

Social networking: Leave Your Parachute

According to recent surveys; employee social networking is growing rapidly. Learn the pros and cons of employee social networking, from creating business development opportunities to just goofing off.



Social networking. We have all probably heard of it before, but not everybody knows what it means? If you were asked to delineate what social networking was, would you be able to give a precise definition? Unfortunately, most executives cannot, even though it is probable that they contribute in some form of social networking, mainly online.

Results of an exclusive MessageLabs survey reveal that approximately 75% of companies said the number of visits their employees were making to social networking sites had increased over the previous six months. About 60% thought this had damaged productivity; while over 75% believed corporate reputation could be seriously threatened if staff posted negative comments about their organization online. No wonder over 70% of respondents said they were thinking of restricting employee access to social sites.

*“Social Networking:
Brave New World or Revolution from Hell?-MessageLabs”*

Common Issues with Social Networking Tools

The increase in the practice of consumer-focused social networking tools has led to a variety of problems that the majority of organisations are not used to dealing with from their experiences of more enterprise oriented solutions.

- Social Networking Tools Proscription
- Information Security
- Information Quality
- Information Lifetime
- Information focus
- Information legality
- Information conceptuality
- Tools Reach
- Wisdom of the Crowd

Social networking builds on the existing platform of communication and collaboration tools already utilized within an organization. For those looking to implement new communication and collaboration technologies such as instant messaging, the co-implementation of social networking tools will provide the optimum means of a public sector body dealing with internal employees and external citizens, suppliers and co-workers.



Email

The standard means of getting information from one person to another, or to a group of people. Email usage is still growing for relatively formal messages, but is falling for less formal interactions, as the new intake of employees looks to more immediate systems such as instant messaging.

Workflow

Workflow is utilised for very formal interactions, where individuals have a specific role to play within the movement of information, either as someone who has a sign off capability, or as a specific source of data or knowledge to be added to the information.

Instant Messaging (IM)

IM has become the tool of choice for many users – from the sweet spot user in the 12-18 year old group to the grandparents wanting to keep in touch with family in far flung places.

Web conferencing

Although web conferencing has not become widely used by the consumer, its capability as a social networking tool should not be underestimated.

Web sharing

On top of web conferencing, many tools enable users to share their desktops, with many people being able to access functionality at the same time.

Voice

Voice has historically been kept separate to the data network, yet has been the major form of person to person interaction for some decades, outside of direct face to face interactions. However, the capability for voice to be carried over public data networks now means that it has become far more integrated into many consumers' computer environments. Indeed, the use of tools such as Skype means that many people are using voice over IP (VoIP) as a cheap means of calling other people. Again, the usage mix is diverse, with the sweet spot being the 20-30 year old, but with many in older groups making use of such technology to avoid high international telephone charges. Other voice-based technologies are also on the increase – interactive voice response (IVR) is beginning to replace dial tone multi-format (DTMF) hierarchical menu services, and text to voice services such as Spinvox are providing the

capabilities to get emails to people on the road as voice messages.

Person availability

The capability to see whether a specific person is available, and by what means, such as via IM, via email, via telephone/VoIP or whatever.

Video Conferencing

Video conferencing is emerging from being seen as a poor communication tool, beset by complexity and failures, to a highly useful tool based around more immersive approaches, such as telepresence.

Successful implementation of a large number of diverse solutions meeting just such business needs. We always concentrate on business issues – so we will only deliver the functionality you need to solve your business issues. We always avoid talking to customers like you in jargon or by hiding behind complex technical details – they are not relevant to your concerns.

Different nature of involvement with additional firms is a key element for growing global. Wide-ranging the harmonization (control and coordination) of these new or old alliances is a very tricky and complex concern. So how to formulate business strategies and how will your alliance reacts to this issue is another anxiety.

Here I am trying to explain few important constraints involved in this particular issue.

1/ Demographic factor

Different sections of the globe follow different standards in business dealings. The alliances need to adjust towards their business network and develop new methodologies in business dealings.

2/ Flexibility and adaptability

the flexibility and adaptability of foreign firms are a critical reason in trouncing the regional blockades and performing well in the international business networks.

3/ Designing new Business tool

Modern international business management techniques are very indispensable in managing a lasting relationship with its international alliances. These alliances are empowered to take a wide array of decisions so as to complement the overall strategy of the business network.

4/ Social dynamics

Majority of the networks are formed with social and cultural benefits in regions around the globe and they have common ideologies that amalgamate them. When an alliance joins an international business network, there is requirement to adopt fundamental and new values which is generally considered risky and hence there is great resistance causing direct influence on the internationalization of the business network.

5/Cultural barriers

The next vital factor that affects global business network is the cultural factor. These are age aged polices and principles trailed for years by the members of a business network in a particular region in coordination with the

cultural ethos of the region. In certain cases these archetypes are nation wide, and are accepted by the major business networks and differ from country to country or region to region.

6/ Financial regulations, trade policies

Some time financial regulation and trade policies define the systems which are obligatory to be adopted for creating alliances with foreign country businesses. These rules also define the limits and licensing rules that need to be adopted.

In one contrast; Business networking is one of the most successful marketing strategies. The more populace you are the larger possibility of increasing leads or promoting your products and services.

On other hand employee get addicted to the networking platform and here comes the pitfall. Such as wrong product placement, competitor's advantage; competitors might come to know what are yours futures plans. Your preparation for marketing, customization etc...

I now believe that internet networking is not just for those who can write. How good you are at business networking depends on several aspects. It is a manifestation of how well you connect your marketing, promotion skills, selling skills and leadership skills and other parameters. All of these skills are necessary when you are actively marketing yourself through networking platform.

I will make it easier to understand. Take an example your firm deals with Yacht Charter services. So the next question is to ask your self is how I will take advantage of networking platforms. As a yacht charter agent, I would recommend the following:

First step will be. Install a blog on your website and start updating it at least once in a week. And request user to subscribe you feed. As and when your subscriber list increases your business grows. How? This serves as 2 purposes. First, it allows you to be in touch with clients on a weekly basis without having to call them on the phone each week. Second, it increases the overall content on your website which will allow you to generate more traffic to your website.

Register to a networking site or group focused on the yachting or sailing industry. Through this you can get more focused audience.

Start posting article, contribute to the group. This is very important for business people to recognize you. So participate actively.

Now the question comes. How will you come to know that you are recognized user?

Answer is if other members will start asking you about your connection and person you are connected with.

Unfortunately, many in business see networking as a one way affiliation - What's in it for me? They forget to view people as people, because they are viewing them as objects.

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