

Rethinking social media
Building the social organisation through HR



Foreword

The Australian Human Resources Institute and Deloitte's Centre for the Edge have come together to produce this Point of View (PoV) for human resources (HR) practitioners and others interested in driving value from social media and social software, both externally and internally.

This PoV was prepared in two parts: a survey of current HR practices around social media usage and an in-depth analysis of the survey's findings. The survey delved into the current state of social media usage in Australian organisations from the perspective of HR practitioners. A total of 502 respondents answered questions about current usage, experiences, attitudes and practices within their organisations.

After analysing these results, we applied Centre for the Edge research into the ways social media can drive benefits within organisations. This research includes work with MIT Sloan Management Review to assess the use of social media in United States-based businesses. It also draws from the research paper Metrics That Matter, which identifies how organisations can use social software to target the areas that provide the greatest return.

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Executive summary

Rapid technological innovation has created a more dynamic and connected world. In response to this shift, companies are beginning to use a wide array of social software technologies to improve their internal processes. These tools connect employees, simplify internal knowledge flow and unleash returns through enhanced productivity. As this technological evolution continues, social tools will become the collaborative fabric of successful organisations in the future.

When used with a clear purpose, social tools – which we identify as internal social platforms as well as public social media networks (see below) – can enrich internal communications and greatly contribute to an organisation's prosperity. However, the experiences of organisations without a pronounced strategy or policy tell a very different story. Such indistinct initiatives are at risk of being derailed by isolated cases of inappropriate use that prompt restrictive policies to protect the business.

The Deloitte and AHRI survey of HR practitioners investigated how social tools were being used to achieve business outcomes. We asked these practitioners what sort of policies they had in place and why, and the results suggest that Australian businesses need to rethink the way they approach social media.

Despite being aware of its benefits, Australian businesses are nearly four years behind the US and Britain in using social software.¹ With only 25 per cent of organisations using social platforms to facilitate HR and people management practices, there is a risk that social tools are being overlooked.

This raises the question: How do Australian businesses think of social media? According to our research, most still don't see it as essential. Instead, companies tend to perceive social as an ad hoc branding platform or a risk

to productivity and business image – or both.

Our survey showed that 51 per cent of respondents use social tools for work purposes. Despite this, only 46 per cent of these organisations had policies in place defining how they should be used. The respondents identified the main barriers to use as a lack of awareness and understanding of social tools, concern about the associated risks, unresolved concerns over productivity, and uncertainty over how to match different media to appropriate business practices.

The key thing for Australian businesses to understand is that employees' familiarity with social media is an asset. As the workings of social media are now deeply ingrained in most workforces, this innate knowledge presents latent skills that could help businesses to improve internal operations and productivity.

HR departments in particular stand to reap substantial benefits from adopting organisation-specific social platforms for on-boarding and training employees. Businesses seeking better ways to handle unexpected difficulties, or 'exceptions', also have much to gain by using social tools. Other benefits include lower communication costs, greater employee engagement, and more efficient recruiting processes.

However, it isn't enough to understand the benefits of social software – Australian businesses need to articulate where they stand. Organisations will not gain from social tools without clearly defined policies outlining how they are to be used. They should also put measures in place to better monitor how social software is being used within the organisation.

¹ 'Social media uptake slow', Clare Kermond, The Age, 8 July 2011, www.theage.com.au/business/social-media-uptake-slow-20110707-1h4o1.html.



Defining social tools

In many ways, social tools take the basic function of email to new levels of efficiency and flexibility. They enable quicker and more dynamic communication, both between businesses and customers, and among staff members within businesses. A key component of social software tools is the connections they establish. For the purposes of this report, Deloitte uses the term 'social tools' to cover both public networks and internal tools, including:

Public networks

- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Instagram
- Product information and advice forums such as User Voice, Get Satisfaction and Lithium Social Support
- Blogs.

Internal tools

- Internal social networks such as Jive, Microsoft's Yammer or Salesforce.com's Chatter
- Innovation platforms like Kindling or Spigit
- Application suites such as Google Apps
- Wikis
- Social project management tools such as Basecamp or Trello.

Research findings

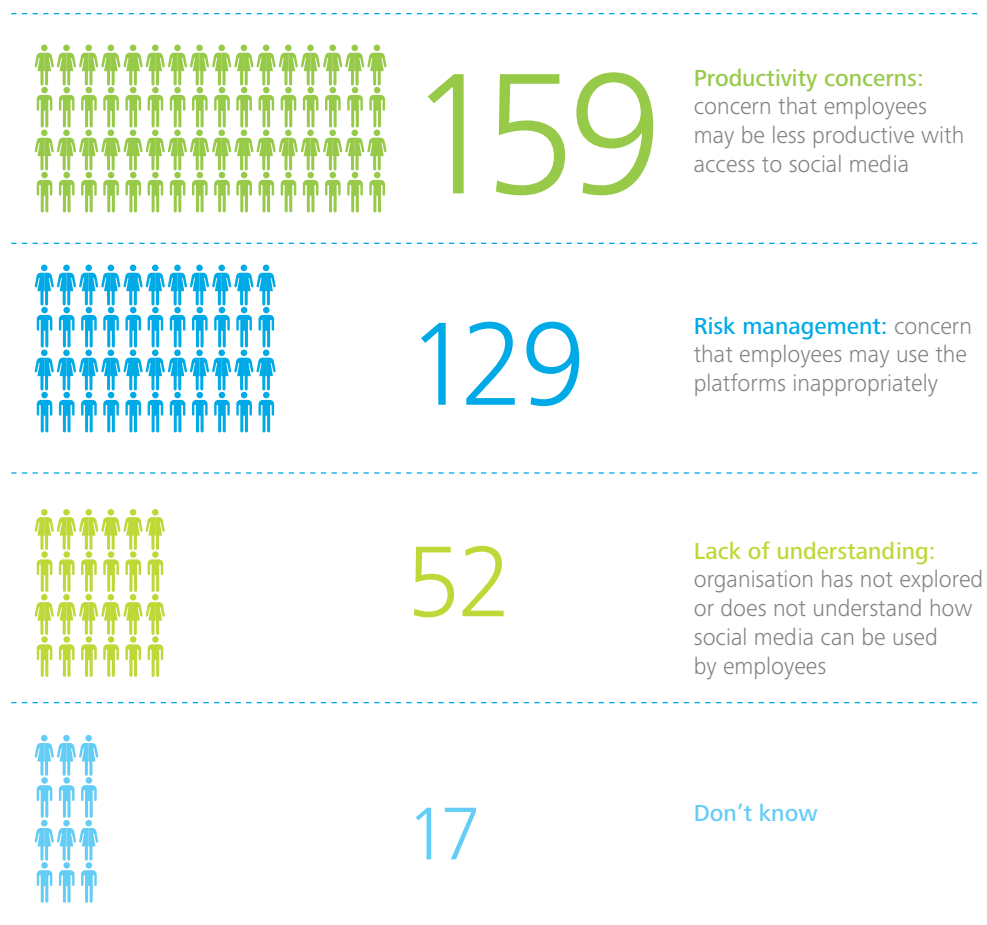
Although the average Australian spends around 22 hours using social media every week², many organisations still lack a formal social media policy, while others prefer to ban it altogether. To investigate why, Deloitte conducted a survey with AHRI of 502 HR practitioners working in organisations in various industries and of varying sizes.

In total, only 51 per cent of the respondents' organisations use social media sites and software for work activities. Of those that do, only 46 per cent have a formal policy or strategy in place outlining how they should be used within the organisation. The results for personal use in the workplace are similar: 51 per cent of respondents' organisations allow staff to access social

media sites for personal use at work, while only 61 per cent of these have a formal policy setting guidelines and boundaries for personal usage.

Many of the organisations without policies see social media as a risk to productivity and the business in general. Over half of the respondents that do use social media for work purposes aren't actively encouraged to do so. Similarly, with personal use, the majority of organisations restrict the way their employees use social media, while 38 per cent ban personal use entirely. This behaviour is predominantly driven by concerns over productivity and risk management (see Figure 1), with 82 per cent of respondents believing these concerns may be or are justified.

Figure 1: Reasons for banning social media



² Nielsen Online Rating Survey, 2012, www.bupa.com.au/health-and-wellness/shine/spirit/social-media-and-its-impact-on-health-and-wellbeing <http://www.nielsen.com/content/dam/corporate/au/en/reports/2012/Nielsen%20Online%20Landscape%20Review%20July%202012%20Media%20Pack.pdf>.

³ 2012 Allied Workforce Mobility Survey, Allied HR IQ, May 2012, hriq.allied.com/surveys/#results.

Only 25 per cent of respondents' organisations use social media platforms to facilitate HR and people management practices (see Figure 2). This is consistent with a US report last year surveying 500 HR professionals, in which only 38 per cent rated social media as a 'good' or 'excellent' method of recruitment.³

Around a third of respondents reported an incident of inappropriate use of social media that had negatively affected their organisations. They indicate the main contributing factor was employee negligence (67 per cent), followed by lack of employee training on social media (39 per cent), lack of understanding of social media (38 per cent), lack of awareness of policies (32 per cent) and lack of a defined policy (31 per cent).

Despite the low uptake, organisations do understand that social tools are here to stay. Sixty-seven per cent of respondents believe that employees will continue to use social media for personal use despite it being banned. Sixty-four per cent also report that social platforms could positively affect HR and people management practices within their organisations. Respondents cited a lack of awareness and understanding of social media (65 per cent), concern about the risks (61 per cent) and uncertainty about which media to use for specific purposes (40 per cent) as the primary barriers to using social tools. These figures suggest organisations understand that social tools can create value, but are unsure how to integrate them.

Figure 2: Organisations that use social media platforms to facilitate HR/people management practices



About the respondents

The survey addressed a broad range of responses from HR managers across a number of organisation types. Most of the 502 respondents worked in businesses with between 100 and 499 employees, followed closely by those in organisations of 1,000 employees or more and organisations of between 500 and 999 employees. Small businesses were strongly represented – 157 respondents were employed in organisations of between one and 99 staff (see Figure 3).

Most respondents worked in the private sector, with considerably fewer in the public and not-for-profit sectors, and government business enterprises (see Figure 4). The top four industries represented were professional, scientific and technical services; health care and social assistance, education and training; and financial and insurance services (see Figure 5).

Figure 3: There was a broad range of responses across organisation types

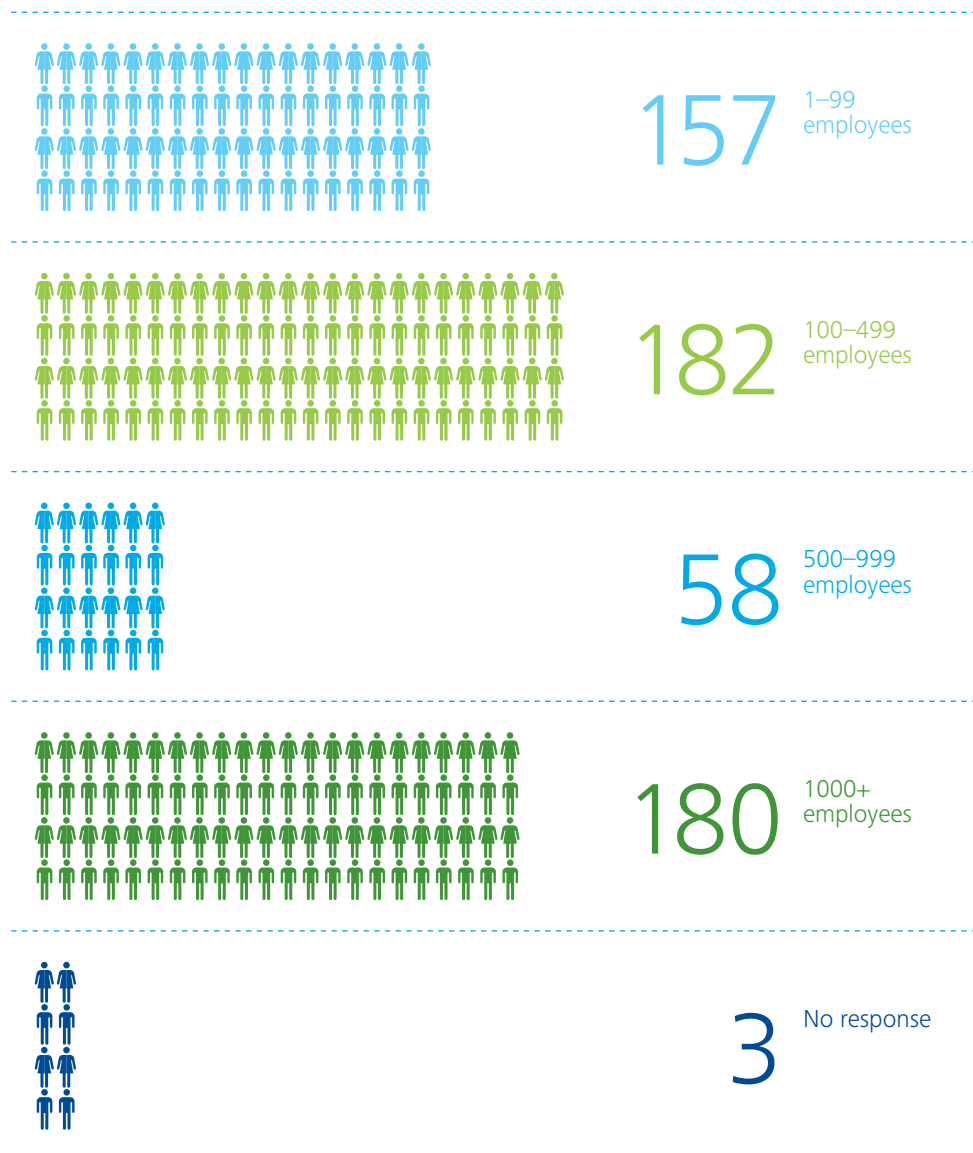


Figure 4: Most responses were from the private sector

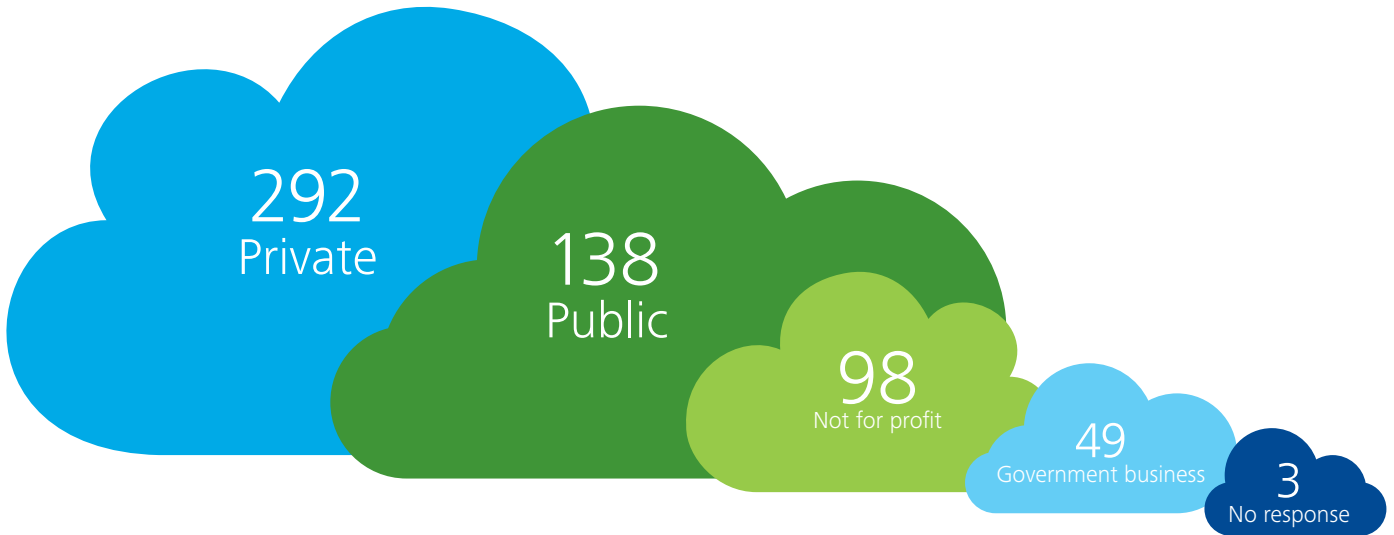
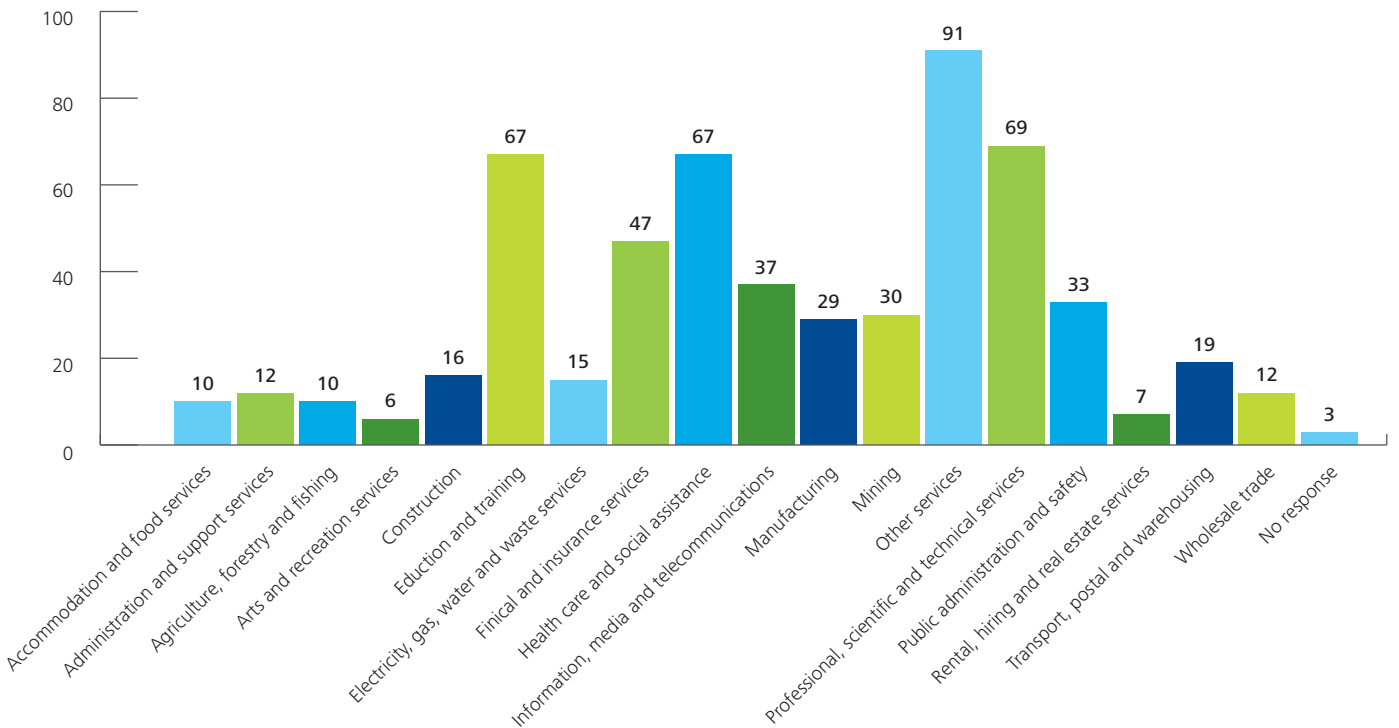


Figure 5: Industries surveyed



Business benefits

Social tools involve networking and can be used to brand a business. However, by limiting use to these capabilities, organisations risk measuring success in terms of the number of users, rather than the impact on business performance.

In her ebook *11 Rules for Creating Value in the Social Era* (Harvard Business Press, 2012), Nilofar Merchant argues that organisations' poor understanding comes from the term 'social media' itself. She says that organisations tend to focus on the 'media' association of social tools and don't realise that a broader perception can provide greater benefits.⁴

Merchant is on the right track; our survey found that most formal organisational policies regarding the use of social media for work refer to external employer branding rather than internal business performance. Policies tend to focus on who represents the organisation on social media sites (65 per cent), what is said on behalf of the organisation (64 per cent) and how the organisation is portrayed (66 per cent).

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It's important for businesses to consider whether social tools will have a positive impact beyond branding. They might help maintain the company's image, but do they help it run more efficiently? Metrics relating to adoption have no bearing on real business results. The key is to use these tools in ways that improve how a business operates – to manage costly exceptions, reduce communications and travel costs, improve employee engagement, and rationalise training and recruitment.

⁴ 'How Social Tools Can Help Your Company Avoid Strategic Failure', Nilofar Merchant, interviewed by Robert Berkman, MIT Sloan Management Review, 9 October 2012, sloanreview.mit.edu/feature/how-social-tools-can-help-your-company-avoid-strategic-failure/.

Managing exceptions

Consistency is critical in the business world. Organisations aspire to 'business as usual' levels of operation by automating processes and designing jobs around repeatable procedures. The problem comes when the unforeseeable and unexpected happens, from unanticipated customer needs to brand-damaging videos and supply chain-disrupting earthquakes.

Past Centre for the Edge research shows that employees in a wide range of roles spend between 60 and 70 per cent of their time minimising the negative impact of exceptions – non-routine and unforeseeable tasks that must be attended to but fall outside the boundaries of core business processes.⁵ This time is spent identifying relevant experts and information to help them resolve such exceptions.

Social tools can help reduce these pain points by connecting networks of people who can solve problems or help navigate towards solutions in next-to-real time. While many businesses view social media as a branding platform or business threat, the truth is it can be a powerful tool for exception handling. It lends organisations a level of agility and adaptability that helps them respond to the unexpected more quickly and efficiently.

LG Electronics, with 82,000 employees across the world, estimates that regular users of its internal social software save about three hours a week by finding faster answers to business exceptions.⁶ If every employee in the organisation used the tool regularly, it would save 246,000 hours per week – the equivalent of approximately 136 employees working full time for a year.

Telecommunications companies such as Telstra are also jumping on this opportunity to minimise exceptions and improve operating metrics relating to customer service. Telstra uses an online platform called CrowdSupport to crowdsource solutions to customer issues.⁷ By connecting customers with other knowledgeable users, Telstra reduces the time and cost involved in resolving customer issues internally. Customers also benefit – the time and cost of waiting on the phone to speak to a representative is reduced or eliminated and customer satisfaction is improved. Telstra also seeks ideas from its customers opening up new possibilities for innovation.

Government departments responsible for disaster planning are also keenly aware of the need to handle exceptions more efficiently. For example, CSIRO is looking to improve its capabilities by harnessing the value of social networks. One of the key metrics of an emergency response organisation is its ability to respond to an event quickly. In a report on its newly developed Emergency Situation Awareness (ESA) software, CSIRO noted, "*Social networking has changed the way people broadcast and receive information. Every minute, vast amounts of information are communicated via Twitter. Our challenge is to make relevant information accessible to emergency services.*"⁸

The ESA software sources real-time information relating to disaster incidents from social networks and provides early notification to emergency response organisations. These organisations can then prepare prior to official confirmation, reducing the time it takes to respond to a disaster. In Queensland, the software notified the Department of Community Safety of a grass fire, which enabled a safe and timely evacuation of a nearby hospital before conditions worsened.⁹

To capitalise on this potential, organisations first need to reassess the way they perceive social tools, along with their benefits and applications. Merchant claims that "*the social era will reward those organisations that realise they don't create value all by themselves.*"¹⁰ The businesses making the best use of social networks realise that networks extend beyond their employees – consumers are also affected by exceptions and can be used to resolve them.

⁵ 'How Finding "Exceptions" Can Jump Start Your Social Initiative', John Hagel, MIT Sloan Management Review, 5 September 2012, sloanreview.mit.edu/feature/how-finding-exceptions-can-jump-start-your-social-initiative.

⁶ 'Yammer Success Story: LG Electronics – Improved Business Performance', www.yammer.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/case_study_lge.pdf.

⁷ Telstra CrowdSupport; crowdsupport.telstra.com.au

⁸ 'Emergency Situation Awareness tool for social media', CSIRO, 10 October 2012, www.csiro.au/en/Outcomes/ICT-and-Services/emergency-situation-awareness.aspx#SocialMediaAnalysis.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ 'How Social Tools Can Help Your Company Avoid Strategic Failure', Nilofer Merchant, interviewed by Robert Berkman, MIT Sloan Management Review, 9 October, 2012, sloanreview.mit.edu/feature/how-social-tools-can-help-your-company-avoid-strategic-failure/.

Westfield case study:

using Yammer to manage exceptions

As Director of Westfield Shopping Centres in Australia, Andy Hodges is someone who understands exceptions and deals with them on a daily basis.

"Every shopping centre is like a small village," says Andy. "When you are running 40 of them, every day brings some new issue that you couldn't predict."

As he explains, it can also be difficult to anticipate the nature of these issues. Whether it's a serial fraudster making the most of a stolen credit card, or a kangaroo running loose on the fourth floor of a shopping centre car park, a prompt and successful resolution requires a high level of communication between staff.

To help manage the unforeseeable, Westfield Australia introduced an enterprise social network based on Yammer to connect people across shopping centres and the Support Office. As a result of working together, employees on the ground are able to identify problems, come up with and implement solutions, and involve the Support Office to solve the problem in a programmatic way. These communities are driving tangible business results. Store managers and retailers share best practices, solve problems, celebrate achievements and even share security tips.

If I hadn't seen it on Yammer, it would have been a bigger issue

For example, several stores identified a problem with a Westfield Gift Card through customer feedback and came together on Yammer to solve it. There was a communication issue around redemption codes, and a physical issue that placed the code too close to the magnetic stripe, preventing the stripe from working. By working together, store managers created a revised communications package for retailers and consumers, and looped in the Support Office quickly to physically relocate codes.

"If I hadn't seen it on Yammer, it would have been a bigger issue," said Andy. "Because I saw it there, I could take care of it quickly (I dragged the GM into the office right away!) and get it resolved much faster for the people on the ground. Without Yammer, I may not have even seen this issue; it saved at least six weeks of pain."



Accelerating communication

Social tools can help improve internal communications and aid productivity by facilitating collaboration.

EMC, a multinational company specialising in information management, was concerned about the time and money its people spent contracting expensive external vendors. In response, the company developed a test platform for its 40,000 global employees called EMC/ONE.

Based on Jive's social business platform, EMC/ONE reduces external vendor costs by enabling employees to more easily network and collaborate on projects. The platform delivered substantial benefits within a year. In one instance, an in-house production team at EMC was able to save approximately US\$10,000 by using the platform to collaborate with a third-party production crew on a sales video. Overall, EMC estimates that the platform has generated more than US\$40 million in savings.¹¹

Using social tools in this way also benefited Deloitte's performance. Deloitte Australia recently measured the holistic value of its internal social networking platform, Yammer. It ran data analytics methods across individual business units' email usage, calls to mobiles, Yammer activity, organisational structure, web activity logs, and staff engagement surveys, together with performance metrics relating to revenue, revenue growth, gross margin, and business unit profitability.

The study found that employees who were most active on Yammer came from business units that demonstrated higher levels of revenue growth, profitability and staff engagement, and enjoyed lower staff turnover. People within these units were more connected across the firm, breaking down organisational silos. This suggests that employees who are connected via social tools are more productive in situations where the time required to seek advice can be reduced through real-time peer-to-peer support.

¹¹ 'What's Your Social Media Strategy', H. James Wilson, P.J. Guinan, Salvatore Parise, Bruce D. Weinberg, Harvard Business Review, July/August 2011, hbr.org/2011/07/whats-your-social-media-strategy.

Driving engagement

The ability of social tools to engage employees should not be underestimated. According to a Hay Group study, only two-thirds of employees worldwide feel engaged in their work, with more than 44 per cent of the global workforce intending to leave their employer within five years.¹² Social tools are a cost-effective means of providing the support and conditions needed to encourage the type of engagement that leads to discretionary effort.

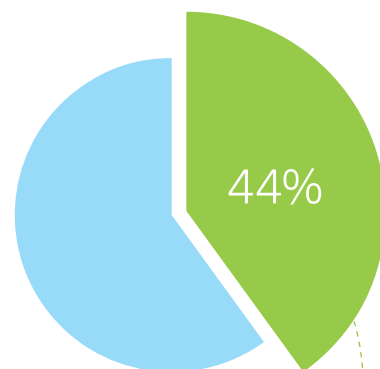
Passionate, proactive employees, who consistently seek to improve performance and inspire innovation, can connect and collaborate via social tools.¹³ They are also a great way to take greater advantage of workforce diversity.

On the topic of diversity driving productivity, the University of Michigan's Professor Scott E. Page says, "What the model showed was that diverse groups of problem solvers outperformed the groups of the best individuals at solving problems. The reason: the diverse groups got stuck less often than the smart individuals, who tended to think similarly."¹⁴

Deloitte Australia's YamJams initiative – driven on the company's internal social Yammer network – is a good example of bringing diversity and engagement together (see breakout box 'YamJam success story').



2/3 employees feel engaged



employees intending to leave their employer within five years.

¹² 'Depressed employee engagement stunts global business performance', Hay Group, www.haygroup.com/www/press/details.aspx?id=34123.

¹³ The 2011 Shift Index: Measuring the forces of long-term change, John Hagel, John Seely Brown, Duleesha Kulasooriya, p. 101, www.deloitte.com/assets/Dcom-UnitedStates/Local%20Assets/Documents/us_tmt_2011shiftindex_111011.pdf.

¹⁴ 'In A Professor's Model, Diversity = Productivity', Claudia Dreifus, The New York Times, 8 January 2008, www.nytimes.com/2008/01/08/science/08conv.html.

Improving recruitment experiences

Networks of people are a key asset to organisations and, with the help of social tools, can be used to generate real business value. But with so many exceptions occurring both inside and outside of the business, where do you start?

There is a widely held belief that social tools will have a profound impact on the way that organisations manage human capital. Although some HR processes have moved towards automated systems over the years, many activities remain dependent on people networks and knowledge flow for success. For example, Deloitte uses staff members' external social networks to recruit 'like minds' and relies on knowledge flow to new recruits for on-boarding and continuous learning.

There are a number of ways that social tools can be used to create time and cost efficiencies within recruitment processes. Traditionally, newspapers have been used to advertise vacancies. Australia-centric websites such as Seek and MyCareer have now become a medium for connecting employers and job seekers. Alternatively, some organisations fill positions via word of mouth. The underlying message is the same; we rely on networks to communicate and receive information about prospective candidates.

However, digital disruption in the marketplace has brought about a game changer in recruitment – companies can now directly connect with people networks en masse. Polycom, a communications solutions company employing more than 3,000 employees in 23 countries, has moved its recruitment in-house, saving more than £2 million annually. Along with an internal team of five recruiters, Polycom uses LinkedIn's Recruiter tool to hire 60 per cent of its staff across the Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA)

region. This tool allows organisations to see profiles and names beyond their employees' networks and provides an advanced search interface to locate global talent. Not only has Polycom reduced its reliance on recruitment agencies, the company saved £53,000 in agency fees by recruiting its Vice President of Marketing through LinkedIn.¹⁵

One of the other key benefits of recruiting using social tools is that companies no longer have to focus on 'active' candidates (individuals who are actively seeking employment). The rise of social media is driving a shift towards directly sourcing 'passive' candidates, who may not currently be looking for their next career move.¹⁶ This means that organisations can be proactive in recruiting their share of top talent.

There is also the added benefit of having more control over employee branding. Take Sodexo as an example. By connecting directly with talent through social media, the food services and facilities management company has increased traffic to its careers website from 52,000 to 181,000 year-on-year. Sodexo has reduced its annual recruitment advertising expenses by \$300,000.¹⁷ It has also strategically aligned a large part of its recruiting with Facebook, as the majority of the company's potential talent uses this network.

By integrating its careers blog with its Facebook page, Sodexo is engaging people with tips for job seeking and competitions. A quarter of new hires in 2009 said they read this blog when applying for a vacancy. Facebook users can search for jobs, visit the Sodexo YouTube channel and select events to attend. This direct approach means Facebook users feel connected to an authentic company that is willing to share and collaborate.

¹⁵ 'Case Study: Polycom', LinkedIn Talent Solutions, LinkedIn Corporation, 2011, talent.linkedin.com/downloads/assets/li_polycom_case_study.pdf.

¹⁶ 'Social media used to poach workers', Chris Zappone, The Age, 7 May 2012, www.theage.com.au/small-business/managing/social-media-used-to-poach-workers-20120506-1y6z0.html.

¹⁷ 'Sodexo Earns SNCR Excellence Award for Innovative Use of Social Media', Sodexo USA, 2 December 2009, <http://www.woodco.com/user/newsroom/press/press09/sncrexcellenceaward.asp>.

Reducing training and travel costs

Social tools have the ability to alleviate other pressure points with HR activities. We know that the costs involved in on-boarding employees can be immense when the costs of induction, training and further learning are taken into consideration. A US study estimates that it takes eight months on average for an employee to become fully productive and that 23 per cent will probably leave before their one-year anniversary.¹⁹ How can we ensure that new employees become productive and engaged as soon as possible, without inflicting considerable cost on the business?

Social software has the potential to improve the efficiency of on-boarding, as well as alleviating the associated cost.

Only 19 per cent of respondents to the survey use an organisation-specific platform for on-boarding, despite the positive effect it has on business performance. Social software has the potential to improve the efficiency of on-boarding, as well as alleviating the associated cost. It can give new employees answers to questions not covered during induction, and allow them to join relevant groups and extensive discussions to position the work of their own business unit in an organisation-wide context.

A tougher economic climate also puts pressure on employee travel, making it difficult to connect and train a geographically dispersed workforce. Despite this, only 27 per cent of respondents use an organisation-specific online platform for knowledge sharing, and 24 per cent for learning and development and project team communications. As with on-boarding, the strategic use of social software tools can lower the cost and improve the efficiency of working with remote employees.

Internal networking platforms for enterprises, such as Yammer, are a great way to help new hires connect to relevant people, tools and information. For ongoing learning, organisation-specific online platforms can deliver high-quality training at a fraction of the cost of flying executives in from around the world.

Online platforms can also help continue the conversation once formal training is completed, ensuring that participants revisit the content.²⁰ Writing on Deloitte's use of Yammer, University of Sydney academic Kai Riemer cites the importance of building the 'social fabric' of an organisation to foster collaboration between knowledge workers.

Riemer observes that Yammer serves such a purpose within Deloitte. By allowing staff from geographically discrete offices to discuss industry matters and share ideas, Yammer helps break down communicative barriers and allows employees to work more effectively together.

*"What emerges is a shared background that is the foundation for all other knowledge work to happen," says Riemer. "Only if people are aware of what others are doing and what they are interested in can they post the relevant information that provides the foundation for serendipity to happen."*²¹

Deloitte Australia's use of Yammer to collaborate with the firm's team in Hyderabad, India, is an example of this. It has helped to establish a social fabric across the offices, allowing employees in each location to build connections and work productively across time zones and geographies, even though they will never meet face to face.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ 2012 Allied Workforce Mobility Survey, Allied HR IQ, May 2012, hriq.allied.com/surveys/#results.

²⁰ 'Use Yammer In Your Training Programs', Allison Michels, Yammer The Blog, 15 November 2011, blog.yammer.com/blog/2011/11/use-yammer-in-your-training-programs.html.

²¹ 'Enterprise Social Networking in Knowledge Work', Kai Riemer, Backed By Research, 19 May 2012, byresearch.wordpress.com/2012/05/19/esn-knowledge/.

Using Yammer as an efficient team-building tool

Social software has helped improve communication within teams at Deloitte.

Approximately 10 weeks into a \$4.5 million, year-long engagement with a major client, Deloitte identified that the internal project team was having communication issues.

After reviewing the problem, Deloitte Australia's Digital Director, Esan Tabrizi, decided to use Yammer to improve lines of communication between team members in the firm's Melbourne and Sydney offices, and those working on-site at the client's office.

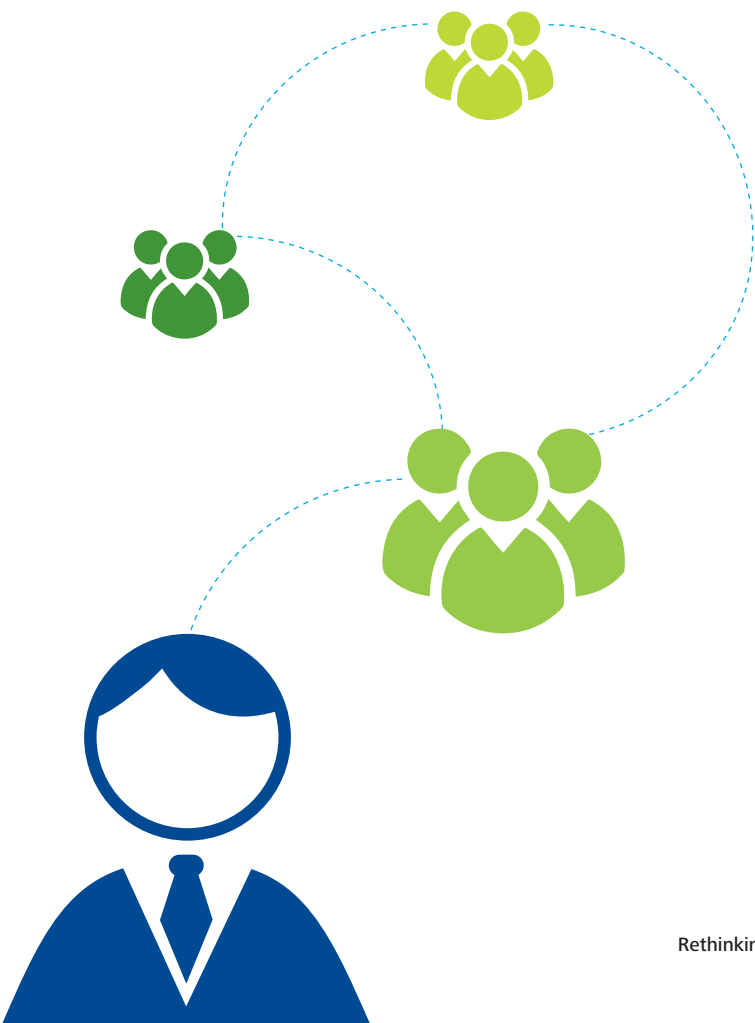
In the first three weeks using the software, Tabrizi observed substantial improvements within the team. Yammer gave each team member a comprehensive awareness of key project information. Whenever team members left a client workshop, interview or technical design session, they would immediately enter key points and notes into Yammer for co-workers to review and comment on.

Now, if anyone working on the project is unsure of a concept or has a pressing question, they bypass team leaders to post their query directly to Yammer for a more efficient answer. The project's technical team has found this approach particularly useful for answering business queries during technical design workshops with the client.

Yammer also served to replace the project's daily 'stand up' team meeting. Instead of meeting, employees post discussion points as Yammer threads tagged '#cxstandup'. Co-workers then 'like' posts to indicate they have been read, and respond with necessary information. This makes it simpler to gauge the work of the whole team despite its dispersion. It also saves each team member 30 minutes of time daily, allowing them to schedule client sessions or workshops at 9am each day without having to miss the meeting.

Tabrizi reported that Yammer has simplified team on-boarding, and has become a focal point for team quirks and in-jokes, helping to create a cohesive culture, despite the distribution of team members.

"I see the use of the private Yammer group as a mechanism that has broken down all these barriers and helped us achieve a much more inclusive team," he said.



Next steps

The examples of success highlighted in this report indicate that there is a business case for embracing social tools. In order to produce effective change, organisations need to adopt a strategic view – social is not just about branding and a Facebook page.

To identify how social tools can benefit business, there are five key considerations to address.

The first is to identify the exceptions that are costing the business the most time, money and efficiency. Drill down to the front line and identify exactly what the problem is. Then, think about whether social software can help solve the problem.

The second step is to identify where social belongs in the organisation. Social tools should not be the sole responsibility of the IT department. Responding to the big shift requires an organisation-wide effort. Given the potential for improving HR-related activities, it is important that HR sits at the decision-making table in the organisation.

Third, consider whether the organisation is taking full advantage of its employees' social software skills. Australians are among the most active users of social networking platforms in the world. While many organisations have not yet developed active followings on social networks, their employees have. In their lives outside work, people are using social networks to build and maintain relationships, learn, collaborate and express their creativity. Leveraging these skills and networks in a business context provides an immediate source of value.

The organisation might have already identified a number of opportunities to improve business performance. But success will only come with momentum. Before a business-wide change can occur, executive leaders need to be supportive of social software usage. As a fourth step, assess the organisation's current state. Is it equipped, both culturally and structurally, to embed social tools?

Have frank conversations about the current social media policy and whether it enables business functions to benefit from the potential of social tools. Great social media policies find a balance between encouraging a culture of creativity and transparency, and drawing a clear line in the sand on what is considered inappropriate behaviour.

Finally, make sure the social tool's impact can be easily quantified. Success should not be measured by adoption rates. Consider which business performance metrics the social tool will affect and how its success will be gauged.

With all of these considerations addressed, the organisation can begin to realise the full benefits of social tools.



5 steps for using social tools in business

1. Find the disruptive exceptions in your business and consider how social software might help
2. Establish where social software belongs – don't isolate it to one department
3. Assess the potential to leverage employees' existing social media skills
4. Revise existing policies to remove potential roadblocks
5. Set realistic milestones for measuring RoI.

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