



Social Business Strategy



1. Introduction / Summary

Social business software creates an online environment in which all stakeholders can collaborate and discuss business tasks. Capitalizing on the opportunity of collaboration via social business software can provide a business with many benefits, such as: a connected network of employees who can communicate with each other in real time, mobility for those workers who travel frequently or are remote, and integration with other software programs critical for collaboration and sharing. It will also help begin a corporate memory stream of decisions made, issues resolved, and processes developed.

2. Background / Challenges

The modern workplace is littered with obstacles to mire business productivity and success. Amongst these hurdles are workforce instability, an increasing complexity of the work itself, communication and collaboration challenges, and forcing rapid modernization to technologies and processes.

2.1 Ever-Changing Workforce

Human capital quickly overturns in the modern workplace as an aging workforce retires, vendors lose current contracts or seek new opportunities elsewhere, and younger employees stay in jobs for shorter stints. Fluctuations in human capital are especially dangerous to organizations already struggling to retain corporate knowledge. The impact is especially seen during times of decision-making when absent documentation of past crises, knowledge of who has relevant expertise, and where important information resides are needed.



2.2 Increasing Complexity and Specialization of Tasks

Due to increasing complexity of tasks, employees narrow their focus on accomplishing a single task without consideration for the rest of the Command. The resulting work silos derail communication and collaboration between organizations and diminish enterprise wide awareness. This lack of awareness leads to work slow-downs, mistakes, or redundancies, which end up costing tremendous amounts of time and money.

3. Solution

Effective communication and purposeful collaboration are each fundamental to overcoming these hurdles. One of the methods that accommodate the ever-changing workforce—while helping to decrease complexity through collaboration and communication—is by implementing a social business strategy.

By creating a robust social business strategy, stakeholders can collaborate in a more effective manner by: posting comments and asking questions, messaging individuals for feedback or by creating larger discussion groups online, video-chatting and screen sharing with workers that are either remote or in different locations, collaborating on documents and files real-time, mining a wiki-style repository for best practices and use cases, or by watching videos created by industry experts and long-time employees that detail a task or a challenge.

In addition to fostering a more collaborative environment and increasing overall communication, a sound Social Business strategy will help to gather the knowledge that large, complex organizations are at risk of losing as employees change roles, are promoted, or retire. A social business strategy can help to give employees background and contextual information on tasks, past challenges, and a myriad of other institutional knowledge. It puts emphasis on and value in peer-to-peer communication, collaboration, and recognition, thus also positively increasing workforce morale.

3.1 Ever-Changing Workforce

The constant stream of information exchange and social collaboration enabled through a social business platform can prevent “corporate amnesia”. As human capital quickly overturns, the social business tool can provide archived information on what decisions were made and why, how issues were resolved and when, and what the potential impact of a situation could have been on the organization as a whole. In addition, utilizing all of the IT resources within the social business toolkit will allow the retiring workforce to capture, store, and transfer its collective knowledge. According to Gartner research, when an employee retires or changes roles, up to 50% of the organizational knowledge possessed by the employee is lost.³

3.2 Increasing Complexity and Specialization of Tasks

Through social business capabilities, such as: file sharing, real-time conversation, and other media, every employee can get a full grasp on which organizations are working on what projects, and what the purpose and outcome of those projects are.⁴ This can save the organization time and money, by preventing employees from re-doing projects or creating tasks that are similar to those that have already been completed by another employee.

“Improved communication and collaboration through social technologies could raise the productivity of interaction workers by 20 to 25 percent.”¹

“...two-thirds of the potential [business] value lies in improving collaboration and communication within and across enterprises.”²

—McKinsey & Company

¹ M. Chui et. al, “The social economy: Unlocking value and productivity through social technologies,” McKinsey & Company, July 2012, <http://www.mckinsey.com/industries/high-tech/our-insights/the-social-economy>

² M. Chui et. al, “The social economy: Unlocking value and productivity through social technologies,” McKinsey & Company, July 2012, <http://www.mckinsey.com/industries/high-tech/our-insights/the-social-economy>

³ Carol Rozwell and Karen Hobert, “How to Retain Knowledge for Reuse After Employees Leave,” Gartner. March 7, 2016, available from Gartner, accessed August 5, 2016.

⁴ Mike Gotta et. al, “Critical Capabilities for Social Software in the Workplace,” Gartner. December 18, 2014, available from Gartner, accessed August 5, 2016.

Suggestions for Implementation

For a social business strategy to have the desired impact on the organization, an appropriate social business platform must be selected. Selecting a platform begins with identifying and implementing the appropriate social business capabilities, at the appropriate levels, for the proper use case.

Capabilities

It is imperative that the underlying software that supports a comprehensive social business strategy meets the demands of all stakeholders. These capabilities will allow users to collaborate and communicate in the most efficient fashion for the institutions to meet its goals. The six critical capabilities, for a social business platform, according to Technology Research Firm Gartner⁵ are as follows:



1. Filtering and analytics

Allows users to filter irrelevant information, and to calculate analytics useful for content improvement such as relevance of information, reputation scores, and reliability.



2. Conversations

Enables users to give feedback on posted work, ask and respond to questions, and converse directly with individuals or groups through video chat or instant messaging.



3. User experience

Streamlines and makes easier use of portals



4. Create and Share

Lets stakeholders write, build, and share files, documents, or articles.



5. Integration

Allows for other applications or “plug-ins” to be embedded into a single platform



6. Administration and Governance

Permits leadership to monitor usage, censor posts, restrict access, and ensure security of organization.

⁵ Ibid.

Use Cases

The top four uses for social business platforms according to Technology Research Firm Gartner⁶ are as follows:

1. Project Team Collaboration

To support collaboration between a set group of people working to complete a short-term project with well-defined goals.

2. Social Intranet

To facilitate informal discussions amongst cross-organizational employees; a “virtual water cooler.”

3. Contextual Collaboration

To inject collaborative capabilities into everyday tasks via commonly-used applications like email, office suite, etc. Increases worker flexibility when addressing exceptions during workflows.

4. Community Hub

Supports interactions between people with similar interests or responsibilities, specifically the needs to discuss, consolidate, and organize content related to those interests.

The image below outlines which business critical capability a social platform requires in order to fulfill your need.

Project Team Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create and share• Conversations
Social Intranet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conversations• User experience capabilities
Community Hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conversations
Contextual Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integration

Once the appropriate social business platform is selected, the key to effectiveness and sustainment of the solution is a detailed implementation plan, along with an in-depth unified communications and collaboration methodology. Ensuring user adoption, at all levels of the organization, will be achieved by garnering insight and commentary from all stakeholders and users prior to project kickoff, in addition to consistent communication to all stakeholders, influencers and end-users, starting pre-implementation and carrying on throughout sustainment.

Conclusion

As organizations expand and become more complex, a robust strategy is necessary to maintain strong communications, collaboration, and knowledge sharing across all levels of the Command. In addition, at a more granular level, it is imperative that a collective corporate memory exists; detailing when decisions were made and why. Equally as imperative, is that this corporate memory be accessible to all those who need it, at any time or geographic disposition. Through a comprehensive social business strategy, knowledge management, knowledge transfer, real time collaboration, and effective communication are synthesized into a useful tool that allows for sustained growth.

⁶ Ibid.

Works Cited

Brynley-Jones, Luke. "4 Key Steps for Implementing Social Business." Our Social Times. May 8, 2016. <http://oursocialtimes.com/4-key-steps-for-implementing-social-business/>

Chui, M., Manyika, J., Bughin, J., Dobbs, R., Roxburgh, C., Sarrazin, H., and Westergren, M. "The social economy: Unlocking value and productivity through social technologies."

Gotta, M., Drakos, N., and Mann, J. "Critical Capabilities for Social Software in the Workplace." Gartner. December 18, 2014. Available from Gartner, accessed August 5, 2016.

Gotta, M., Drakos, N., and Mann, J. "The Future of Social Software in the Workplace." Gartner. January 21, 2016. Available from Gartner, accessed August 5, 2016.

Kosinski, Matthew. "The Top 5 Workplace Challenges Today." Recruiter. N.p., 19 May 2015. Web. 05 Aug. 2016. <https://www.recruiter.com/i/the-top-5-workplace-challenges-today/>

Rozwell, Carol and Hobert, Karen. "How to Retain Knowledge for Reuse After Employees Leave." Gartner. March 7, 2016. Available from Gartner, accessed August 5, 2016.