Social Media Tools for Leaders and Managers

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Arguments about the value of social media are generationally divided – younger workers use and value social media like blogs, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook. Older workers see it as privacy intrusion and a waste of time. Do educators acknowledge social media as a trend, technology, or business tool that is useful to leaders? Companies have Facebook sites and market brands while collecting information from customers. External social media sites are visible to competitors and resulted in a cottage industry for web analytics. Are organizations utilizing social media internally for management? While difficult to observe behind firewalls, social media tools are used for internal communications, news, learning, knowledge sharing, projects, and collaboration through "the cloud." This paper addresses social media and related strategies for business leaders.

INTRODUCTION: WHY SOCIAL MEDIA AND NETWORK OPTIONS

The assumption of the authors is that social media and networks provide powerful systems for businesses to learn and use productively. As the abstract suggests, one can make arguments that support or challenge these technologies as a viable for businesses. Based on the pervasive use and prevailing impact social media have on society, our position is that it is essential for leaders to integrate these technologies and seek the best way to use social media and networks to the advantage of the business and for him/herself, personally.

Why adopt social media and networks? We will examine predominant reasons: viral growth, connectivity, ease of use, anonymity, global reach community, relevance, and a "smart" trend. The viral growth of usage requires everyone who wants to compete in the business environment of today to understand and utilize social technologies. "The numbers speak for themselves," according to Media Advantage (2011, p2), as shown in Table 1:

Instant connectivity to the world at large is another compelling consequence. Immediate transmission of news in the making has provided justification for even slow adopters to join in – just to keep up on daily events. The authors, for example, were skiing in the mountains of Colorado when the earthquake struck and resulting tsunami that occurred in Japan on March 11, 2011 was predicted to travel across the Pacific to reach the Hawaiian Islands. We were amazed at how we could track the impending impact second by second, live, via Twitter accounts. We knew long before the newsfeed that the tsunami was much less significant in Hawaii than forecast. The aftermath in Japan was reported via tweets as well.

TABLE 1
SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

Facebook	Twitter	LinkedIn
>500 million users	Awareness – 87%	75 million users
50% of users log in daily	51% of users follow companies, brands or products	Members are in 200 countries
Average user connects to 80 community, group, or event pages	Companion media to other channels such as Facebook and TV	Members from all Fortune 500 companies
Source: Facebook	Source: Social Media Today	Source: LinkedIn

"A powerful 8.9 magnitude earthquake struck the coast of Japan on Friday, causing widespread power outages, fires and a severe tsunami that was reported to be up to 10 meters high in places. It was the seventh most powerful earthquake in recorded history. The reaction on Twitter, quickly becoming the go-to service in emergencies, was immediate and intense. Less than an hour after the quake, with the country's phone system knocked out, the number of tweets coming from Tokyo were topping 1,200 per minute, according to Tweet-o-Meter." (Taylor, 2011)

One other story: as a consultant to a company on leadership development, one of this paper's authors had invited a panel of bloggers to meet with leaders of a food company. During the discussion about *why* it is important to actively follow blogs and actually sponsor them, a senior leader jumped up in the middle of the session, phone in hand. She announced that there was a "twitter campaign" against one of their products and she had to depart immediately to investigate and respond immediately. "Facebook 50 is packed with food companies … Pizza Hut…hired a twintern." (Matlin, 2009) Like it or not, news travels faster than anyone ever dreamed possible. Leaders who do not see to "get connected" may render their businesses defenseless and become relics of the past.

Rapid adoption of social media usage has been enabled by its ease of use. Social media should be "a process that lets you exploit the power of the Internet in 15 minutes a day or less!" (Lemaire, 2012) Simple set up, login, entry, and distribution of messages provided every *single* person access to the world at large. Social media has even defied the predications that the older population was technology-adverse.

It's easy to assume social media are the domain of the young and frenetic. To assume the "silver surfer" or the silver haired 55+ demographic is rather technologically disconnected. That assumption would be wrong. Marketers would do well to take a second look at this market and it is growing. In Atlantic Canada and northeastern USA, based on research by Crouch (2011), the average age of a Facebook user is 53. In England we see a similar trend.

Clearly, easy access has resulted in chaos and sometimes major communication blunders; however, the focus for business is shifting from prevention to the most effective way to utilize this instant communication. With broadening security layers and increasing caution among users, perhaps the ease of use may be compromised. However, nothing so far has deterred expanding use and the resulting need for businesses to determine the best way to use and monitor social media and networks.

The bane and beauty of social media is the anonymity it can offer. With the popularity of privacy and the ability in social technology to hide your real identity, it is very easy to comment radically, critically, and unsubstantiated. The problem is that business cannot stop or change this practice; instead, we must learn to manage the communication impact regardless of anonymity. The good news is that "the nastiness of anonymous comments is dwindling. Regardless, more and more traditional media sites are moving to the moderated or full disclosure approaches." (Falls, 2011)

Leaders are reminded that they naturally exist in a "global business," whether or not they intentionally target customers or suppliers outside of their physical geography. As The *World Is Flat* author (Friedman, 2005) informed readers, the commercial playing field has been globally leveled and

disrupted as a result of the internet and, increasingly, social media tools. What businesses are learning to do is to leverage the social media and networks for global reach to track, communicate, buy and sell.

Contrary to some assertions that social media isolates people since you can communicate without ever coming face-to-face with another human being, the authors' perspective is that social media actually aids the formation of communities. Without the discomfort of personal interactions and bias or filters we administer in face-to-face interactions, social media provides the opportunity for people to form connections intellectually and based on common interests and points of view. It also permits access to others who share a perspective around the globe, not just "down the street." The potential to leverage these communities for all kinds of reasons has been discovered by some businesses and leaders. As social media becomes even more refined (for example, Google Plus' ability to form circles), the formation of communities in the "global electronic landscape" (Rubin and Rubin, 2007) promises some new ways to mobilize customers and employees.

Tapping the social media trend can help with relevance at all levels. Whether you are seeking popular opinions, trends, or insights, you can capture information with immediacy. The delay and filters of standard press have really rendered print as irrelevant. For business, this relevance is essential:

"… the power of social media as both a breakthrough source of consumer data and a way of enabling more relevant experiences with consumers. … In an age of information over-load and unlimited choices, any marketer worth their salt knows that brand engagement is driven by providing precisely relevant experiences that attract and hold the attention of each consumer. Consumer relevance cannot be episodic. Maintaining relevance continuously as consumers move seamlessly from one interaction point to the next is a new demand of the digital age. The imperative for consumer relevance requires a brand to harness deep contextual knowledge about each consumer and apply it intelligently to create persuasive experiences at every touch point. This ability to be "relevant at scale", will determine which brands win and which brands get lost in the war for consumer attention." (Breed, 2012)

Lastly, it is just plain "smart" to be engaged in something as significant as the social media trend. It has been a game-changing time. While we always value classic business and leaders for the sake of history, the profitable, great places to work and productive workplaces are the trend-setters. The reasons above and more, such as speed and "green," move social media to the strategic circle. Let's look at the top 25 companies that use social media as testimony to the "smartness" of a social media strategy (Clancy 2012): 1.SAP, 2.Google, 3.Pemex, 4.Royal Bank of Scotland, 5.Microsoft, 6.Supervalu, 7.Kimberly-Clark, 8.Jacobs Engineering Group, 9.Tesco, 10.Omnicom Group, 11.Office Depot, 12.Flextronics, 13.Xerox, 14.Manpower, 15.Computer Sciences, 16.Cisco Systems, 17.DISH Network, 18.Costco Wholesale, 19.Dell, 20.Constellation Energy, 21.IBM, 22.Home Depot, 23.Avon Products, 24.BP, and 25.Devon.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND NETWORK OPTIONS: WHAT THEY ARE

The social media and network tools are many and options continue to expand. Most familiar and used include: wikis (like Wikipedia), blogs, YouTube, Delicious, RSS, website input, Four-Square and Yelp. Social networks include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Skype, Face Time, You Tube. Understanding of the technology begins with a look at its evolution.
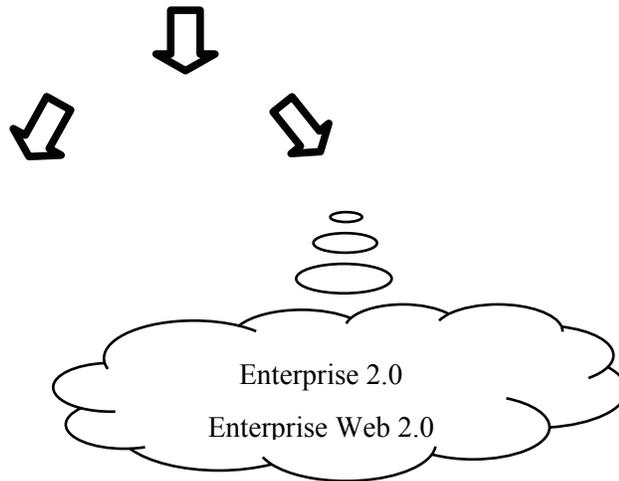
Web 1.0 was first experienced in 1993 and allowed for hyperlinks between web pages. This was the dominating feature until 2001. Other features and limitations included static brochure-ware types of applications, few dynamic abilities, very little context, no interactivity, and no leverage of intelligence from user interactions.

Web 1.5 emerged around 1995 as companies first capitalized dramatically on the commerce capabilities of the internet. Electronic commerce was introduced by eBay and Amazon in their first generation releases. (Wikipedia, 2010)

Web 2.0 is characterized as the "move from personal websites to blogs and blog site aggregation, from publishing to participation, from web content as the outcome of large up-front investment to an ongoing and interactive process, and from content management systems to links based on tagging

(folksonomy)." (Flew, 2008, p. 19) Web 2.0 is associated with Javascript, Blogger, Wikipedia, DIgg (user generated content), searching, interactivity, speed, rich multimedia, Google, YouTube, Facebook, and 2nd generation Amazon. (Frappaolo and Keldsen, 2008) Even further development has differentiated between consumer and enterprise use, thus paving the way for targeted business applications, as shown in Figure 1.
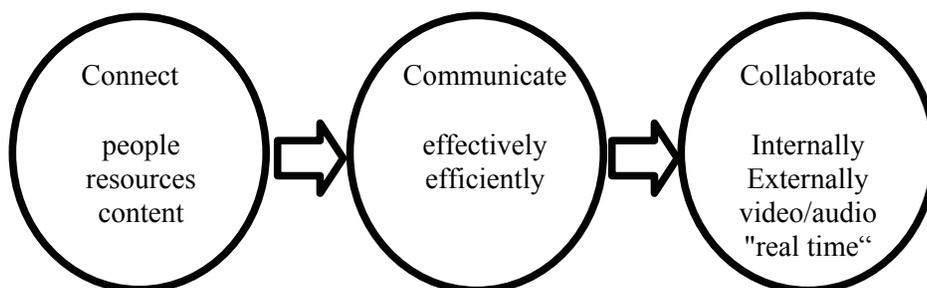
FIGURE 1
EVOLUTION OF THE WEB

Enterprise 2.0 is defined as "a system of web-based technologies that provide rapid and agile collaboration, information sharing, emergence and integration capabilities in the extended enterprise." (Wikipedia, 2011) It is sometimes called enterprise social software (Wikipedia, 2008). Emergence is the ability to detect and leverage the collective wisdom of the community.

At the Technet Summit in November 2006, Reed Hastings, founder and CEO of Netflix, stated a simple formula for defining the phases of the Web (Hastings, 2006):

"Web 1.0 was dial-up, 50K average bandwidth, Web 2.0 is an average 1 megabit of bandwidth, Web 3.0 will be 10 megabits of bandwidth all the time, which will be the full video Web, and that will feel like Web 3.0."

Cisco's take on the evolution of the web is displayed simply in Figure 2 (Krishna and Bouchard, 2009).

FIGURE 2
CISCO'S VIEW OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE WEB

The next horizon is Web 3.0 best anticipated by futurist John Smart, who sees personalization and the semantic web (Smart, 2007):

"Web 3.0 [is] the first-generation Metaverse (convergence of the virtual and physical world), a web development layer that includes TV-quality open video, 3D simulations, augmented reality, human-constructed semantic standards, and pervasive broadband, wireless, and sensors. Web 3.0's early geosocial (Foursquare, etc.) and augmented reality (Layar, etc.) webs are an extension of Web 2.0's participatory technologies and social networks into 3D space."

STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA AND NETWORKS FOR LEADERS AND MANAGERS

Leaders are aggressively addressing the linkages that make sense for their businesses. With the capabilities that are available with enterprise social networking, organizations can devise a social strategy to reach out to four key stakeholder groups: internal (employees), external (customers and suppliers), governing (board, regulators, and shareholders); public (influencers, industry, and public). These stakeholders are creating demand for use of social media for the following:

- Marketing: promote, sell, campaign, viral release
- Communications: information, knowledge, news, announcements
- Public Relations: quick release, public influence, offset, response
- Disaster Control: rapid, comprehensive reach (Japanese Nuclear Disaster)
- Operations: trouble shooting, radiological reviews, diagnoses (Antarctica)
- Knowledge and research: ideas, market research, open source

"Without question, social media has become a "disruptive" technology. Its power to influence and change how people think and interact, how companies operate and even which governments survive has been demonstrated repeatedly." (Tapscott, 2011, p. 2) The five principles outlined by this author include: collaboration, openness and transparency, knowledge sharing, interdependence, and integrity. These require a leadership agility that raises the bar for most organizations. Just focusing on the customer, the personalization of the enterprise is a push for consumerization and the following evolution:

TABLE 2
ENTERPRISE CONSUMERIZATION

Consumer & Public		Personalization
WordPress	⟶	Blogs
Twitter	⟶	Microblogs
Reviews, Comments	⟶	Discussion forums
Wikipedia	⟶	Company Wikis
Flickr, YouTube, Google	⟶	Document sharing
LinkedIn, Facebook	⟶	Relationship maps

In order to support corporate social technology initiatives, leaders become more effective endorsing these decisions if they *personally* adopt the technology. No longer for their children, their administrative assistant, or the younger generation, social technology can become their personal tool as well as a key

part of business strategy. Working with progressive businesses, the authors have found that adoption by leaders can support social media adoption for the following use:

- Expertise location
    - Employee directories
    - Recruiting & training
- Corporate wikis
    - Subject matter expertise
    - Exchange of ideas
- Employee blogging
    - Communications
    - Marketing and company news
- Internal community exchange
    - Topics of interest
    - Chat
- Idea generation (ideation)
    - Brainstorming
    - Creativity
- Project collaboration
    - Virtual work
    - Streamline and productivity
- Bookmarking or tagging
    - Research
    - Tracking and sharing

"Social networks satisfy employees' needs to feel connected. More companies are getting over their fears of social technology and are embracing … networking tools to help employees connect and collaborate." (Eberle, 2011) Organizations that seek to attract a bright and capable workforce will also plan to engage them actively by using social technology. "Business leaders recognize that engagement is the best way to glean value from the knowledge exchanged in social media – and not by seeking to control social media with traditional knowledge management [KM] techniques." (Bradley and McDonald, 2011) Operational efficiency and global connectivity through improved communications and interactions will improve with a cross-enterprise use of social media. The compelling reasons to connect with employees are continually reinforced through company findings like (Ladika, 2010):

- Cisco: "Over 50% of employees admit to ignoring policies that prohibit social media in the workplace."
- Sabre: "The line was disappearing between personal and business connectivity, so developed cube-less."
- Towers Watson: "Millennial generation is horrified at how unconnected people are in organizations." (36% of the U.S. labor force in less than 5 years.)

As cited earlier in this article, there are tradeoffs with the active adoption of social strategies. Personally and organizationally, social media needs to be managed thoughtfully. Based on the authors' perspectives, thoughtful use includes these in Table 3.

TABLE 3
SOCIAL MEDIA USE CONSIDERATIONS

ADVANTAGES	CAUTIONS
Connects people quickly	Threatens privacy
Monitors the environment	Consumes time
Gathers data	Depersonalizes
Short and sweet	New language, short – not meaningful
Younger generation expects it	Quality of content
Fast, efficient, cheap (maybe)	New, fear of change

Every day, we find new ways to leverage the capabilities created by Enterprise 2.0 social technology and tools. Smarter selling, venture capitalization (Kickstarter, Indiegogo), fund raising, brainstorming, and problem solving become fueled by access to a global population. Smart phones, tablets and iPads in the hands of most people 7x24 provide an accessibility that offers huge potential for leaders and businesses. Experiment with MS SharePoint, IBM Lotus Connections, Yammer, Moxie, Clearvale and more. Think about Charlene Li's ideas expressed in her latest book (Li, 2010) about open leadership which reflects the social transformation of the workplace. "… the social transformer strategy can have the largest impact on an enterprise, affecting everything from R&D and operations to channel partners and customers. " (Wilson et al., 2011)

The parting thought for this paper is to ask leaders and teachers associated with business to actively become a social media star in order to lead a strategy that is of value to individual leaders and businesses. "Act like a student – seek reverse mentoring by a younger generation star if you are challenged, push your teams to understand the business use of their social tools, look for partnerships, develop and implement a social media policy, and proceed carefully" (Thomases, 2012) but aggressively. In the author's experience coaching leaders to embrace social technology, the simple tasks include be open, try and try again, and stay in touch with employees or students, or children who demonstrate the agility and imagination in the world of social technology.

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