

# The Age of Enterprise Collaboration

## Boost innovation by building enterprise social networks into project and portfolio management

By Tim Washington

### Today's Environment

Innovation is a hot topic in business right now, driven by the ever-growing need for companies to deliver better products and services. A key ingredient in fostering innovation is enterprise collaboration.

Until a few years ago, collaboration was often limited to small siloed teams, which ran the risk of duplicating efforts across large companies. The development of enterprise social networks such as Yammer, Chatter, Slack and Jive, has changed that; now collaboration can include all employees across the organization, significantly increasing innovation and improving quality across the company.

The promise of smarter collaboration comes from the power of an enterprise social network to tap into the collective brain trust of the organization. The potential payoff for corporations is enormous; a 2012 McKinsey report identified the potential for over \$1 trillion in new business value to be created annually through the use of enterprise social networks (e.g., improved product development, work efficiencies, etc.)

### Point B's Perspective

In the context of project and portfolio management, we encourage our clients to use social tools to improve employee connection, communication, collaboration and community—otherwise known as the 4 Cs.

### 1. Connection

Social tools enable employees to connect with a broader group of colleagues than they otherwise would in their work. User profiles provide additional detail around work history, education, and other personal information that foster stronger connections on a professional and personal level. Project managers with more connections have a greater pool of resources to choose from when building out their project team. They're also better able to quickly identify subject matter experts to assist in critical phases of work.



A good project portfolio social platform can also connect users with others who have managed similar risks and issues. By making these connections, project managers can reach out to the right people at the right time for

help and leverage proven solutions rather than losing time reinventing the wheel.

### 2. Communication

Email is still the predominant form of business communication with over 200 billion business emails sent each day<sup>1</sup>. Tremendous amounts of business knowledge are trapped in employee inboxes—not searchable by other knowledge workers who would benefit from accessing key information.

An enterprise social network, on the other hand, allows conversations, discussions and answers to questions to become searchable content that is continually enriched by users of the social network. Project teams can

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proactively search to find other teams that have encountered similar challenges, learn how they solved problems, and reuse successful solutions. This fosters further communication and improves project delivery and quality.

### 3. Collaboration

A major benefit of enterprise social networks is the ability for a broader group of people to work collaboratively within and across project teams.

At the portfolio level, the quality of new project proposals increases substantially when employees can collaborate (“crowdsource”) on new ideas. Great ideas can generate a lot of traction and be improved even before reaching a governance committee.

At the project level, team members have greater visibility into work in progress and can comment on deliverables and other project work. These comments are made visible to other team members who can build on those comments to improve the overall quality of the work.

### 4. Community

At the organizational level, social communities can spring up around areas of common interest; participants can ask questions, share ideas and learn from one another. This further strengthens connections, communication and collaboration.

For instance, a project management community of practice can promote project management best practices across an enterprise. This not only uplifts the quality of project management within the company, but also creates a way for senior project managers to share valuable experience with younger project managers, who in turn, have more opportunities to develop and grow in their profession.

## Imperatives of Social Collaboration

In order to successfully establish social collaboration, a company’s senior leaders must nurture a collaborative culture and be fully engaged in using social tools

themselves. Their engagement is crucial to giving employees the incentive to collaborate and incorporate social tools in their work.

Senior leadership cannot merely sponsor a social collaboration initiative; rather, they must lead by example. There is no substitute for seeing social tools embraced and in use by leaders. When senior leadership demonstrates greater transparency and communication through its own use of social tools, the rest of the organization will follow suit.

Changing an organization’s culture and the behavior of senior leadership are both very difficult. Only a concerted effort of organizational change management can redirect a company toward collaboration. Such change must be a priority in order to affect the daily behavior of senior leadership to embrace enterprise social networks. Based on Dr. John Kotter’s change model, senior leaders need to establish a sense of urgency around social collaboration. There must be a powerful guiding coalition to create a shared vision and communicate it across the organization. Then, both leaders and employees must act on the vision and rally around demonstrative, short-term wins.

## The Bottom Line

Enterprise social networks have tremendous potential to improve project and portfolio management effectiveness—but only when the company has a culture of collaboration. Senior leadership is uniquely responsible for ensuring that such a culture exists before implementing social collaboration tools and must lead by example to encourage adoption. With strong leadership and a collaborative culture, your organization can reap the many benefits of social collaboration in project and portfolio management. The result is nothing short of a smarter and healthier company.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.radicati.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Email-Statistics-Report-2015-2019-Executive-Summary.pdf>