

A Roadmap for Successful Adoption of Social Computing in the Enterprise

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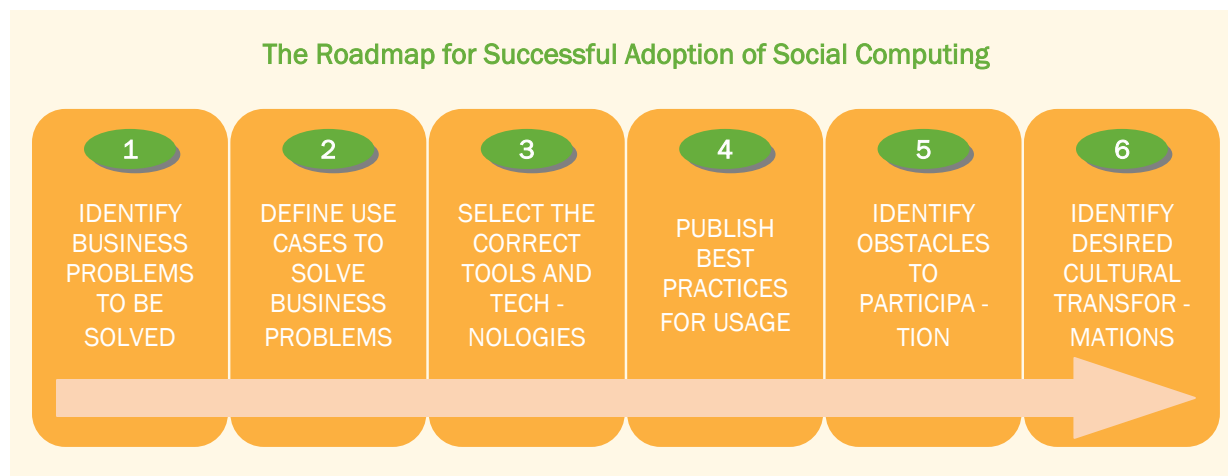
TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
IDENTIFY BUSINESS PROBLEMS TO BE SOLVED.....	3
DEFINE USE CASES TO SOLVE BUSINESS PROBLEMS.....	4
SELECT THE CORRECT TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGIES.....	5
PUBLISH BEST PRACTICES FOR USAGE	5
IDENTIFY OBSTACLES TO PARTICIPATION	6
IDENTIFY DESIRED CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS	7
CONCLUSION	8

INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of social computing tools for consumers has created an expectation regarding adoption and the viral nature of participation. Tools and technologies such as blogs, wikis, social networking, social bookmarking, micro-blogging and online communities are finding their way behind the firewall and those expectations regarding adoption can follow along.

This paper presents a model for proactive analysis that should be undertaken prior to or during the early phases of deploying an enterprise social computing initiative. Investing the time and effort to complete the analysis should greatly increase the opportunity for successful adoption and active ongoing participation.



IDENTIFY BUSINESS PROBLEMS TO BE SOLVED

Several common benefits or value propositions are often mentioned when discussing an enterprise social computing project. Those benefits include:

- ▶ Expertise discovery
- ▶ Improved collaboration
- ▶ Recruiting and retention of employees
- ▶ Retention of knowledge from an evolving workforce
- ▶ Rapid innovation

While an enterprise social computing initiative can help to realize these benefits, the initiative can also help to solve very concrete business problems. It is when these general, albeit important, benefits are translated to a concrete collection of business goals that the analysis posited as critical to success can be initiated.

Let's explore Customer Relationship Management (CRM) as an example. CRM is generally recognized as a series of business processes and the software used to manifest those processes for managing interactions with customers. But, CRM is not in and of itself a business problem. Business problems or challenges often have Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) associated with them.

The first order of analysis would identify the specific problems and the KPIs:

- ▶ Customer response is not timely - decrease the time from customer initial contact to response by 15%
- ▶ Customer problem resolution is not timely - decrease customer initial contact to problem resolution by 7%.
- ▶ Overall customer satisfaction is marginal at best - increase the average quarterly customer survey rating by 20%

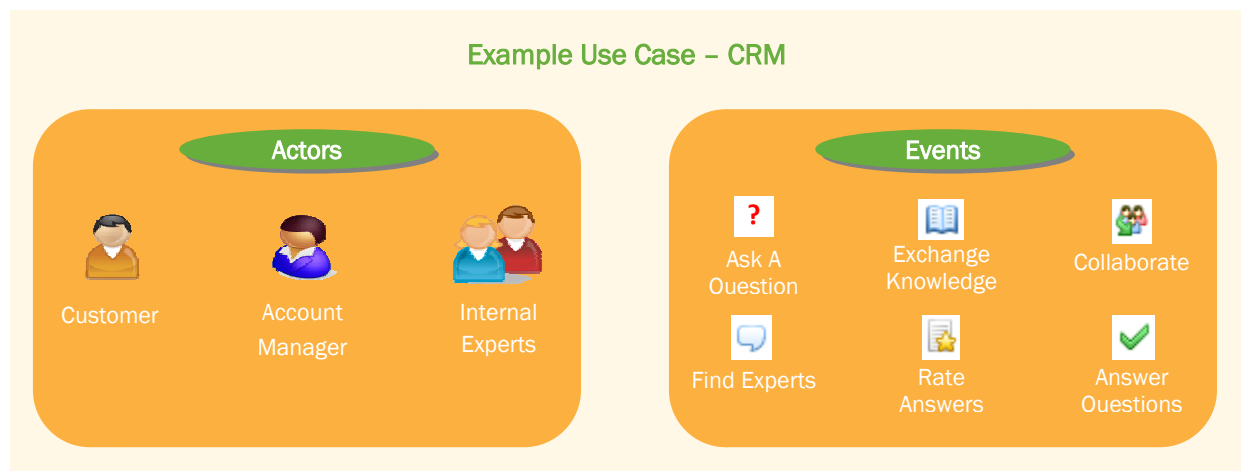
Many large organizations already have defined KPIs and may be able to leverage them for this analysis. However, even defined KPIs may require additional analysis to arrive at an appropriate level of detail for measuring success of the enterprise social computing analysis.

DEFINE USE CASES TO SOLVE BUSINESS PROBLEMS

Now that the core business problems have been identified, it would be tempting to deploy a plethora of social computing technologies, platforms and tools and assume that users will just know how to properly use them to solve the problems. This is not even a “build it and they will come” mentality. This is a “let them build it and maybe they will figure it out mentality” and it is a disturbingly common phenomena. The reason this phenomena is so prevalent is that, unlike many enterprise IT initiatives in the past, there is a perception that many corporate users are so familiar with social computing from personal use that they will be able to easily arrive at good use cases for the enterprise.

Continuing with our CRM example, analysis now must extend to identifying very concrete use cases, including the actors and events involved in the use cases. An example use case for the business problem of decreasing customer initial contact to problem resolutions could be:

- ▶ Customer presents challenging product question to account manager
- ▶ Account manager reaches out to community of individuals with subject matter expertise about the customer and the product
- ▶ Some community members respond with input, while other community members critique that input via attention data such as ratings, comments and tags
- ▶ Account manager filters responses based on input and attention data
- ▶ Account manager responds with answer back to customer
- ▶ Account manager updates community with specific customer interaction
- ▶ Account manager generalizes feedback appropriately and updates knowledge base



This is a very lightweight or casual use case and does not necessarily follow the formal systems engineering process for defining technical use cases. However, this level of detail is an adequate starting point.

SELECT THE CORRECT TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGIES

As mentioned earlier, there is a wide selection of social computing tools and technologies and all are being used within the enterprise to some degree. Among the more common choices are:

- ▶ Blogs
- ▶ Wikis
- ▶ Social profiles
- ▶ Social bookmarking
- ▶ Communities
- ▶ Discussion forums
- ▶ Tagging
- ▶ Micro-blogging
- ▶ Activity streams and status updates
- ▶ Voting and rating

While some of the tools have more limited application to solve specific problems, others can be used in a much more general manner to address numerous use cases. The analysis on which tool to use is compounded by the fact that some use cases could be successfully solved with several of the tools or a combination of them. Let's examine one of the steps in the use case presented in the previous section.

Account manager reaches out to community of individuals with subject matter expertise about the customer and the product.

There are numerous ways this step could be accomplished. During this step, the account manager might do any of the following or some combination of them:

- ▶ Post a specific question to a discussion forum
- ▶ Explore relevant "people tags" to reach out to specific individuals with self-proclaimed or implicit subject matter expertise
- ▶ Explore content that has been tagged with the subject matter to connect to the creators of that content or to connect to people who have critiqued the content

The best solution will depend upon many factors including existing business processes, internal governance, employee comfort with the tool, ease of use of the tool and integration of the tool with existing business processes. During a pilot or early phase of production deployment, experimentation with several options can be explored, with the best option being chosen as a result.

PUBLISH BEST PRACTICES FOR USAGE

There is a school of thought that suggests social computing in the enterprise should be left unfettered by directions, rules or guidelines. While this degree of open participation is de rigeur in the consumer space, best practices and even rules can actually increase adoption if created and delivered in the proper manner. Corporate governance will apply to social computing applications as it does to other applications and will address topics such as individual privacy, intellectual property, government regulations and human resources policies. In addition to traditional governance, however, it is wise to establish a set of best practices to help the user community take advantage of the transparency, emergence and increased collaboration that should manifest with deployment of the applications.

There is a delicate balance between mandating and facilitating and the specific best practices developed should never discourage usage.

Some best practices can be developed before the tools are launched, while others will emerge as a critical mass of users begin to use the system. It is acceptable and encouraged that best practices be regularly examined and improved in an agile manner.

Sample Categories of Guidelines

Traditional Governance	Social Computing Best Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Individual privacy ▶ Intellectual property ▶ Government regulations ▶ Human resources policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ When to use email versus communities ▶ Community participation ▶ Tagging dos and don'ts ▶ Discussion forum best practices ▶ Profile building tools & sessions

Some examples of best practices for usage include:

- ▶ When receiving an email that is specific to an existing online community of practice, encourage the sender to share the message in the community or ask for permission to do so.
- ▶ Launching a new community requires some upfront work. In particular, seeding information before bringing in a larger audience will provide a model for how to interact with the components of the community.
- ▶ There are many best practices that can be offered related to tagging. Some are as straightforward as encouraging users to take advantage of auto-complete capabilities, while others are more specific to particular use cases. Knowledge workers focused on social computing adoption might tag articles and analyst papers with terms that are meaningful to the group, but may not be obvious categorizations of the source material.
- ▶ There numerous usage claims, supported by academic research, related to the effectiveness of community contributions. One claim states that high-volume discussions, particularly when the discussion goes “off topic”, can be detrimental to future participation. Thus, there could be a need for a community manager to act as a gardener, tending to discussions to ensure that some members are not turning away because of such activity.
- ▶ Social profiles are vital to a comprehensive social computing effort and users should be educated on how to take advantage of this tool. Consider a profile building jam session in which teams get pictures made and fill out the pertinent information about themselves. Also, take time during the gathering to explain the benefit, including specific case studies.

IDENTIFY OBSTACLES TO PARTICIPATION

By 2012, more than 30% of large organizations will have deployments of social software suites available to all their employees (The Gartner Collaboration and Social Software Vendor Guide, 2009, Carol Rozwell, Nikos Drakos, David Mario Smith, Jeffrey Mann, Matthew W. Cain, James Lundy, and Tom Eid, February 19, 2009, Gartner.). While encouraging, large corporations in particular will likely encounter internal obstacles to the deployment and widespread adoption of these initiatives.

Examples of such obstacles include:

- ▶ Employees already use other systems and don't want to be bothered with another alternative.
- ▶ Employees are concerned about having their contributions public and uncensored.
- ▶ Management is entrenched in the "old school" way of thinking - institution over community, hierarchy over collaboration.
- ▶ Management desires more control over the actions of contributors, e.g. tagging, discussions, group creation, etc. The open nature of social computing is concerning.
- ▶ Management is worried about decreased productivity as they still perceive social computing as "fun".

It is prudent to identify these obstacles proactively before the applications are widely deployed in order to derive a set of tactics for addressing each one. The obstacles should also be prioritized in terms of impact to adoption and level of effort to address. Those that are most impactful and have a lower level of effort should be addressed as early as possible. Subsequently, a roadmap for addressing the other obstacles can be developed and addressed throughout the lifecycle of deployment and phased adoption.

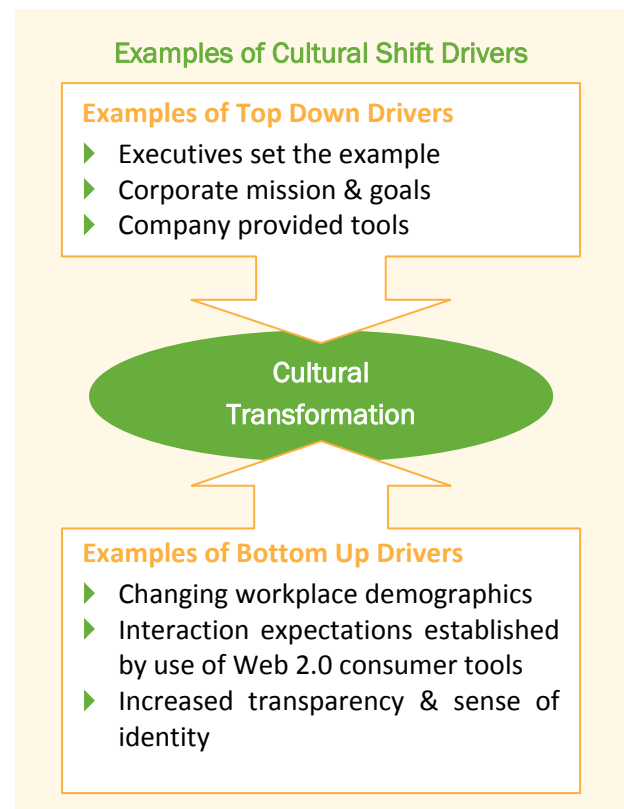
IDENTIFY DESIRED CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS

Web 2.0 has been credited with sparking a number of dramatic shifts in terms of how we interact with one another and with our expectations concerning those interactions. Those same shifts can occur within the enterprise, but corporate cultural transformation requires much more than the deployment of a set of tools. Cultural shifts are sparked by both top down global initiatives and bottom up changes in the workforce. There has been much talk about retiring baby boomers and the influx of Generation Y, aka Millennials, and how these workplace generational changes will manifest change in and of themselves.

There are a handful of common cultural transformations that are often touted as resulting from the introduction of social computing initiatives. They include:

- ▶ Improved transparency
- ▶ Decentralization of information
- ▶ Increased sense of identity
- ▶ Democratization
- ▶ Emergence of knowledge
- ▶ Improved communication for a distributed workforce

An organization will have to shine a very bright and honest light on whether or not is ready to fully support those changes. They don't emerge without considerable commitment, a willingness to change and, perhaps most important, a belief that the changes will result in improvements to the bottom line.



For each desired cultural transformation, a concerted effort to identify the following should be undertaken:

- ▶ Prepare a mission statement for each transformation. This will provide a common framework around which individuals can work on the more tactical aspects.
- ▶ Identify several very specific examples of activities which would illustrate the transformation in action.
- ▶ Identify the second and third order results of the specific examples defined above. The goal in this step should be to drive towards identification of bottom line improvements.
- ▶ Identify groups or even specific individuals believed to be good role models for the future transformation. Arrive at the specific traits that make these groups such good role models.
- ▶ Identify groups that may be particularly resistant to the transformation and why that would be the case.

Armed with this deeper understanding of what a cultural transformation actually means, the champions of the enterprise social computing initiative can work more effectively with the departments most concerned over cultural changes.

CONCLUSION

The model presented herein can be adjusted to fit the needs of any organization. At first glance, the phases may seem daunting in that they require time and resources. However, organizations that follow the model are much more likely to reap the many benefits afforded by enterprise social computing initiatives.

To learn more about enterprise social computing, contact NewsGator at 800-608-4597 or insidesales@NewsGator.com.