

Issues and Challenges in Enterprise Social Media

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INTRODUCTION

Social media is a ubiquitous phenomenon enabling social connections worldwide. This communication platform has given rise to a new social order wherein users can create and disseminate information, opinions, self-created content and knowledge to widespread audience. Business organizations are also catching up with the phenomenon in terms of utilizing the functionality of social media tools for intra firm communication among employees for enterprise wide social networking and collaboration (Fulk & Yuan, 2013). Many organizations are using Enterprise Social Media (ESM) tools for information sharing, crowdsourcing ideas and solving problems, and relationship building (Riemer & Scifleet, 2012). The present article attempts to understand the enterprise social media tools from the perspectives of its functional and interactional aspects along with highlighting the key issues associated with its usage.

BACKGROUND

Social media provides a platform to create and share user generated content along with the functionality of connecting with people. Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, wikis, blogs etc. are some examples of popular social media tools. Users can look for people with similar interests, connect with them, create groups and share varied types of content. Web tools similar to popular social media

are being utilized in the enterprise context to foster collaboration and knowledge sharing within the firm. These tools are known by varied names such as Enterprise Social Media (ESM) or Enterprise Social Software Platforms (ESSP).

Defining Enterprise Social Media

Leonardi et al. (2013) define Enterprise Social media (ESM) as “Web-based tools that allow workers to communicate messages with specific coworkers or broadcast messages to everyone in the organization; explicitly indicate or implicitly reveal particular coworkers as communication partners; post, edit, and sort text and files linked to themselves or others; view the messages, connections, text, and files communicated, posted, edited and sorted by anyone else in the organization at any time of their choosing” (p.2). According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), these are “web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system; articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection; view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system”(p. 211).

ESM includes tools like as blogs, social network sites (SNSs) and wikis. A lot of different packages are available for use by enterprises. SharePoint by Microsoft, is an online application platform where members can collaborate for team projects, upload and modify files, initiate discussions and work together in a virtual space mak-

ing the collaborative work easier to execute and monitor. Jive is another name in the same list that provides functionality of enterprise wide connections facilitating online sharing and collaboration among employees across the world. Other tools in use are Yammer and Chatter.

Benefit of ESM Tools

ESM provides an ability to maintain social connections along with accessibility to digital content (Kane, 2015). It gives a way of connecting with employees across the organization facilitating interactions and information sharing. Online connections, social interaction and communication patterns can reveal a lot about the various knowledge communities in the organization. Along with providing a functionality similar to traditional media of communication exchange such as email, it provides a way to connect and display the shared information to a preferred set of people who can further benefit from the exchange. The mutual communication partners, shared information and membership of different online groups can help employees understand the prevalent social dynamics along with locating the relevant support for knowledge (Ellison et al., 2015).

Some of the major benefits are listed below.

Acts as an Interactive Platform

Members of an ESM platform can interact in a variety of ways. Subramaniam and Nandhakumar (2013) identified the following ways in which members interact over an ESM platform

1. **Impromptu or Informal:** Ad-hoc problem solving is enabled by collective work of individuals in an Informal way where formal structures do not inhibit communication and interaction. Members come together to work on some common problem that needs immediate attention.
2. **Planned:** This happens in the duration of a planned project where the interaction is

sustained for specific information needs from different members of the community.

3. **Ongoing:** Focused and repetitive interactions help in developing roles as members share knowledge over ESM platform.

Helps to Locate Knowledge Source within Organization

Awareness about the communications of others can help the knowledge seekers understand the potential knowledge sources. An understanding of who knows what and who knows whom helps the employees become aware of the communications among the coworkers and it becomes imperative in eliciting knowledge from them whenever required. This kind of awareness has been referred to as 'ambient awareness (Leonardi & Meyer, 2015) which is facilitated by the use of enterprise wide social media tools. Message transparency and translucent network connections offered by social media (Leonardi, 2015) give employees an edge over the opaque communications handled by conventional technologies.

- Message transparency is the ability of users to see the different conversation threads and the contents generated therein.
- Network translucence or the knowledge of people's communication partners helps in identifying real communication patterns in any organization which may be different from the traditional or expected ones.

Employees can gain an understanding about the nature and kind of projects done by their colleagues along with their individual expertise. The communication threads and patterns can be observed to make sense of individual's tacit knowledge which can be accessed whenever required.

Facilitates Knowledge Sharing Among Employees

Social tools enable knowledge sharing and collaboration which is important for the new and

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