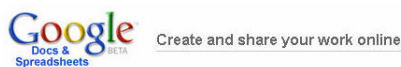


## Is Your IP Leaking - 2 – Office Collaboration



If you've ever struggled to keep track of different versions of spreadsheet or word processor files sent over email, Google Docs & Spreadsheets may be right for you. Google Docs & Spreadsheets is a free web-based word processing and spreadsheet program that keeps documents current and lets the people you choose update files from their own computers. You can, for example, coordinate your student group's homework assignments, access your family to-do list from work or home, or collaborate with remote colleagues on a new business plan. [Learn More](#)

**Get started quickly.**

Import your existing documents and spreadsheets, or create new ones from scratch.

**Edit your documents and spreadsheets from anywhere.**

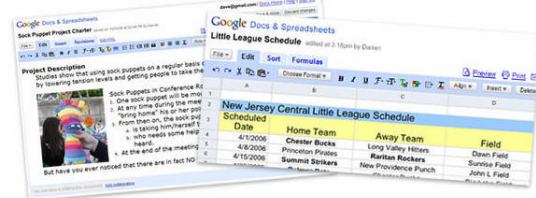
All you need is a Web browser - your documents and spreadsheets are stored securely online.

**Share changes in real-time.**

Invite people to your documents/spreadsheets and make changes together, at the same time.

**And it's free.**

[Take a tour of Google Docs & Spreadsheets »](#)



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“Here's the punch line for managers – you need to understand the effects this may have on the ability of your business to function as individual users selectively or randomly choose to use Google Collaboration Tools.”

PCProfile believes that you have better things to do than worry about than this, but be warned, its coming to a desktop near you, and it could cause you to lose considerable amounts of Intellectual Property and Corporate sensitive data and documents if not managed correctly!

## Managing “Google Tools” to reduce risk

is a feature article, in the **Managing Clouds and Moving Goalposts** © 2006-2007 series of “Management Focused” articles by **PCProfile** <http://www.pcprofile.com>

## OFFICE Collaboration

Everybody is looking for better ways to “collaborate together” electronically through documents, spreadsheets and web based systems, using the power of the Intranet/Internet.

Office Collaboration tools are expensive when you look at corporate wide coverage, so the advent of free tools offered by Google may well be very attractive to many as new offerings are appearing that seem to be very useful.

Google has just announced that it plans to use “Tonic” to take on Microsoft PowerPoint and offer a PowerPoint “look-alike” via Google. <http://search.sys-con.com/read/364712.htm>

This is going to add to the list of challenges faced by Management and needs to be put on your watch list of things that you need to ensure are governed correctly within your organization to ensure that the organization is protected.

### Why?

Given that PowerPoint files from business and government sites tend to contain significant amounts of Intellectual Property (IP) regarding market share, new product releases, competitor positions, sales and profit performance, stocks and share market information, salary and pay rate information, assay results, press releases embargoed for release, legal privileged information, takeover strategies, market buyouts etc (all of which can appear in draft and final form) sharing these in a Google/Tonic PowerPoint look-alike version over the web via Google isn't a desirable aspect for business and government sector accounts.

### Who would be silly enough to expose corporate information such as this you say?

Many IT (and even management) personnel will jump at the chance to bring in these free tools (to save money meet a budget) without thinking about the IP implications and when the corporate data is shared via these sorts of open technologies “the web is unbelievably porous and open” then the damage that will be done to many sites will be irreversible.

Even if the risks are known, do not underestimate the power of the end user at the desktop to find ways and means of getting around corporate “rules” to make their own life easier, and unless you know how to manage the situation (through proper governance) then you face significant risks.

Take the example of **Google Calendars** <http://googleblog.blogspot.com/2006/11/search-public-events-in-google.html> being shared as a means of ease and collaboration.

Did you know that you can access meeting details and dialin passcodes for key meetings online? This has been aired in the last few days on US sites as a risk. see [http://www2.csoonline.com/blog\\_view.html?CID=32853](http://www2.csoonline.com/blog_view.html?CID=32853)

Google has responded very quickly to add some user warnings prior to release of a calendar but this isn't the biggest issue.

Whilst we agree that the calendar can leak details about critical meetings, names, address, timing of new releases or market information etc, the bigger risks will come from sharing a PowerPoint look-alike from Google and Google Documents and Spreadsheets on the basis of “collaboration” offered via Google will be far worse.

### Google Documents and Spreadsheets (the old Writely)

[https://www.google.com/accounts/ServiceLogin?service=writely&passive=true&continue=http%3A%2F%2Fdocs.google.com%2F&ltmpl=WR\\_tmp\\_2\\_lfty&nui=1&utm\\_campaign=en&utm\\_source=en-et-more&utm\\_medium=more](https://www.google.com/accounts/ServiceLogin?service=writely&passive=true&continue=http%3A%2F%2Fdocs.google.com%2F&ltmpl=WR_tmp_2_lfty&nui=1&utm_campaign=en&utm_source=en-et-more&utm_medium=more) are also offered online as a collaborative way of sharing information and these could pose a far bigger risk due to the lack of protection for Intellectual Property.

Read **Google's Terms and Conditions Of Service** <http://www.google.com/google-d-s/intl/en/terms.html> (very few will) and you will see they don't guarantee any privacy or IP protection, in fact in some instances "they assume rights to use" over the content that you have uploaded onto their servers.

**Make sure you read about what can happen to "Your Content":**

### *Your Rights*

Google claims no ownership or control over any Content submitted, posted or displayed by you on or through Google services. You or a third party licensor, as appropriate, retain all patent, trademark and copyright to any Content you submit, post or display on or through Google services and you are responsible for protecting those rights, as appropriate.

By submitting, posting or displaying Content on or through Google services which are intended to be available to the members of the public, you grant Google a worldwide, non-exclusive, royalty-free license to reproduce, adapt, modify, publish and distribute such Content on Google services for the purpose of displaying, distributing and promoting Google services.

Google reserves the right to syndicate Content submitted, posted or displayed by you on or through Google services and use that Content in connection with any service offered by Google.

Google furthermore reserves the right to refuse to accept, post, display or transmit any Content in its sole discretion.

Unless you want to risk exposing your IP to Google and the world "to use" then you will need to make it patently clear to employees within your organization what your policy and procedures and compliance rules say about what they can and can't use when creating and sharing Documents and Spreadsheets, PowerPoint look-alikes and Calendar details via these new Google initiatives.

### **Why raise this as an issue?**

In the ongoing quest to save \$ on IT budgets etc some IT personnel will recommend using these "free tools" and they have little or no idea about the IP or commercial ramifications. Many are very naïve when it comes to this issue.

The decision on whether to use these sorts of free tools is NOT one that an IT Manager should make without consulting the owners of the business and legal counsel 1st.

It's as simple as that, or have we all forgotten what the core reasons are for being in business?

Using these sorts of "free tools" might just mean that those that start using this approach have a business career that is very short lived, as does the business itself.

If you want a copy of another IP related issue that needs to be on the governance watch list contact me at [pcprofile@internode.on.net](mailto:pcprofile@internode.on.net) as we wrote about the issues of "**Is Your IP Leaking**" in 2004 and we were discussing the risk of using Open Source software code within business for development of bespoke software.

Now that Google is driving hard (as a strategy up against Microsoft) into corporate and government accounts through Documents, Spreadsheets, Calendars and PowerPoint (look alike) files the real issues need to be raised higher and put into perspective.

Google is a great Search tool but if used unwisely or without thinking (by uploading corporate and sensitive documents over the web through Google collaboration tools) then IP will be leaking everywhere at a much faster rate than it already is just by people and bots sniffing around ports and scouring servers for unprotected shares and open user accounts.

This alone in its own right is causing a significant amount of IP leakage and using Google collaboration tools just accelerates the task and makes it easier still!

## The Bottomline according to PCProfile?

Many innocent users will cause havoc in your systems if they aren't accurately instructed on how to deal with the issues relating to Using The Google Collaboration tools and features. PCProfile believes that a coordinated approach needs to be taken by Management to control the process under their own terms.

Now is the time to make sure that you assess your position across the enterprise, mandating **Acceptable Use Policies** for the use of these "free tools".

"Can you afford to take the risk of letting your corporate data and sensitive information be openly shared across the WWW"?

**About the Author** PCProfile has been in the anti-piracy and management advice business for over 15 years offering assistance and advice to managers to help them save their own jobs and their businesses!

<http://www.pcprofile.com>

### *Why "Managing Clouds?"*

*"As soon as you see them forming they change shape and form again, sometimes turning into vapour, other times dumping rain all over you! .....and you really can't manage them at all!"*

The role of any manager is complex and difficult and with rapid changes taking place all around you it's difficult to know where to find practical advice on "how to manage" these changes. This is especially true when you think you have it all under control then find the rules change, again, and again.

This is when it's more like **"Moving the Goalposts"!**

**About "Managing Clouds and Moving Goalposts" – PCProfile** has been writing feature articles on a wide range of technology issues and many related to "management practices" or failing to understand what was happening around them.

The key issues we noted were that technology changes were happening so fast around managers it was a bit like trying to "manage clouds". The other issue was the rules keep changing, (nothing new here) hence the reference to "moving the goalposts".

"Managing Clouds and Moving Goalposts" is a series of management focused articles on relevant technology issues that are impacting businesses across the world and are intended to inform with pragmatic solutions steps that can be undertaken to minimize risk.

Other articles in the series;

- Hasta La Vista [http://www.pcprofile.com/Hasta\\_La\\_Vista.pdf](http://www.pcprofile.com/Hasta_La_Vista.pdf)
- Update Now [http://www.pcprofile.com/Update\\_Now\\_Managing\\_Clouds\\_and\\_Moving\\_Goalposts.pdf](http://www.pcprofile.com/Update_Now_Managing_Clouds_and_Moving_Goalposts.pdf)
- Is Your IP Leaking - 1 – Open Source
- Is Your IP Leaking - 2 – Office Collaboration (this feature article)
- RMA Your worst nightmare
- Who Is Responsible for Software Piracy - 1
- Who Is Responsible for Software Piracy – 2
- The Risk of Old PCs
- File Sharing
- No Budget for Software
- We DON'T CARE how much they lose!

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