Use of social media technology becoming more popular way to boost productivity

By Ryan Huang | Posted: 16 June 2010 2238 hrs

SINGAPORE: It appears that more companies are turning to social media technology to boost efficiency and productivity in the workplace.

And experts said the Asia Pacific market for such tools and solutions called unified communications and collaboration market is set to more than double to US$5 billion by 2014.

The growth will also be boosted by the expected increase in global spending on infocomm technology.

Email and instant messaging may be relatively common tools for office communication.

But experts said there's a case for companies to start looking at using blogs and wiki pages to communicate internally.

Wikis are websites that allows the easy creation and editing of any number of interlinked web pages via a web browser.

Assistant Professor Michael Netzley, corporate communication practice, SMU, said: "There are many opportunities to find efficiencies with social media or enterprise 2.0. When used well they can increase the speed of communications, they can increase productivity and collaboration.

"They give us amazing opportunities for employee engagement and there can even be cost savings in terms of reducing paper costs.

"With internal wikis, one of the advantages here is that a wiki is basically just an empty sheet of digital paper with a lot of functionality to it. So people can go in and use that site for whatever purpose they need.

"It allows people from different time zones and different functional units to all have a common space come together and collaborate.
And it seems companies are now more willing to spend and adopt such technology.

That's because they can reap substantial cost savings when workers become more efficient.

Experts said people spend up to 40 hours a week collaborating with co-workers and business partners.

For instance, observers said the average cost of an employee searching for information is
about US$3,300 per worker per year.

Craig Dower, president, APAC, Avanade Asia, said: “We’re seeing a lot more people that are saying that this is fundamental to success. 80 per cent of the executives that we surveyed globally said that using collaboration technology was not only important but critical to success.

“What we’re now starting to see is concern around whether the tools get used effectively or whether they get abused. Is this something that is really creating productivity and enhancement or is it wasting people’s time?

“Our view of that is it’s not really the tools that do that, people can find ways to waste time in all sorts of ways in the office. You can spend a lot of time sitting around the water cooler or go downstairs and have a 25 minute cigarette break. These are really around the culture, how do you want to use the tools effectively.”

Experts said other concerns to consider when implementing such technology includes the workplace culture.

Obstacles may also come in the form of senior management who are unfamiliar with the use and benefits of such technology.

Research firm Gartner expects the market for enterprise applications is set to grow at a compounded rate 25 per cent annually over the next four years. - CNA/vm