web usage" and "encourages democratic use of the web and promotes content composition by nontechnical users" (Leuf & Cunningham, 2001, para. 5). The creation process is dynamic and ever-

3

evolving. Wikis change the role of the website user. No longer are they passive viewers of a document, but potential creators, partners, contributors, and editors. In short, wikis have the potential to create a community of dialogue and co-ownership.

Wikis have had public success with projects like Wikipedia, and there has been significant adoption by corporations for internal audiences (Fernando, 2005). By 2004, IBM, Walt Disney, SAP, and Motorola were all using wikis and one wiki software producer estimates that two-thirds of his users are businesses (Hof, 2004). Although this adoption of wikis is significant, these companies choose to use wikis for internal information sharing, project management, and collaboration (Krause, 2004). Thus, this indicates an openness and familiarity with wikis but a hesitancy to utilise wikis for dialogic communication between organisations and an external public. Utilising wikis for dialogic public relations purposes requires a retooling of one's use of wikis, and as no previous studies have examined this, there is a significant gap in practitioners' and researchers' knowledge of wikis' potential for external relationship building. The risk of posting a publicly editable website could be a factor holding back these companies from targeting outside publics. The risk is high, but the rewards could be substantial. Imagine a company that puts its latest product manual on the web as a wiki. Users of the product could tweak and add to the manual. The results might be a better manual and enhanced relationship building.

The risk involved in using a wiki may be the reason behind a lack of organisation-sponsored externally-focused wiki. In this study, health wikis were selected as a proxy. With the topic of health, everyone has some experience and knowledge, but there also are widely accepted experts like physicians and nurses. This mix of novice/expert and knowledgeable/uninformed will be mirrored in an organisational wiki. Additionally, health wikis were chosen because of the format's potential in health organisations – be that an insurance provider or non-profit health organisation like the American Cancer Society. Insurance providers could create wikis about benefits, and the American Cancer Society could create wikis dealing with cancer survivorship.

The potential for wikis in public relations is great. This form of website may meet the requirements for dialogic communication in a way that other Internet tools are unable to. In terms of relationship creations, management and enhancement, wikis could be an ideal form of Internet communication. The risk implicit in a wiki and with dialogic communication may be holding back practitioners from implementing the technology. Without an example of beneficial relationship building through wikis, few wikis will be built that aim at external publics, but without any external public wikis, no examples will exist. This lack of externally focused organisational wikis led to the selection of health wikis as a proxy for this project. By studying the potential these health wikis have to create, adapt, and change relationships, the information gained will inform public relations practitioners about the possible implementations of externally focused wikis.

The following research questions were thus proposed:

RQ1: Do wikis exhibit Kent and Taylor's dialogic principles?

RQ2: Does a wiki format increase the value of the website to its users?

RQ3: Does a wiki format increase commitment to future usage of the website?

Methods

Participants

The survey resulted in 65 participants: 16 from WikiHealth and 49 from Wikipedia. All participants were users of wikis, and 62 used non-wikis for health information. There were 15 different non-wikis used for the second set of questions; WebMD was reported by 45 percent of those listing a specific website. The second was e-medicine with 11 percent of respondents. Sixteen respondents did not list a specific website for the second set of questions. More participants would have been preferred, but these numbers allow for exploratory and

4

preliminary findings. While these data will not allow generalisability across different kinds of websites and users, the data does allow for the testing of wikis' basic structural elements as dialogue building tools and point the way for future research.

The participants in this study were mostly well educated, affluent, white, young, and male. Additionally, the participants were heavy Internet users and frequent visitors to the specific wiki. Over a third (37.7 percent) had completed four years of college and 41 percent of participants had completed a postgraduate degree. As to income, 43 percent were in the upper bracket of this survey, making more than $75,000 a year. About a fifth (19.7 percent) reported being non-white, and 68.2 percent were males. The participants also spent large amounts of time online with almost half (47.3 percent) spending 21 or more hours a week on the Internet, and 49.2 percent spend more than five hours a week on the wiki.

Procedures and survey instrument

Permission was gained from the websites Wikipedia and WikiHealth to study the sites' interactions and users. Wikipedia was selected because it is the largest wiki on the Internet. A Google search about many health concerns will return a link to Wikipedia on the first page of results. WikiHealth is a smaller website that has a more intimate atmosphere and only focuses on health information. At the time of this study, WikiHealth was one year old and building a user base. After selecting the sites and obtaining permission, an announcement with a link to the survey was placed on both Wikipedia and WikiHealth. The link took users to the informed consent page. After providing consent, they were directed to the survey. Active users of the sites were contacted about the survey through the wiki feedback tool. The survey was available online for approximately two months. The online survey began with four general questions about the Internet and wiki usage. The survey then asked participants to report whether the Internet has improved the way they get information about health care. Participants then responded using a scale

ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree to questions assessing their level of involvement and investment in the health wiki. Questions relating to each of the principles and sub-principles of dialogic public relations were included. The questions were based on the descriptions of the principles provided by Kent and Taylor (2002). Participants then responded to a series of questions using a scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree assessing the depth and trust/expertise of the health wiki site, intention to revisit the site, complexity of the search task, knowledge, and reliance on the wiki for information. These questions were taken and adapted from Hong (2006). Participants then indicated whether they had interacted with individuals outside of the wiki environment. The last component for this section of the survey asked participants two open-ended questions about why they use health wikis and how using health wikis affected their health. Those participants who indicated that they had used other health websites to search for information were prompted to fill out the same series of questions listed above for a health website.

The last section of the survey had participants report whether they rely on other sources for health information beyond their doctor and to report on their health consciousness. These measures were taken from Dutta-Bergman (2005) from the 1999 DDB Needham, Inc. consumer survey. These questions were followed by demographic questions, including country of residence, occupation, education, gender, age, income, and race. This paper only reports the findings about the dialogic public relations principles.

Results

Dialogic public relations questions

Ten questions were asked about the principles of dialogic public relations. Respondents responded using a scale of one to five to indicate their agreement, with five being the most positive. In all but one question, the wiki websites had significantly higher mean scores than the non-wiki websites. The largest

5

difference occurred when the participants were asked about being free to contribute ideas to the website (wiki, M=4.35, SD=. 917; non-wiki, M=1.85, SD=1.083). When responding to a question asking if they had used the website while making a decision, the wiki (M=3.47, SD=1.197) and non-wiki (M=3.52, SD=1.243) results were not statistically different t(43)=. 427, p=. 671) (**see Table 1**).

The items were combined into a single dialogic score by adding the 10 sub-scores. These items have a Cronbach alpha of 0.71. As would be expected, the dialogic scores were significantly higher for the wiki websites (M=39.55, SD=4.90) than the non-wiki websites (M=25.17, SD=6.31), t(39)=11.251, p=000. The dialogic scores between the two different wiki websites studied (Wikipedia and WikiHealth) were not statistically different, t(54)=.886, p=.380).

Participants were also asked about the website being valuable to them and if they would use the website in the future. While the wiki websites (M=4.51, SD=.598) received a higher scores than the non-wiki websites (M=4.31, SD=.701) on the question of value, the difference was not significant, t(43)=1.813, p=.077 (See Table 2). The finding about future commitment was significant and people responded more positively to using the wiki websites (M=4.50, SD=.725) in the future as compared to the non-wiki websites (M=3.56, SD=.943), t(44)=4.433, p=.001 (**See Table 2**).

Table 1. Dialogic public relations questions by wiki and non-wiki websites

	Wiki			Non-wiki			df	t
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD		
Mutuality								
I am free to contribute my ideas on this website.	60	4.35	.917	47	1.85	1.083	45	10.329**
Content on this website is developed by collaboration of ideas.	60	4.25	.773	47	2.62	1.033	45	7.146**
Propinquity								
This website is a shared space for communicating with others.	59	3.66	1.060	45	2.07	.837	44	7.900**
I come back to this website to see new content additions.	59	4.03	.982	46	2.91	1.262	44	4.774**
I sought information or posted information on this website while I was making decisions about this issue	57	3.47	1.197	46	3.52	1.243	43	-.427
Empathy								
My contributions to this website are acknowledged.	58	3.98	.827	43	2.19	.982	41	8.669**
I am treated as a colleague on this website.	59	4.07	.763	44	2.20	1.002	43	8.849**
Commitment								
On this website, my contributions will be received without ridicule or contempt.	60	3.90	.986	44	2.75	1.014	43	4.342**
My contributions to this website were genuine and honest.	59	4.63	.554	43	3.00	.655	42	11.795**
Risk								
I have self-disclosed personal information or opinions on this website.	59	3.14	1.181	44	2.00	1.057	43	4.408**
**p < .001								

Table 2. Information value and commitment to future usage by wiki and non-wiki

	Wiki			Non-wiki			df	t
	N	Mean	SD.	N	Mean	SD		
This website's information is valuable.	59	4.51	.598	45	4.31	.701	43	1.813
I am committed to using this website in the future.	60	4.50	.725	45	3.56	.943	44	4.433**
**p<.001								

The overall dialogic scores for the two wiki websites were also found to have positive and significant correlations to finding the website valuable and users' commitment to future use. Pearson's correlation between the dialogic score (M=39.55, SD=4.90) and finding the website valuable (M=4.51, SD=0.598) was r(53)=.283, p=.035. For being committed to future usages of the wiki websites (M=4.50, SD=.725), the Pearson correlation with the dialogic score was r(53)=.424, p=.001. For the wiki websites, as the dialogic score increased so did the value and future use scores (**See Table 3**).

Table 3. Dialogic score correlation to value and commitment to future usage

		Dialogic Score	This website's information is valuable.	I am committed to using this website in the future.
Dialogic score	Pearson Correlation	1	.283(*)	.424(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.035	.001
	N	56	56	56
* p<.05 ** p<.001				

Discussion

RQ1: Do wikis exhibit the dialogic principles?

Both of the wikis examined in this pilot study enabled dialogic principles. The Wikipedia and WikiHealth participants reported that the dialogic principles were there and were stronger than found on non-wiki websites. Wikipedia and WikiHealth have the same wiki structure of being open, incremental, organic, and observable, but the number of users, age of the site, and depth and breadth of information is very different. This seems to suggest that wiki sites of various sizes are useful in terms of engaging in dialogue with the public. Further research is needed to investigate this outside of the health information arena. Further, the finding that wikis uphold dialogic principles is strengthened as it was found to be evident in two very different wiki sites.

The open-ended questions about why people post to the wikis and the impact on their lives lends further support to the numeric data.

Below are a few comments that illustrate the dialogic principles, in participants' own words.

- "I like to believe that those that suffer from a similar condition [to me] are better informed."
- "I had an eye problem. I wanted to share with others what I learned."
- "I am very interested in health, and think laymen have a good perspective."
- [The impact is] greater appreciation for the alternative positions people seem to take."
- "To help people."

These comments also show how the dialogic principles can be hard to separate from each other. The first two examples clearly illustrate empathy, but also illustrate propinquity because they are sharing with people who are currently making a health decision, and risk because they are sharing a personal, and probably private, experience with the entire web.

RQ2: Do wikis increase the value of the website to its users?

The answer to this question is less clear. When examining wiki website data, a significant correlation exists between the overall dialogic score of the wiki websites and the respondents finding the website valuable. Yet when comparing mean scores for both wikis and non-wikis, the difference is not significant. A possible answer is that both types of websites are useful in different ways; both types scored above four on the five-point scale. Wikis may be specifically thought to be valuable due to their upholding dialogic principles and non-wikis may be valuable for other reasons. A more nuanced scale may need to be developed to look at what makes a site valuable in order to distinguish between ways that wiki and non-wiki sites are thought to be valuable. Further, the nature of the participants (i.e. young, well educated) may tend to sway them toward seeing health websites as more valuable. The participants tended to select and report on non-wiki health websites that were credible and well regarded and thus this may have influenced how participants responded to this particular question. The correlation suggests though that a more dialogic website is viewed as more valued.

Another possible answer is that dialogue does not add value and thus wikis may be seen as less valuable than traditional sites. These findings could be unique to the area of health information seeking. Kent and Taylor (2002) mention that dialogic processes can "often fall short of participants' aspirations" (p. 33). Given that this was a pilot study with a small sample, strong conclusions cannot be drawn as to the value of wiki sites versus non-wiki sites, especially in regards to the dialogic nature of wikis. Participants' comments do seem to suggest that real value was added by wikis being dialogic. Here are some participant comments that illustrate the value added:

- "Fun, I learn stuff, the world is better."
- "I really like the idea of sharing information on health issues and topics. The wiki model is the perfect model through which to do this."
- "I am a medical student and find that I learn by teaching."
- "I am making contributions in the hopes that one day it will make an impact."

These comments not only focus on the information being useful, but also the mutuality, empathy, propinquity and commitment of the wiki process.

RQ3: Do wikis increase commitment to future usage of the website?

Though the value of the informative versus the value of the process is difficult to distinguish using these data, this is not the case with commitment to future usage. The results do point to a significantly higher commitment to future usage for wikis than non-wikis. Additionally, a significant correlation exists between the overall dialogic score of the wiki websites and the respondents being committed to using the website in the future. In designing a website, conservation of visitors and encouraging return visits is vital (Kent & Taylor, 1998; Kent, Taylor, & White, 2003). Websites that funnel visitors to other sites or do not work to encourage return traffic will be unable to have long-term success. I would argue that a website's success has more to do with return visits than being viewed as valuable. It is possible for a website to be seen

8

as valuable but not have many return visits. For example, the NCI website containing cancer information is valuable, but I do not expect to return every week to see if any new content has been added. In short, the NCI website is valuable, but I do not have a sustaining relationship with that organisation. The increase in commitment for future usage with wikis advocates strongly for this website form.

The commitment to returning to the wikis was frequently mentioned in the comments. Below is a sample of those comments.

• "It's a great procrastination tool."
• "Over time I hope to improve and appropriately change what is there."
• "Mainly I eradicate vandalism, crankery, or other forms of crud."
• "To correct spelling or clarify information. I only make small changes."

The last two comments demonstrate how many users spend many hours editing other people's work to make it better for the wiki users and the community. The incredible passion that the users have for the wiki was quite surprising to us. This commitment to future usage was most evident in the research process when we inadvertently posted a link to the Wikipedia survey on a discussion page about a health issue. We were immediately (within two minutes) and repeatedly reprimanded for 'dirtying' the page for future users and straying from the overall Wikipedia goal of creating an encyclopaedia. The users of both wikis were highly committed to the project of creating and maintaining their wiki sites.

Conclusions and future directions

Wikis may be an untapped resource for organisations to dialogue with external publics. There is potential for both research and theory building in this area as well as for practitioners to engage with this new type of dialogic public relations. The findings from this study lend support to the need for future research and for practitioners to begin to explore further uses for wiki technology. As a pilot study, this study begins to develop theory and a deeper understanding of how wiki sites uphold dialogic principles and encourage dialogue. Further, this study contributes to our understanding of what develops commitment to a website and to making a website valuable to participants. Organisations that rely on or value dialogue with external publics may find this type of site particular valuable. Though this type of site is risky as it allows participants to have partial ownership of the site and to assist in creative content, partial ownership may encourage repeat visits to the site and an increased investment in the organisation.

As with any study, this pilot study does have limitations. This study is limited in terms of the scope by investigating only health wikis and investigating only two wiki sites. Further, the generalisability of the findings is limited by the small non-random volunteer sample. Future research needs to examine other types of external wikis and needs to gather a larger and more diverse sample. The participants in this study were well educated and heavy Internet users. Though not generalisable, these findings are useful as they enable practitioners to rethink their use of wikis as an internal-only tool and provide a foundation upon which to build future studies of new Internet technologies in public relations. Finally, the dialogic scale shows great possibility for future refinement. This research project was broad and collected data on online health-seeking behaviours. This limited the number of questions that could be asked about each sub-point of dialogic public relations. In the future, a more detailed scale could be developed that allows exploration of the influence and interaction of each of the sub-points.

Kent and Taylor (2002, p. 33) admit "there are no easy answers to how to implement dialogic systems in organizations". In regards to websites, the structure of wikis seems to support the dialogic principles and work toward the goal of using the Internet for relationship building. Just as Associated Press cannot ignore Wikipedia, public relations research cannot ignore wikis. This form of website is developing quickly and, with further research, it could become a useful public relations tool.

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