Confluence

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What are the uses of Confluence? What does it do?

Confluence was developed primarily to be used in the business world, but its versitility makes it an easy fit in any education situation. It was made to improve the productivity of underperforming businesses and has already seen a lot of success. [1]

Confluence is a newer program and much of its potential is still unknown. Below are a few examples of how Confluence can be used in unique ways.

- You can use Confluence as a place to upload files for others to see.
- You can incorporate Confluence into business, education, and personal uses
- You can use Confluence as a discussion tool.

Confluence is an organizer [2]. Whether it be for a large project, like the one that is being created here, or for a group of people that need a network to colaborate ideas, Confluence makes it easy to keep everything in one place and makes it viewable from anywhere in the world.

Who uses Confluence?

Confluence can really be used by anyone with a need or desire for a better networking or organizational system [2]. It is easy to learn so that even people that may be new to computers can quickly pick up the skills needed to use Confluence. Confluence is mainly used by teachers and students as well as business people that may need to communicate from across the world.

Schools	Companies	Government Agencies
Cornell University	Disney	European Commission
Harvard University	UPS	European Parliament
Johns Hopkins University	Boeing	FBI
MIT	IKEA	Port of Seattle
New York University	Adobe	United Nations
Stanford University	Electronic Arts	USAID
University of California	Nike	US Department of Energy
University of Cambridge	NASA	US Environmental Protection Agency
University of British Columbia	NOKIA	US Navy
Yale University	British Red Cross	US Supreme Court

I. History

I.1 Development

Atlassian Software Systems, the company by which Confluence was marketed and developed, was founded in 2002 by Mike Cannon-Brookes and Scott Farquahar [3]. Confluence was developed in 2002 and its first public release date was May 12, 2004 [4]. Atlassian Software Systems has over 6,000 Confluence customers in more than 100 countries. It's an Australian company that specializes in issue tracking and collaboration software [5]. Confluence was created to make it easy for everyone to share information with everyone all over the world.

I.2 How Confluence works?

Confluence uses a wiki format, and it's own set of code to allow the user to create their own space for education, business, or personal use; similar to the format of Wikipedia.

Confluence is designed to give everyone — even novice wiki users — the confidence to become an online publisher.

- Easy, instant editing: right in your browser.
- Auto-save: so your work is always protected.
- Version rollback: nothing is irrevocable.
- Concurrent editing: safety for multi-user environments.

I.3 Getting more out of the application

If basic Confluence tools aren't quite getting the job done you can use Plug-ins to make Confluence work for you.

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II. How Confluence relates to other applications?

II.1 Comparison to Competitors

How is Confluence related to other applications?
To view and compare a list of wikis go to the following website:http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_wiki_software;

A related application called Office Connector allows Confluence to be used with Microsoft applications. This way, users who are familiar these programs will be more comfortable working on Confluence. You can transfer Word documents, spreadsheets, and PowerPoints from the program onto Confluence and you can edit them in their respective Microsoft programs and save the changes to your Confluence page [6]. To learn more and to view an informational video, visit the following site:http://www.atlassian.com/office/.

The following links allow you to explore Office Connector features:

- Edit a page in Microsoft Word
- Embed a Microsoft application file into Confluence

- Import Microsoft Word documents into Confluence
- Integrate other word processing programs

Through SharePoint Connector, Confluence can be bridged with Microsoft Office SharePoint. This way, information from the two applications can be accessed by users simultaneously and securely. On top of this, documents from SharePoint can be embedded and edited within and Confluence. Also, searches conducted within either program yield results from both applications [7]. To learn more and to view an informational video, visit the following site:http://www.atlassian.com/sharepoint/.

The following links allow you to explore SharePoint Connector features:

- Embed Confluence into Microsoft Office SharePoint
- Link Confluence and SharePoint content and capabilities
- Search for content in both Confluence and SharePoint at the same time
- Login once and navigate between both Confluence and SharePoint

Office Connector and SharePoint Connector are just two of Confluence's plugin features. Users can pick the plugins that best suit their needs [8]. To learn more about Confluence plugins, visit Atlassian's plugin overview. Also, the Plugin Library provides a list of all of the available Confluence plugins.

II.2 Unique Uses

Following is a list of the most popular Confluence plugins:

- Gallery
- Calendar
- Tasklist
- Gliffy
- Theme Builder
- Balsamiq Mockups
- Chart
- SQL
- WebDAV

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III. Real World Application

III.1 Educational Lesson Plans

i. Elementary

Confluence as a communicator and helper:

   At the elementary level, teachers with access to Confluence can create a page for each of their children. They can use that page to track their progess and behavior in class. The teacher could then give parents access to their student's page. This would create a constructive environment where teachers and parents could communicate without worrying about scheduling conflicts. Even though most of the current possiblities involve just adults, students themselves are growing more and more familiar with technology and could learn to use the Internet through Confluence.

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Functions of the Skeletal System.pdf
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S.T.E.M.

Biomes- The Arctic Food Web.doc

Biomes- The Arctic Food Web.pdf
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Delivering a Persuasive Speech.doc

Delivering a Persuasive Speech.pdf

ii. Secondary

Confluence as a tool for distance education:

    Confluence could be a good way to keep students and teachers on the same page. Each student could have their own page (they are called children, after all) in which they could ask their teacher questions. Also, the teacher could provide individual students with extra help or information. This could be very helpful for kids that have missed class due to illness or an extended vacation. Since it can be accessed anywhere and links to websites can be inserted onto pages, teachers can teach their class and present their materials without having to speak with students face-to-face. On the main board, teachers could post information that apply to the entire class about updates and reminders. The easy access to all of these materials could help students who don't speak up in class as much, or perhaps just students that are confused when doing work on the weekends and don't have a teacher present to ask directly.

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Le Shopping en France.pdf
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An Approach to Current Events.doc

An Approach to Current Events.pdf
—
S.T.E.M.

Definition of the Derivative.doc

Definition of the Derivative.pdf

iii. Post Secondary

Confluence as an organizer:

    Confluence is being used right now as a way to organize a large project. A class doing extensive research needs a place to compile and share data. Confluence's ability to be divided into chapters with pages and subpages give it an outline-like structure. This can make it easy to keep track of one's own research while still being able to show it to the rest of the class in order to increase cohesiveness.

Confluence as an everyday tool:

    Confluence can be used as a tool for coordination between a student and an instructor. Updates about grades, class cancelations, and important projects can be easily and clearly displayed to keep a class on track. Purdue uses its program "Blackboard" much this way, but it does not provide the same information sharing and contact abilities. Using Confluence could eliminate many misunderstandings and technical problems with a reliable system that saves a persons work every ten minutes and is constantly accessable. Students could post attachments rather than e-mail them, and with the ability to track posts, instructors can make sure that they were sent on time.

III.2 Business/Industry

i. Business

Here is a list of businesses that are already using Confluence and seeing positive results [9]:

- Dow Jones & Company
- Wyrcan, Inc.
- Giga Spaces
- GPC Biotech
- Night Kitchen Interactive
- National Constitution Center
- Red Ant
- Sabre Holdings
- Johns Hopkins University
- Customware
- Near Infinity
- Telenor
- University of California Berkeley

    To learn how they have been using Confluence to improve their business practices, visit this site http://www.atlassian.com/software/confluence/casestudies/. Also, from this site you can access case studies over each of these businesses experience with Confluence.

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IV. Demonstration of Educational Value

What general ways can Confluence be utilized for learning?
Confluence is a web-based wiki that functions much like the well-known Facebook. It is easy to navigate and store data through attachments. With the use of labels, users can quickly access any information needed. Taking time to understand the concepts of a program can take away from the actual substance of the material needing to be learned, so this simple program was designed to optimize features while limiting guesswork in program mechanics.

Ways confluence can be used:

- Message forums to share ideas
- Online announcements
- Access to offline data and other materials
- Starting point to other learning programs
- Organize materials for class, whether a student or teacher

What features of Confluence help learning to occur?

Confluence is an effective program because of its versitility. Confluence has easy to grasp concepts that make simple work out of sharing links of other websites, attaching offline work, and organizing data in tables. Confluence pages can be directly exported to Microsoft Office and versions of Confluence contain features called "Plugins" to further work with familiar software. [10]

For more information on Plugins, consult the following website: http://www.atlassian.com/software/confluence/plugins/

Confluence also uses features called labels. A creator of a page can label that page using keywords. Other users can then search for those keywords and any page that contains that label will appear. It makes short work out of searching for the information a person wants to view. [11]

Confluence can also be organized into chapters, making it an ideal program to launch a large project, much like the one seen here. This makes it easy to organize, which makes requested information fast and easy to find.

What other materials would a person need to utilize Confluence for learning?

To use Confluence, one would need access to a computer and an Internet connection. To use some of the other features, an individual may need to have Microsoft software installed on their computer, but running the basics are as simple as a trip to the computer lab or sitting at home on your own computer.

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V. How Confluence is used Internationally

Confluence can be used all over the world! It is designed for collaboration between teams, organizations, friends, and family to communicate with one another all over the world and to share information and ideas. It is useful for businesses as well if they have employees all of the world and they want them to share information or collaborate with each other. People can upload presentations, reports, etc. So, if you're traveling abroad and have a report due about something you could post it in Confluence for your colleagues to see. Also, if you give a presentation, the PowerPoint can be posted directly on Confluence for people who missed the live presentation to see. It could also be used in classrooms where the students are learning about different parts of the world or are in a foreign language. They could used Confluence to communicate with students, teachers, or experts all over the world to learn things that they would otherwise not have been able to access. Currently, Confluence has over 6,000 customers in more than 100 countries! [12]

To see a list of some of Atlassians customers, consult the following site: http://www.atlassian.com/about/customers.jsp

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VI. References

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