understanding the value of social for the enterprise

As the nature of work evolves, leading organizations are taking advantage of the social business shift. Are you empowering your workforce with social for the enterprise?
the need for a more social enterprise

New patterns of work demand a social approach to enterprise knowledge management and cross-functional collaboration.

Today’s workplace has never been so demanding. New technologies have created new employee expectations and patterns of work. Cross-functional collaboration has never been more important to the success of an enterprise. According to McKinsey, the average interaction worker (defined as “managers, professionals, sales people, and others whose work requires frequent interpersonal interactions, independent judgment, and access to knowledge”) now spends an incredible 48% of their work week managing email, looking for information, and tracking down colleagues for their expertise and assistance. Harvard Business Review has put this figure closer to 61%.

In a world where access to information and collaboration are so vitally important, leading enterprises are increasingly turning to enterprise social tools like Yammer, Office 365, SharePoint, and NewsGator to empower their employees and solve core business problems.

An emerging symbol of the social business shift, enterprise social networks (“ESN”) put human capital at the heart of workplace challenges, emphasizing interconnectivity, relationships, and better engagement. As a Gallup Consulting study found, organizations with engaged employees enjoy 18% higher productivity, 16% higher profitability, and 51% lower turnover than organizations with disengaged employees. Given that employee engagement is now a key success factor, leading enterprises can’t afford not to empower their employees with the enterprise social networks they need to collaborate effectively. As Microsoft has noted, social will “transform daily work—how we all manage customer relationships, analyze data, make decisions, finish projects, share content, discover people and information, and create relationships between people and things.”
Social for the enterprise is the future of enterprise communication and collaboration. What are its main benefits?

1. Knowledge management

Social for the enterprise is the future of enterprise knowledge management and collaboration. Enterprise social networks help leading enterprises to capture, store and leverage the knowledge and expertise of their people. Rapidly sharing that knowledge and expertise between employees and across groups, departments, and strategic business units can eliminate the negative effects that come with organizational silos and help to boost productivity by an estimated 20-25%.

By facilitating the discovery of the resources employees need to do their jobs, especially through the power of social search, enterprise social networks can reduce costs, expedite processes, empower decision making, foster innovation, and act as powerful filters of information. Take for example the difference between asking a question over email versus with an enterprise social network. With email, the sender needs to know who to ask in order to get an answer. With ESNs, the question immediately reaches a wider audience, dramatically increasing the likelihood of finding the right information at the right time.

2. Community building

While many organizations see the community building value in social tools, public social networks don’t offer the privacy and security they require. Social for the enterprise allows for a safe, shared environment for the expression of ideas, knowledge and interests. Subject matter experts can be readily identified, providing leaders and employees with easy access to people and information. Enterprise social solutions also excel at fostering collaboration between users with similar corporate objectives, meaning better alignment across the enterprise. Enabled employee communities also provide visibility into issues of particular importance to the enterprise, allowing leaders to quickly identify areas of concern and make adjustments. Lastly, enterprise social communities (either communities of interest or communities of practice) provide a valuable platform for employees to showcase their knowledge and talent to the rest of the organization, having the dual impact of recognizing individual performance as well as surfacing valuable expertise to the rest of the organization.
“Improved communication and collaboration with social technologies can raise productivity by **20-25%**”
- McKinsey

---

**3 promoting transparency**

A major benefit of social for the enterprise is the promotion of transparency. As the enterprise continues to become flatter, openness and visibility have become key workplace demands. Today’s employee is increasingly demanding greater insight into their enterprise’s strategic direction and goals. As an informal method of communication, enterprise social networks allow leaders and employees to leverage the contemporary communication styles commonly used with public social networks. Employees can be empowered with information about the enterprise, while management has the power to engage with communities of employees on an ad hoc basis, sharing the news, thoughts and expertise that will impact employees and the enterprise on a day-to-day basis. Another aspect of transparency and a flat organization: ESNs provide the tools that senior team members need to connect with subject matter experts and thought leaders in the organization, regardless of geography or place within the company hierarchy.

---

**4 enable actionable engagement**

As a function of their transparency, enterprise social networks excel in their ability to enable actionable engagement across the enterprise. High visibility and easy access to information means more accountability, higher follow-through and better employee engagement. Action breeds results, and enterprise social networks provide the tools required to measure the depths of social engagement, meaning that targets can be set and tasks can be developed to meet those targets. Progress and success can be easily tracked and measured, providing enterprises insight into their cultures and communities, and enabling them with the information they need to address areas for organizational improvement.
There are a number of enterprise social networking tools available. What should you consider when making a decision?

**key success factors**

1. **put social front and center**

   If a new ESN tool is deployed in a stand-alone fashion, it will quickly die on the vine for one simple reason—very few people arrive at work each morning and think “I wonder what’s happening on my company’s social network?” Social tools need to be integrated into the fabric of daily life. Most often, the most basic, tangible expression of this is to include an activity feed right on the home page of the corporate intranet. An integration strategy should grow from there.

2. **make it beautiful and easy to use**

   This means a focus on user experience, working hard at making the experience as intuitive and simple as possible. It also involves organizing your content in thoughtful ways that easily convey meaning, and leveraging the best design skill sets to make the solution beautiful and integrated with your brand for consistency.

3. **organizational readiness**

   A key consideration for any enterprise social technology deployment is the readiness of the enterprise in terms of executive buy-in and employee willingness.

   Social is more than just technology. It’s a transformational workplace shift that requires cultural adjustments for both leaders and employees. Top to bottom organizational buy-in is a must. Leading enterprises must look at the roll-out of enterprise social not as a technology deployment, but as a complete overhaul of internal communications processes and how relationships are built and fostered.

   Senior leaders must work diligently to understand their existing social landscapes and plan for how social enterprise technologies will change the ways their organizations operate. Human beings are naturally resistant to change, but the good news is that with intentionality, it’s very feasible to move your organization in a positive direction and embrace the benefits of enterprise social networking.
key success factors

4 operational requirements

Leading organizations must clearly define their social goals to ensure the tools they choose have the capabilities the enterprise requires, from security to reporting to content creation. Each social enterprise tool has unique features and attributes that can impact timelines, costs and ROI, so organizations must carefully consider their own unique requirements when weighing each option. Key considerations with social for the enterprise should include:

• Security
• Training
• User requirements
• On-going creation of fresh content to foster employee engagement
• Executive participation
• Community management
• Reporting
• Publishing
• Network requirements
• Governance
• Mobile considerations (ability to work from any location)

5 measuring social engagement

Accurate and insightful analytics capabilities are crucial for measuring ROI, identifying natural social leaders and measuring social adoption. Keep in mind that the metrics that constitute engagement at the beginning of the process (e.g. one-time task of completing your user profile with an avatar and organizational info) may be different from on-going engagement (commenting on content, contributing or posting information, adding new colleagues). Although it’s tempting, don’t leave analytics considerations to after launch. The dashboards and KPIs that you may be interested in may require collating data from different systems. Having these targets identified early in the adoption cycle will allow you to capture and analyze usage data from Day 1.
key success factors

6 feedback loop

As with any project, a clearly defined feedback loop must be created to ensure that insights garnered from enterprise social tools can be leveraged into tangible results across the enterprise.

A simple, practical application of this would be a new community within your set of communities that is dedicated to feedback on your new ESN tools. Ensuring you have the resources in place to set up a functioning feedback loop is crucial. However, it’s important to ensure that you have a community manager with sufficient time to monitor, respond and resolve issues. Being responsive to feedback is a huge boost for engagement, but the opposite is also true: unresponsiveness kills engagement.

7 the right platform

Leading enterprises must consider the impact of new tools on their existing IT environments, in addition to cost, complexity, compliance, governance, and IT/employee training requirements.

There are two distinct approaches to implementing enterprise social technologies:

1) New Platform Deployments (such as Yammer or Office 365)

2) Integrated Deployments (such as NewsGator or SharePoint 2013)

The decision comes down to an enterprise’s position on cloud adoption and social adoption. When making the decision, companies must weigh the benefits of stand alone platforms with the desire to enhance existing technology tools with new value. Both have merit.
case study

social at ING DIRECT Canada

ING DIRECT Canada, one of Canada’s largest financial institutions with over 1.8 million clients and $37 billion in assets, was an early proponent of the immense value of social for the enterprise.

Realizing that public social networks were unable to meet their social collaboration requirements, ING DIRECT Canada chose to integrate social business elements into their existing SharePoint platform based on imason’s social vision. Key organizational objectives included strengthening the brand, simplifying access to information, breaking down organizational silos, increasing employee satisfaction, accelerating innovation and capturing knowledge. Over a 3 month period, ING DIRECT Canada worked with imason to integrate a wide array of social features, such as communities, likes, follows and shares, into existing SharePoint collaboration sites.

Post-launch, ING DIRECT Canada’s social platform, picture above, enabled employees to connect, collaborate and exchange knowledge more efficiently. Senior executives were able to gain awareness into previously unknown organizational issues, and were able to actively solve both internal and external problems in real time.

Only 4 months after launch, engagement on the ING DIRECT Canada social platform frequently tops 1,000 activities per day, including such actions as community joins, social ‘likes’ and value-added comments.
resources

For more information on social for the enterprise, here are some great resources:

imason

Visit the imason website here for more information on social for the enterprise.

Microsoft Yammer SharePoint

Microsoft is working to enable communication and collaboration with a range of social tools like Sharepoint and Yammer that help people work in ways that are familiar to them in their personal lives. Find out more about Microsoft’s social solutions at http://www.microsoft.com/enterprise/en-au/solutions/social-enterprise.aspx#fbid=YxRvkp7Y19r.

NewsGator

NewsGator is helping to pave the way to true enterprise social. Leveraging the Microsoft Ecosystem, NewsGator is developing solutions for organization who believe in the future of work. Visit their website at www.newsgator.com.

To discuss your enterprise’s needs, please contact:
Stephen Keams
(416) 848-1323
stephen.kearns@imason.com
@stephenakearns

about imason inc.
imason is a leading authority on social for the enterprise. Our experience designing and deploying social solutions that users love can guide your social enterprise initiatives to success.

To find out more about how imason can help your social enterprise efforts, contact us today.

www.imason.com  
imasoninc.
312 Adelaide Street West
Suite 801
Toronto, ON M5V 1R2
T: 416.597.3256
F: 416.597.2527
notes

1 http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/high_tech_telecoms_internet/the_social_economy

2 http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2012/08/social_medias_productivity_pay.html


4 http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/high_tech_telecoms_internet/the_social_economy