

5 Reasons Why Social IT is Essential to Your IT Organization

A Thought Leadership White Paper





“Tools will continue to improve, and access to information will grow wider and deeper. Technocentrism gives way to human-centered design. People will become even more sophisticated consumers and co-creators of technology and content. They will share their experiences and preferences, leading to broad adoption at an accelerating pace..” (1)

Gartner Prediction
The Nexus of Forces: Social, Mobile, Cloud, and Information 2012

INTRODUCTION

We are in the midst of a transformative revolution

A social revolution, powered by new technologies, has spread across the world at an incredible speed with nearly 6 out of 10 people using social networks and forums these days.(2) It is no surprise today’s business leaders have concluded that social paradigms are major drivers in providing better ways to listen, engage and respond to customers and stakeholders, creating more intimate and “sticky” relationships.

In a relatively short time, social technologies have become pervasive inside the business enterprise as well. They are being rapidly adopted in the workplace because they facilitate collaboration to address many business needs such as problem-solving and new idea generation. McKinsey & Company, for example, recently asserted that “when used within and across enterprises, (social technologies) have the potential to raise the productivity of the high-skill knowledge workers that are critical to the performance and growth in the 21st century by 20 to 25 percent.” (3) Echoing this sentiment, one analyst from a leading research firm has noted, collaboration across and among professional teams is now a “must have” management capability in the connected enterprise.

As social technologies are embraced by the enterprise, IT leaders have an equal opportunity to drive productivity within their own teams by leveraging social capabilities. Innovative IT organizations are seizing the opportunity to embrace social collaboration technologies for the same reasons that the overall business has: people want to work together in a more collaborative immediate fashion. Forward-thinking IT managers recognize that social collaboration can harness the power of the collective knowledge in IT to substantially improve efficiencies while reducing risks in managing IT environments.

By capturing and leveraging knowledge within the IT environment through social technologies – and utilizing it as a corporate asset – business enterprises can exploit social IT to their advantage. This whitepaper describes five reasons why IT departments must embrace social IT as it will increasingly become essential to their success.

Social IT Defined

Social IT is the ability for IT professionals to capture, share, and leverage knowledge through the use of Wikipedia-style crowd-sourcing and Twitter or Facebook-style news feeds. Social IT is further characterized by the enhancement of traditional IT processes with in-context collaboration to improve efficiency and accuracy of IT decision-making and actions. For more information on Social IT and to benchmark your Social IT maturity, please visit www.itinvolve.com/socialITmaturity



1 Reason # 1: The only way to keep up is to capture human knowledge and put it to work

Utilizing the collective knowledge of groups has proven to be a highly effective means of educating a broad spectrum of individuals, creating content or assets that are widely shared, and developing creative ideas to solve a myriad of challenges. Whether on a large scale such as Wikipedia which advertises 450 million monthly users, or within smaller workgroup's utilizing file sharing, providing a methodology to capture, enhance and distribute the combined wisdom of a group has proved extremely valuable. The characteristics of this kind of knowledge include:

- Broadly shared and learned
- No longer hoarded
- Analyzed from multiple perspectives
- Continuously improved
- Trusted

Capturing human knowledge is especially important for IT environments that have become more complex, more distributed, and often harder to understand. Knowledge surrounding the successful management of the IT environment is scattered, often not fully known, and frequently exists only in people's heads. The complexity of the IT environment and the broad disbursement of knowledge raise the risk that errors or omissions can occur and make the benefits of capturing and leveraging collective knowledge quite significant.

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Once captured, techniques for sharing and facilitating collaboration allow IT professionals to take advantage of the captured knowledge, thereby, driving improved productivity and accuracy for IT teams. From a service management perspective, a trusted source of knowledge about every element in the IT environment – servers, applications, network devices, etc. and even incidents, changes, and problems themselves – combined with effective collaboration, will dramatically reduce risk and improve IT employee productivity. For example, understanding impacts of changes across the environment from a policy, people, business service, and virtual/physical relationship perspective, combined with effective notification and approval processes, will substantially reduce the risks associated with making changes as well as improve change execution performance metrics.



To be effective, social collaboration requires this shared and accurate knowledge of the relationships and dependencies across the environment, but it must also be embedded into IT processes to facilitate in-context communication among team members. Change management is just one example of a service management process that can be re-invented – unlocking substantial efficiencies by leveraging social collaboration capabilities. All IT processes, including incident, problem, request, release management, etc. can benefit from capturing human knowledge and utilizing that knowledge through a collaborative process to make decision-making faster and more accurate.

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Reason # 2: Your IT teams and stakeholders expect you to be social savvy

Current college graduates entering the workforce have grown up in a socially enabled world. A recent study calculated that 98% of 18-24 year olds use social media.(4) In hiring these more socially enabled workers, employers will find these new staff members will expect and eagerly embrace social tools for communication and collaboration within the workplace.

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IT professionals will increasingly expect the ability to have knowledge delivered to them automatically and in the context of their role because they are expected to make decisions knowingly and without delay. The use of social media and technologies will only accelerate as employers continue efforts to reduce costs associated with physical real estate, and more employees are located in far flung locations and unable to effectively collaborate simply by walking down the hall to meet with their colleagues.

Consider these analyst estimates:

- As far back as 2007, Gartner estimated that on average, mobile workers accounted for 35% of staff (Gartner - User Survey Analysis: Mobile Enterprise, 2007)
- In IDC's 2012 EMEA Enterprise Mobility CIO survey, 60% of respondents "plan to invest in developer resources to deploy (mobile) apps in the next 12-18 months."(5)
- IDC recently estimated that by 2015, the world's mobile worker population will reach 1.3 billion. (6)

These trends in the work environment require solutions that can automatically deliver knowledge and enable collaboration in-context, instantaneously, and anywhere at any time. Mobile access combined with off-site working arrangements will demand that current processes take advantage of new communication methods and information sources to enable workers to perform their daily duties more productively. IT processes are no different than other business processes and require the same level of social media integration. In fact, IT was one of the first set of users to champion connecting mobile communication with job responsibilities by embracing the early use of pagers.



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**Reason # 3:
Social IT paves the way to innovation by greasing the wheels of collaboration**

For the past decade or more, cost containment, and “doing more with less” have been the mantras of many CIOs and IT organizations. Despite these directives, two-thirds or more of typical IT costs still go to sustaining operations as opposed to new innovation. To break the dominance of sustaining costs in IT budgets, new methods of management must be explored and embraced, helping to free human resources for more innovative activities.

By harnessing the knowledge of the IT organization and utilizing that knowledge to better manage the IT environment, social collaboration provides a means to dramatically reduce costs and increase productivity simultaneously. Thus, CIOs and IT managers will have the opportunity to devote more resources to efforts which grow their businesses and encourage innovation.

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**Reason # 4:
Social IT offers the best way to preserve critical knowledge when staff move on**

As social collaboration solutions take their rightful place in IT operations, IT executives will no longer have to accept losing valuable knowledge when an employee leaves the company.

IT professionals often change roles within their organizations, and enjoy a higher level of employment mobility, with many staying with their current employer for five years or less. When IT employees transfer or leave their companies, all the training and institutional knowledge they have accumulated typically walks out the door with them.

Social IT knowledge management solutions, however, provide an environment where knowledge is not only shared but can be retained and augmented over time. Thus, when employees transfer or leave, their battle-tested know-how can be passed on to others within the organization, ensuring that knowledge captured over the course of their employment is preserved and available to team members. As social collaboration solutions take their rightful place in IT operations, IT executives will no longer have to accept losing valuable knowledge when an employee leaves the company. Instead, their lessons learned do not have to be re-learned and IT productivity and effectiveness can be maintained.



In today's increasingly complex IT environments, harnessing the collective wisdom of all will become the benchmark for successful IT management.

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Reason # 5:
You need Social IT to leverage IT for competitive advantage

To fulfill its multi-faceted role in today's global businesses, IT must provide the business it supports with a competitive advantage in the marketplace. IT must accomplish this through faster delivery of new services to customers, better performance and availability of those services, and an efficient use of capital and human resources.

Social collaboration methods and practices have become critical to providing this kind of competitive advantage for the reasons described in this whitepaper:

- Social IT offers more effective and efficient means to manage the IT environment as professionals collaborate across technology and process silos
- Social IT creates an environment where IT professionals can excel and innovate based on methodologies they understand and use on a daily basis in the workplace
- Social IT delivers management efficiencies that change the current cost paradigm, enabling IT operations to re-allocate resources to more valuable, strategic initiatives
- Social IT provides the means to retain and access expert collective knowledge so it can be utilized again and again

The Key to IT success

In today's increasingly complex IT environments, harnessing the collective wisdom of all will become the benchmark for successful IT management. While there have been previous attempts to automate the capturing of information about environments through auto-discovery tools and knowledge article-based approaches, truly harnessing the collective wisdom in systems and staff requires a social and collaborative approach.

We can now readily acknowledge that social capabilities are pervasive in the world. These capabilities have delivered revolutionary ways to share information and stay connected in our personal lives, and now IT must accept that it is essential to apply these capabilities in the way IT gets work done. In fact, it is not only essential to explore and leverage the IT workforce productivity potential offered by Social IT, it is inevitable.



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