The Benefits of Enterprise Social for IT Professionals

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**Work like a network.**

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Introduction

The world has become a giant network, transformed by the growth of mobile devices and social technologies. In fact, there are now more devices than people.[1] This networked world is clearly evident in our personal lives: We keep in touch with our friends and family on Facebook or Instagram, use Twitter to get the latest news from people around the globe, and often find our next career opportunity with LinkedIn. In this networked world, people connect with each other easily, information and knowledge move faster, and we are able to accomplish more by working together.

Yet despite these network advances, employees at most companies continue to work as they have for the past decade. Reply All is the standard for team communication, document version control is often unwieldy, and employees constantly seek troubleshooting and technology support from the help desk. In addition to these cumbersome processes, information at most companies still comes from the top down, often getting trapped behind internal barriers created by geography, organizational function, broken communications channels, and unconnected systems used by different departments. Such information silos hamper employee communication, block collaboration, and slow decision-making—and it's easy to see why. On average, knowledge workers spend 20 percent of their time—an entire day every week—searching for information internally.[2]

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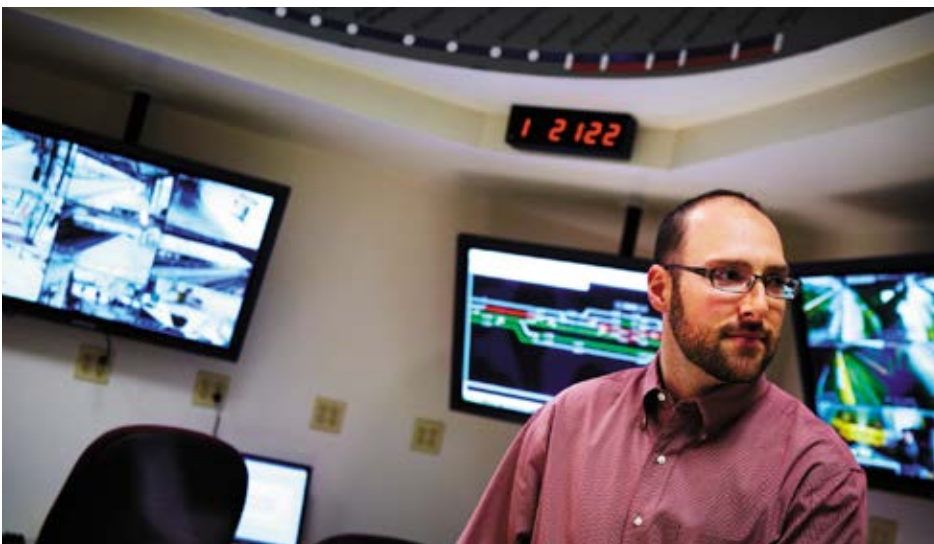
Meanwhile, many other workplace and work-style trends reinforce these silos. Workers today are far more mobile and widely distributed than ever before, frequently working from remote locations and on multiple devices. Work styles are also changing, as employees from different generations—often three generations within the same company—diverge in how they choose to collaborate and communicate. According to Deloitte, baby boomers value person-to-person communication and relationships, while millennials prefer working from home. Millennials like spontaneous, multimedia communication, while gen-Xers prefer email. These generational differences can create disconnects that may contribute to employee and team disengagement. Yet regardless of which generation they're from, within five years 40 percent of these workers will be contingent employees or located outside the office.[3]

Employee disengagement is also a growing problem. According to Gallup, only one in eight employees worldwide (13 percent) are truly engaged at work while 63 percent are "not engaged" and one in four (24 percent) are "actively disengaged."[4] This is a big problem for businesses, because workers who are not engaged are just killing time at work, while those who are actively disengaged are negative about their work and hostile toward their employers, often attempting to undermine whatever their engaged coworkers try to accomplish.

By contrast, companies whose employees are engaged have significantly higher productivity, profitability, and customer ratings as well as lower turnover, less absenteeism, and fewer safety incidents. Engaged employees are enthusiastic about their jobs and are the ones most likely to drive innovation, growth, and revenue. It is the engaged workers who build most of the new products and services, and create almost all of their company's new customers. In the United States alone, Gallup estimates that active disengagement costs companies $450 billion to $550 billion every year.

These broader workplace trends combine to make companies, and the employees who work for them, more fragmented, while the rest of the world is networked and breaking down barriers in unprecedented ways. The result at work is often a loss of focus and competitive edge for the business—and a support backlog for IT professionals.

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Empower your company to work like a network with Microsoft Enterprise Social

What if you could give your employees the productivity benefits of social networking in a secure, controlled way? What if you could empower your organization to work faster, communicating succinctly and get the right information without time-consuming searches or broken email chains? And what if you could accomplish it all while spending less money and less time on traditional IT management?

Microsoft, a longtime partner for IT, has evolved its business offering to include Microsoft Enterprise Social technologies that enable companies to engage, inform, and connect their employees, partners, and suppliers. The three primary reasons more than 400,000 organizations have chosen Microsoft Enterprise Social technologies to improve their business are:

- **Enterprise-grade technology built for business –** Microsoft offers companies the experience, global footprint, security, and reliability they expect from enterprise cloud solutions, and the only vendor with the diversity of cloud workloads to match the diversity of our customers' businesses.

- **A comprehensive and connected platform –** Microsoft offers a comprehensive and deeply connected platform for delivering seamless social experiences across many familiar applications, as well as customers' datacenters, service providers, and the Microsoft public cloud, and intelligently mapping interactions to generate personalized insights.

- **Familiar and intuitive user experience –** Microsoft provides consistent, familiar, and intuitive applications across its cloud solutions to drive faster, lower-cost implementation and high user adoption, which lead to improved productivity and better business results.

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71% of business leaders report that enterprise social tools increase the speed of knowledge access.

Top IT benefits of enterprise social for your business

Microsoft Enterprise Social technologies empower companies to work like a network, connecting individuals to a dynamic network of people and information through the Office Graph. When using these connected and social technologies, employees can listen to what matters inside and outside of the business, quickly adapt to changing customer needs and market conditions, and grow their impact on the businesses through better collaboration, faster decision-making, and targeted innovation.

Listen to what matters

With the rise of today's distributed and mobile workforce, the ability to engage with and listen to everyone associated with your business, no matter where they are or what kind of devices they use, has never been more important. Nearly 30 percent of the global workforce is now mobile or works remotely with three or more devices.[5] And between 2005 and 2012, the number of people in the United States who work remotely on multiple days per week increased by nearly 80 percent.[6] Today, the majority of collaboration time is spent working with people who do not sit nearby, including people outside your organization.[7]

Enterprise Social makes it easy for IT leaders to listen to users—employees, partners, and suppliers—and to connect them regardless of their location, work style, or the type of devices they use. When you and your company work like a network, you're able to listen to the conversations that really matter to your business, both inside and outside your organization. And that has tangible benefits. According to a study commissioned by Yammer, almost 70 percent of users agree that Microsoft Enterprise Social improves collaboration across remote locations, and 83 percent of Microsoft Enterprise Social users feel better connected to their team.[8]

Such connection and collaboration are vital to a company's success. More than two-thirds of chief information officers (CIOs) from top-performing companies see internal collaboration and communication as the keys to innovation.[9]

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Yet there are many challenges that can interfere with effective collaboration:

- Geographic, functional, and information silos within organizations often make it difficult for coworkers to collaborate efficiently and for teams to work together well.

- Employees in one department may not know what is happening in another, and team members may be located in different offices, cities, or countries.

- Functional groups such as Sales, Finance, and Operations often use different systems or software programs that apply only to their roles in the organization, and data may get trapped inside those specialized systems and applications.

Furthermore, workers today spend 61 percent of their work week reading and replying to email, searching for information, scheduling meetings, communicating with team members, and so on.[10] Meanwhile, collaborating with partners, suppliers, and others outside the business poses many of the same problems.

Any of these collaboration issues can have a negative effect on productivity. IDC estimates that inefficient collaboration accounts for an average loss of 21.3 percent in an organization's total productivity each year. [11]

With Microsoft Enterprise Social technologies, you can identify business opportunities, changing market trends, and other important issues outside your organization as soon as they happen—and quickly assess how they may affect your business. With Microsoft Social Listening, for example, your marketing and sales teams can embed social insights with your customer relationship management system to track products, brands, competitors, and campaigns in real time to gain a true understanding of your customers and your business across the global social network. Microsoft Social Listening scours social networks, analyzes the data, and presents it to you in easy-to-read charts and graphs. These visuals help you spot emerging trends, track marketing campaigns, respond to service issues before they escalate, gain insights about your competitors, and develop a clearer view of your business.

Microsoft Enterprise Social also gives individuals in your organization greater visibility into other departments and locations inside your business by using Yammer, an Enterprise Social Network (ESN) sold with Office 365. ESNs increase employee engagement by giving everyone in your organization a voice and enabling them to participate in cross-company conversations where they can offer opinions and share ideas. According to Yammer, workers who use Microsoft Enterprise Social experience 76 percent more visibility into other company departments or locations, and 80 percent are more informed about what is happening inside their organization.[12] In addition, by leveraging machine learning and signals captured in Office Graph, the Delve feature provides a natural way for users to search and discover relevant content based on the relationships you have with other people and objects in your network.

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*Adapt quickly to changing priorities
and opportunities*

It is essential for IT leaders to be able to listen and participate in the relevant conversations taking place inside and outside their organizations. It is even more important for them to adapt quickly and make smarter decisions based on new input: what they hear about the evolving needs of their users, as well as industry and technology changes that could affect their business.

Enterprise social technologies increase team alignment, enable teams to self-organize and focus through collaborative workspaces, and ensure that team members can make informed decisions and quickly respond to changes. With Document Conversations, for example, team members can work together on a Microsoft PowerPoint, Word, or Excel file in real time, no matter which application they are in: Microsoft Outlook, Yammer, or the native application itself. At the same time, they can interact and discuss the document through side-by-side Yammer feeds. In short, users can make updates, easily get feedback in the context of the document they're working on, and take next steps to make faster progress.

Organizations realize the full potential of social collaboration by leveraging the people, knowledge, and content that reside in their networks. Document Conversations helps companies engage and tap into their entire network. As a result, 71 percent of business leaders report that enterprise social tools increase the speed of knowledge access.[13]

The cross-suite Groups feature of Microsoft Enterprise Social unifies people, conversations, and content across Office 365 applications. Like groups in Yammer, Office 365 Groups can be set up around anything—an office location or subsidiary, a department such as Marketing or Operations, a cross-functional project team, or simply an idea—to enable open conversations and collaboration. But they also go a step further by bringing in email, team sites, calendaring, and real-time

functionality to provide a more complete collaboration experience than you would have in any single application. With Groups, team members can work together seamlessly, and companies that use enterprise social technologies report a 37 percent increase in project collaboration.[14]

Because Groups spans the Office 365 suite—making people, conversations, and content persistent and bringing together all of the services—members can work with each other in their preferred application, knowing that they are addressing the same people, participating in the same conversation, and working with the same files, even if some are working in email and others are working on the SharePoint team site. Office 365 Groups, like groups in Yammer, are open by default to enhance discoverability and sharing, but they can be made private as necessary to ensure that users have the privacy and control they need.

When working with partners and suppliers, you're likely to exchange a lot of email and phone calls. Pretty quickly, important messages or attachments can get buried or lost in your inbox. With Yammer's External Networks feature, you can create a dedicated online workspace for collaborating with people outside your organization, enabling you to get feedback from partners, suppliers, and customers in real time. By easily communicating with people outside your company, you can respond quickly to changes.

Along with your Yammer External Network, you can also use Microsoft Lync communications software to get real-time feedback from partners and suppliers. You can call, send an instant message, or set up a video conference in one click to meet with external collaborators. Team members from different locations can be in the same video meeting without incurring the travel costs of meeting in person.

In addition to helping your company improve both internal and external collaboration, Microsoft Enterprise Social solutions may enable your teams to make smarter decisions and take action based on

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what's happening across the business. And just as efficient internal collaboration provides enhanced experiences for customers and employees, improved external collaboration makes things better for customers, partners, and suppliers. In fact, a Yammer survey[15] found that networked companies—those that use Microsoft Enterprise Social—experienced a 20 percent improvement in supplier, partner, and customer satisfaction.

Grow your IT impact on the business

Economic recovery has been slow in the years since the start of the global recession. Attracting new customers and increasing revenue has proved challenging for many organizations, and sustaining business growth is made more difficult by competition from new players who are disrupting traditional markets. Competitive disruption begins when your customers' needs exceed what you can deliver. When that happens, your customers will find a company that can meet their needs. To avoid this kind of competitive disruption, companies must be able to respond more quickly, work and make decisions faster, communicate better, and collaborate more nimbly than their competitors. And to do that, they need the right tools.

Microsoft Enterprise Social can spark innovation across your organization, freeing IT staff to focus on developing creative business solutions rather than managing routine tasks, and enabling your

company to create better products and market them more quickly. With Yammer, for example, you can break down communication barriers across cultures, geographies, and organizational levels to accelerate innovation. This ultimately inspires employees to think more creatively and helps your business take new ideas to market faster. Ninety-three percent of business leaders agree that enterprise social tools stimulate innovation within their companies,[16] while executives report that, on average, enterprise social enabled them to cut launch schedules by 20 percent.[17]

Microsoft Enterprise Social also helps companies deliver better customer experiences that increase demand for their products and services and strengthen customer loyalty for their brand. With Microsoft Social Listening, you can deliver outstanding customer experiences by monitoring brand presence and tracking strategic initiatives across Marketing, Sales, and Customer Service.

By enabling greater innovation, faster times to market, and improved customer experiences, Microsoft Enterprise Social can help you grow your business significantly, which is why more and more businesses are starting to view enterprise social technologies as strategic investments.[18] Yammer, for example, has a potential return on investment (ROI) of 365 percent.[19] According to McKinsey, enterprise social networks currently have the potential to unleash $1.3 trillion in annual global business value.[20]

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Conclusion

Enterprise social technologies have the power to transform the way companies do business and to deliver real value— from providing better communication and collaboration to sparking innovation and improving customer experiences. And by implementing Microsoft Enterprise Social across your business, you can also solve many of today's most challenging IT problems.

The Microsoft vision for enterprise social is to empower companies to work like a network. Our comprehensive approach to enterprise social is unmatched, providing seamless social experiences across the familiar applications that people already use—all delivered on an enterprise-grade platform.

Learn more about how Microsoft can help your company work like a network, and grow at the speed of a networked world, at **www.enterprisesocial.com**.

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