

Web 2.0

Phil Bradley

Posting you a note

Introduction

I've never been asked how I get my ideas on what I'm going to write a column about, but if I did I would probably say that it's down to serendipity. While considering what to write this quarter I got an email from a favoured resource which told me that it was changing its name from Wallwisher to Padlet. So I thought I'd explain exactly what this type of tool is, how you can use it and a few sample tools.

If you take a look around you it's probably not going to take long before you cast eyes on a Post-it note or two. If you're anything like me it will actually be rather more than one or two – they're becoming an indispensable way of remembering useful things or passing notes back and forth. Sometimes they're stuck to a wall or noticeboard for so long they become part of the furniture. It's easy to take the concept of Post-it notes and translate it into an electronic version,

and there are a number of tools out there which do exactly that. So imagine if you will that your computer screen is a noticeboard that you can pull up at any time you want to, and you can fill it with as many Post-it notes as you wish; either to use for personal reasons, or to share with other people. Of course, a note doesn't just have to be words, it could be a link to a webpage, an image, video or link to a document for example.

Using Post-it boards

One way that I'll often use a Post-it board is at the start of a course that I'm running. I usually do the 'going around the room' activity, finding out who people are and what they'd like to get out of the course, but using a board is a slightly different way to achieve the same sort of thing. It's easy enough for people to get the hang of very quickly – click on the URL, go to the page, double-click to create a note, and then write what needs to be said. I can keep refreshing the main

screen, and moving notes around so that everyone can see what people want to get out of the training day. I can also group notes together in appropriate collections. The board can then be used during the rest of the day for reference, or I can delete notes off it as I cover each requested subject in turn. Alternatively I can keep the board active if the course is longer than a day for future reference. A Post-it board also gives nervous delegates a bit of confidence right at the start of the day and proves to them that maybe this Web 2/Social media thing isn't going to be so difficult after all! Post-it boards are a great way of brainstorming then – crowdsourcing ideas and then placing them together in groups for later discussion or action.

I had shown one group of delegates – teachers – about these boards and one of them told me that she was about to go and teach a sex-ed lesson, and an integral part of the lesson was let the children ask any questions they wanted. As you can imagine, this wasn't always very easy, but the use of a Post-it board meant that the children could post up the questions that they wanted answers to without being embarrassed. It's the choice of the person who establishes a board as to how they are used, and notes can be moderated prior to posting if necessary or desired.

Alternatively, use a board as just that – a notice board. An electronic noticeboard is available to everyone that you wish, directly from their desk, at home or at work, and it can be accessed 24/7, so it can be used globally if necessary. A Post-it board could be used to provide access to preferred links, instead of using a bookmarking system like Delicious. Since images or videos can be embedded a board could be a really interest-

ing and exciting way to provide access to appropriate resources. If you ever need to plan events a Post-it board would be an excellent way of keeping the discussions together in one place. No more hunting through emails trying to find the one that you read a few weeks ago – the information that you need is waiting and available on the wall. A Post-it board is a great way to keep notes and lists that can be accessed quickly and easily from wherever you might happen to be. Since the board is kept in the cloud it's always just a click or two away, even with a smartphone. If you need to get feedback on an idea, or seek opinions on something, a Post-it wall is a good way to do it. Create a board, post the question or link to a resource and get people to tell you exactly what they think of it.

Post-it resources

Let's start with the tool that prompted me to write this column – Padlet, which used to be called Wallwisher. It's been around for several years now and is a very stable product – you can find it at <http://padlet.com/>. Simply create an account and choose the type of wall that you want to have; it can either be a 'stream' in which one Post-it note appears one after another chronologically, or it can be more free flowing and notes can be moved around and grouped as necessary. The board can be themed with different backgrounds and colours and linked into any number of different social media sites, or embedded onto a website. I've created an Elucidate wall at <http://padlet.com/wall/5wj654rcoj> and you're most welcome to take a look and try it out.

Listhings at <http://listhings.com/> does exactly the same sort of thing – create a wall, take notes directly from your browser and share with colleagues. I don't think it's as sophisticated as Padlet, but if you just need something to quickly jot some ideas down on paper, it's a good tool.

Popplet at <http://popplet.com/> has slightly more of a brain-mapping feel about it, with links that can be made between notes. It's an easy and attractive tool, though you do need to register in order to use it.

Stixy at <http://www.stixy.com/> is quite sophisticated and is visually very appealing. It's one of the very few that actually raise the idea that a Post-it board can be used by a family to organise ideas and events.

Lino at <http://en.linoit.com/> is the tool that most closely reminds me of Padlet; very flexible, powerful and attractive.

There are plenty of other alternatives though, so if none of those attract you, try Postica at <http://www.posti.ca/> Clever Notes at <http://www.clever-software.net/> Edistorm at <http://www.edistorm.com/> (which is not currently accepting new users, but since it's particularly designed for education I'm including it as a placeholder really), and Spaaze at <http://www.spaaze.com/home>, which defines itself as a virtual corkboard.

Summary

Post-it sites, or virtual corkboards are really fun, enjoyable, easy and valuable tools. They have a multiplicity of users, and are ideal for personal work, sharing fun things with family and friends, or as a valuable tool within a work environment. They're flexible and free, so next time you need to collaborate with people, try a Post-it board.