



Change 3.0: using social media to engage your workforce

In a business world of increased expectations, globalization and the growing influence of social media and networking, companies must find new ways to engage their workforce to solve their most pressing issues. Using social media for business provides multiple outlets not only to attract attention to your key messages, but also to create an environment of collaboration focused on improving business.



Authors

Charlie Goldwasser Principal
Advisory Services, People & Organizational Change
EY, United States

Melissa L. Edwards Senior Manager
Advisory Services, People & Organizational Change
EY, United States

Change 3.0: using social media to engage your workforce

As the working population becomes ever more engaged with social media, companies must keep pace or lose a valuable opportunity to gain insight, innovation and feedback.

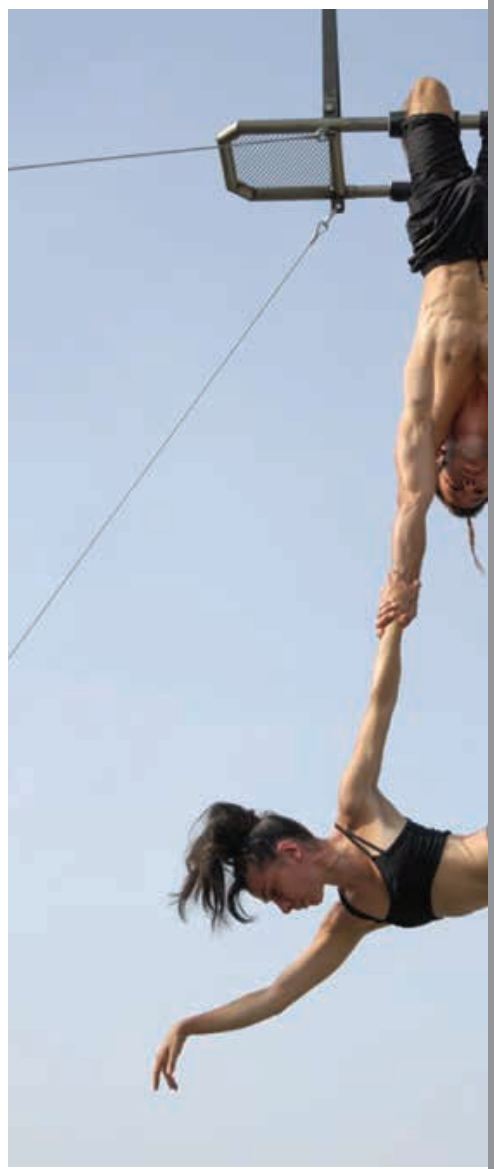
Many studies have been conducted into the most effective ways of using social media to engage an external audience – be that consumers or clients – but little time has been spent on how this interactive platform can be used to engage a workforce internally, for the collaboration and benefit of a business.

Most major organizations undergo organization-wide transformation initiatives on a frequent basis. Whether related to strategy, finance, supply chain, human resources, or a combination of these, major programs that impact business processes, work activities and workplace practices are the new normal. The old adage “the only constant is change”¹ is alive and well.

EY research has found that 80% of enterprise change transformation programs fail. A common characteristic of this failure is the lack of effective engagement of businesses with their employees. Social media and collaboration technologies are essential tools to shape effective strategies and are currently being underutilized.

In many cases, this may mean exploring technologies and platforms already available within the business, but perhaps not yet applied broadly to teams and departments such that they could use them as part of their work activities. To help achieve business change, organizations must actively interact with their workforce using similar social technologies to accelerate design and development and increase adoption of new ideas driving business performance improvement.

While programs such as enterprise resource planning (ERP), talent



1. Heraclitus of Ephesus, Greek philosopher.
 2. “Millennials: Confident, Connected, Open to change,” available at www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/02/24/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change/, accessed 4 February 2014.



management and supply chain re-engineering focus on the use of modern technology, often their success relies on employee adoption and participation. The latter too often relies on large email blasts often buried in the 200-plus average emails professionals receive each day. But the greatest limitation from this approach is the failure to involve the employee. Most organizations limit the “reply all” email feature – and with good reason. But today, newer technologies allow organizations to engage their employees in a two-way dialogue that email missiles could never achieve. Without that two-way dialogue and a commitment to encourage participation and listen with intent, risks to a successful adoption are missed or, more importantly, ideas from your most treasured assets, your employees, go unheard.

A workforce of multigenerations is a multichannel crowd. Texting, Yamming, tweeting, blogging, tagging, posting videos and uploading photos are the mainstream methods for communication in today’s society. If these elements aren’t included in your change management and communications plan, you’ve likely limited the reach of your efforts and the impact of your desired business change.

By 2025, Millennials, or Generation Y, will make up the majority of the workforce. This generation is expected to have different behaviors, values and attitudes as a response to the technological and economic implications of the internet. While experts differ on the precise date range of Millennial births, the general consensus is that this generation of workers will be more technologically minded than

any before them. According to the Pew Research Center, they are confident, self-expressive, liberal, upbeat and receptive to new ideas and new ways of working.² They are history’s first “always connected” generation and, to engage them, employers will need to rethink communication strategies accordingly.

This new generation is not the only driver for social media-powered transformation strategy. The rapid advancement of technology and changing modes of communication affect all businesses regardless of workforce demographic, preparing it for the future.

When social media emerged in the mid-1990s, many corporate organizations shunned its use, seeing the risks it posed to brand reputation, information security and communication management. Today, most are recognizing the increasing number of benefits derived from the use of social media in marketing, advertising, internal and external corporate communications and overall brand awareness. The belief is the benefits outweigh the potential risks. Social media and networking can open channels for dialogue, rapidly integrate employees into the company culture and quickly create a sense of community.

For those early adopters who took the social media plunge in their internal communications, the benefits speak for themselves. A **global energy company** used social tool Poll Everywhere to help form and engage a new advisory council for an enterprise-wide project. This tool provided an essential vehicle for specific and candid feedback from key virtual stakeholders that could then be put into action.



Change 3.0: using social media to engage your workforce

If left to their own devices, savvy employees will figure out creative ways to share knowledge.

The use of Poll Everywhere helped identify key stakeholders' needs and made them visible so they could be proactively addressed. This led to creation of a formal advisory council that played a significant role in project implementation and user readiness.

Most enterprise technologies that businesses already deploy, such as SAP, Oracle, Microsoft, learning systems and HR systems already have integrated social media components – but too often, the components that allow for dialogue are underused. With a plethora of social media platform options and challenges surrounding their use, many organizations are left wondering: “How should businesses use new communications and collaboration techniques?”

Ready, set, engage

Engaging employees in a company's strategic efforts means using communication techniques that enable dialogue. Businesses should incorporate new ways of using social media in the context of business. To do this effectively, there are a number of key steps to follow:

1. Know your audience

Understanding who your change messages are intended for, and their preferred communications style, is often overlooked. While it is easy to resort to email, in today's workforce, the primary communications channels are smart phones, micro blogs and videos. Millennials will account for more than one-third of the workforce in 2014 and nearly 50% by 2020, according to the Young Entrepreneur Council.³ Understanding the audience and how they prefer to receive information is a critical activity to ensure messages are read and retained. For most organizations, the millennial portion of the workforce, or those born between 1981 and 2000,⁴ prefer social technologies and innovation platforms to collaborate and communicate on the job.

2. Optimize your social tools

Today's enterprise tools are routinely adding more social collaboration components either in existing enterprise tools such as SAP, Oracle, mail platforms such as Outlook or Lotus Notes, and newer social media platforms such as Jive, Connections, Sharepoint or Yammer, or even idea management platforms sometimes residing in research areas and overlooked by the broader organization. This provides a large untapped resource of social media technologies that may be useful for internal audiences, as well. Organizations that want to use social media techniques as a key way to engage their employees in their change programs should look within the organization first for untapped sources of collaboration techniques.

An example of this is the use of a collaborative decision-making tool, Group Systems' ThinkTank platform, by a **US-based multinational corporation provider of IT and professional services**. This integrator used ThinkTank to make collaborative decisions and accelerate their finance transformation implementation. Using this platform, finance leaders were able to brainstorm, poll and prioritize online activities, discuss key finance metrics, determine responsibilities in the form of an online Responsible Accountable Consult and Inform (RACI) model and craft action plans in real-time. It was agreed that using this approach saved not only time from multiple meetings, but also created a road map to achieve the benefits of the finance transformation.

3. Find your connectors

All too often, the “usual suspects” are called upon instead of researching who in the organization is best at sharing information and working across the broadest network. Conducting a social network analysis has historically been the only way to get at this information. Now, tools such as enterprise portals and LinkedIn can help organizations understand the most connected employees in their organization – and therefore, the most likely to be great purveyors of information.

4. Design awesome campaigns

New social media tools give organizations the ability to reset ideas on how to create communications messages. Tools such as Yammer or Pinterest provide the perfect vehicle for a photo campaign showing people who successfully use new products,

3. Young Entrepreneur Council (YEC), founded in 2010, is an American non-profit organization that provides entrepreneurs with access to tools, mentorship and resources to support business development and growth.

4. According to American think tank organization Pew Research Center.

Figure 1. Examples of social collaboration tools that can be used to engage employees

Social tool categories	Social media tool examples
<p>Micro blogging A form of blogging where users post short updates or messages in chronological order. Often in enterprises, this could be done for a defined network or group, or the entire organization. Core to blogging and microblogging is the ability to comment on and add to another's posts, providing a richer conversation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Yammer ▶ Jive ▶ Connections
<p>Media sharing: photo and video sharing Allows users to upload and share videos and photos for publishing to a network. Within an organization, this is often used company-wide or within groups. Many media-sharing capabilities can be found in broad enterprise collaboration platforms such as Sharepoint.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Animoto ▶ YouTube ▶ Vimeo
<p>Polling Online audience polling tools that show immediate results to a virtual audience. Many services now allow users to respond to polls using text messaging and smart devices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Poll Everywhere ▶ Yammer
<p>Communities Social software platforms are primarily designed for building a collaborative culture using content defined by the employees. Enterprise social platforms typically allow networks and individuals to create online communities and working groups, providing a space for content or purpose-specific collaboration and social networking, e.g., project management community or a new hire community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Jive ▶ Connections ▶ SharePoint
<p>Visualization tools Provide techniques to turn content and data into meaningful graphics.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Wordle ▶ Tagxedo ▶ Easley ▶ Storyline
<p>Ideation Provides a platform for wide spread idea sharing, often called crowdsourcing, and collaborative dialogue to produce ideas greater than the original. Typically, an organizational challenge is presented to provide a high-level structure for which ideas are shared. When used in a time-boxed manner, these idea management sessions are often referred to as "sprints."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ ThinkTank ▶ IdeaJam ▶ Spigit

or a video challenge on teamwork or success stories on adoption. Factor in "gaming" or competitions, and the users will engage on a whole new level. Consider campaigns along with streaming messages to create a new experience that users will notice.

5. Yammer provocatively

Whether it's Twitter or Yammer or other micro blogging tools, the status update now permeates business applications. If left to their own devices, savvy employees will figure out creative ways to use it to share knowledge. With a little help and strategic thinking, you can harness the power of these tools to get your critical business messages out.

Adapting to a highly socially connected multigenerational workforce, HR leadership must connect to their employees where they work and communicate. For this reason, **one of the world's largest media conglomerates** switched to social media platforms to conduct leadership meetings.

Driving all meeting logistics and communications through a conference Jive community – a social networking site for employees providing communities, employee profiles blogs and status updates – the group was able to better engage and articulate their ideas from various locations.

Also using the organization's Yammer microblogging site, executives posted updates, breakout session activities and photos, and engaged in question and answer sessions with speakers using smart devices. The Yammer feed was supported by Yammerfall, a real-time "waterfall" of updates, easily viewed by

Change 3.0: using social media to engage your workforce



all attendees when projected side-by-side with presentation screens. The level of engagement significantly exceeded the expectations of the attendees and led to great advocacy for usage of the tools long past their workshop.

6. Idea Sprinting

Idea Sprinting is used to unearth inventive ideas from anywhere in the organization. Involving employees early in the visioning and strategy stage can help identify and shape the change processes that will be most impactful.

EY has demonstrated successful idea sprinting with its workforce, tapping the ideas of employees to tackle strategic issues and priorities. **In 2012, one EY group involved its workers in a discussion of future investment and business strategy** over a five-day virtual innovation event. Using EY's innovation platform IdeaJam, participants could post their ideas, comment and rate their colleagues' feedback. This activity generated more than 350 ideas to shape the future investments and direction of the practice, covering topics on value, talent, market and brand, and game-changing ideas. The results of

this saw key ideas immediately acted upon by the business, and others fed into the business strategy.

7. No more boring newsletters

With an average of more than 200 emails a day, employees are likely to quickly overlook program emails and newsletters. Turning to newer technologies such as MailChimp or Easely can help create more engaging and creative formats so your messages stand out. Incorporating multimedia into broad communications is no longer a nice-to-have feature but an expectation of your readers.

8. Listen

The purpose of two-way communications is to foster dialogue and benefit from shared ideas. Now, leaders must listen to the dialogues and be prepared to respond to ideas, recognize contributors, participate in the dialogue and demonstrate how contributions are acted upon.

Listening to employee feedback made a difference to the outcome of a **global finance transformation for a major construction equipment manufacturer** in March 2013. The program spanned five countries and affected over 10,000 employees, all of whom could add valuable insight. By using social media technologies to engage these employees, they were able to more efficiently assess the organization's preparedness to cut over to a new finance system. With the "go-live" date only a couple of months away, the business used the brainstorming and consensus-building tool ThinkTank to solicit the input from 200 employees over a feedback session, asking the questions:

Incorporating multimedia into broad communications is no longer a nice-to-have feature but an expectation of your readers.

- ▶ Are we ready to work with this new technology and still deliver high-quality service?
- ▶ Are you confident you can get your job done in the new environment?
- ▶ Are you prepared?
- ▶ If we're not getting this right, what do we need to change now?

The questions, while simple and straightforward, produced a wealth of information when employees were also prompted to enter their responses anonymously, as well as react and respond to their colleagues' input. By listening to their employees, the company was able to build better relationships with its workforce and more efficiently assess the preparation for change.

Conclusion

In today's fast-paced, globalized, multimedia workplace, engaging employees in transformation programs through traditional methods will no longer suffice. As the working population becomes ever more engaged with social media, companies must keep pace or lose a valuable opportunity to gain insight, innovation and feedback. As EY research and case studies have shown, the use of social media in change programs can play a vital role, not only in realizing the promise of major change initiatives, but also in creating a more engaged and productive workforce. ■

How socially engaged is your change strategy?

Rate on a scale of **0** = not at all, **1** = almost, **2** = definitely

Do you feel your workforce is currently well engaged in business improvement ideas and designs?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you believe your employees feel they can make a difference in decisions that matter for them and for the business?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are engagement tools and techniques tailored to the unique demographics of your workforce across business units, functions and geographies?	<input type="checkbox"/>
To what extent would your employees and business partners say they are able to leverage their greatest strengths to add value to the business?	<input type="checkbox"/>
How active are communities of interest in sharing knowledge and ideas across organizational boundaries?	<input type="checkbox"/>
To what extent are collaborative platforms used to encourage teamwork among different groups of employees?	<input type="checkbox"/>
How frequently and easily can you discover the thinking of your employees using social media polling and other engagement features?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the use of social media factored into your communications and engagement strategies for implementation of all strategic change initiatives?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Total score <input type="checkbox"/>	

What does your score say about you?
0-3 Your change strategy is not at all socially engaged and needs improvement to encourage collaboration with your wider workforce.
4-8 You are moving in the right direction toward using social media to engage and utilize your workforce to effectively initiate and activate change.
9-14 Congratulations, you are among the forerunners of social media-powered change strategy.