

Putting Social Software to Work in Your Business: A Journey Toward Enterprise 2.0

Enterprises today must manage a number of complexities that are fundamentally changing the nature of work:

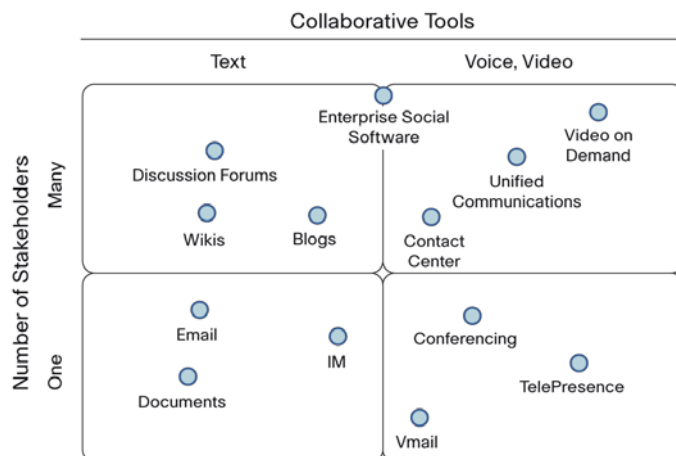
- Globalization has enabled organizations to tap into global talent pools and reach new markets, but it has also dispersed teams across the globe and forced a less personal, more asynchronous way of working.
- Today's workforce is accustomed to new ways of interacting and sharing knowledge. Many employees are using consumer-based collaboration applications like Facebook for business interactions, posing new risks and challenges for enterprise security and compliance.
- Web 2.0 technologies have given employees access and input to more information, content, and expertise than ever before. While this has led to tremendous productivity gains, organizations are now challenged with managing information and content overload and with maintaining accuracy and relevance to help ensure that their employees are connecting with the right content and expertise when they need it.
- Mobility has changed when, where, and how people work. Employees are always connected, even when they're not at their computers. This trend has tremendous potential from a productivity perspective. The ability to extend the worker desktop to the mobile device has become a strategic differentiator for organizations of any size, in any industry.

Over the past decade, business leaders have addressed productivity gaps by implementing systems that automate and accelerate transactional business processes. Automating repeatable processes frees up time for people to focus on things that can't be automated. Today, however, business leaders cannot achieve the growth and innovation they want from further transactional automation alone. In this era, new productivity gains will come from increasing the efficiency of **unstructured processes** - processes that depend on human interactions. This is why collaboration has emerged as a top priority for CIOs.

Traditional collaborative technologies that are document- and text-centric are no longer enough to drive innovation and productivity. As Figure 1 shows, collaboration now encompasses video and voice capabilities as well as text- and document-centric tools. Social networking bridges the divide between text and rich-media-centric tools. In fact, according to Gartner¹, by 2014, social networking services will replace email as the primary vehicle for interpersonal communications for 20 percent of business users.

¹ Gartner Research: "Predicts 2010: Social Software Is an Enterprise Reality": <http://www.gartner.com/resId=1243515>

Figure 1. Employees use a wide variety of collaborative tools in the workplace today, serving a broad range of interaction types: from one-to-one to many-to-many



For many business leaders, the question isn't "if" or "when", but rather "how." CIOs have seen the transformational power of social networking within the consumer world, and are curious about how similar capabilities might unlock better results within their own organizations. But before purchasing decisions are made, it's important to understand what social software is, and whether or not it's sufficient for the organization's goals.

Social Software at Work

As with many collaboration technologies, social software first gained popularity in the consumer world, and is only now starting to make its way into business, education, and public sector organizations. Preceded by a collection of Web 2.0 technologies like wikis, blogs, micro-blogs, RSS feeds, and tagging, social software has evolved to enable people to share knowledge, contribute opinions, and participate in virtual communities of interest. Unlike other collaboration technologies, social software platforms are designed to aggregate the collective insights, experience, and knowledge of participants.

Social software has already eclipsed email as one of the most popular online activities in the consumer world. Along the way, it has sparked an "age of participation," in which people have more power than ever before. Today, through popular sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Wikipedia, and LinkedIn, people can:

- Develop and manage personal online profiles to share information about who they are, where they're from, what their interests are, and what they're doing at any given time
- Easily publish, share, rate, search, and edit content for the world to consume and experience
- Subscribe to content sources and stay connected with specific people
- Find and connect with other like-minded people through communities of interest

These same capabilities offer tremendous potential for organizations to drive a new era of business productivity:

- Profiles enable workers to do "personal branding," share content and experiences, more easily find expertise, and offer their own expertise to the rest of the organization.
- The ability to publish, share, rate, search, and edit content puts the most relevant and accurate information at people's fingertips, and naturally encourages people to take a vested interest in the content that they create. And because content can be so much easier to find, employees can spend a lot less time reinventing content that already exists in other parts of the organization.
- Subscribing to the activity feeds of trusted content sources, experts, and other colleagues within the organization keeps workers connected to the information and content that they want and need, and filters out what they don't want.

- Communities offer dispersed teams a virtual space to privately share content, engage in discussions, and manage projects through team wikis and a host of other tools. Communities can serve the same purpose for groups of people that profiles serve for individuals: offering expertise to the group, sharing content and experiences, and “community branding.”

When Social Software Is Not Enough: Enter the Enterprise Collaboration Platform

Many organizations are finding value in social software at the departmental level: to increase knowledge sharing within a department, to improve customer care initiatives through faster response times, to increase customer retention through external-facing platforms that invite participation. However, if the organization’s goal is more than simply improved knowledge management, social software capabilities alone are not sufficient to improve the efficiency of unstructured processes. Social software must integrate with existing communications and business systems, and provide end-users with an integrated experience that removes the latency and inefficiency inherent in switching between multiple silo’d applications. This desire for a solution that provides an integrated user experience is driving a new class of applications called **enterprise collaboration platforms (ECP)**.

The capabilities that characterize an enterprise collaboration platform are:

- Out-of-box social networking capabilities
- Preintegrated enterprise communications
- Business system integration
- Content management system integration
- Enterprise-grade security and policy management

Preintegrated, extensible enterprise collaboration platforms, with ready-to-go social networking capabilities, offer lower development and deployment costs. As integration costs are typically seven times the cost of the software platform itself, preintegration with communications, business, and content management systems enables significant return on investment (ROI) for the business. More and more businesses are finding that instead of setting up ineffective barriers to the use of social software, they can reduce overall business risk by providing IT-ready social networking managed via enterprise policy.

Rather than providing these capabilities as yet another collaboration silo, or by providing an integrated experience through a portal that only exposes updated information, enterprise collaboration platforms weave social capabilities through existing systems to accelerate business processes.

The following table illustrates the difference between enterprise collaboration platforms, portals, and traditional social software applications:

Capability	Detail	Enterprise Collaboration Platform	Portal	Social Software
Social Networking	Profiles, Teams, Communities, Networks: Capabilities include: Search, Links, Authoring, Tags, Extensions, and Signals (SLATES).	X		X
Business System Integration	Web 2.0 API’s & Open Standards enable business applications to pull information out of and/or push information into the ECP, Portal or Social SW application.	X	X	
Communications System Integration	Click-to-Communicate - allow individuals to reach each other through voice, instant messaging, web conferencing or video conferencing at any location inside or outside the firewall. Integrated Presence - enable visibility into which colleagues are available and the best way to reach them at that moment in time.	X		
Content Management	Native content management capabilities, and/or pre-integrations to existing content management systems through industry standards like CMIS.	X	X	
Enterprise Grade Security and Policy Management	Enterprise-class security and policy management that protect information and exchanges both within and across organizations.	X	X	X

Enterprise Collaboration Platforms: Coming to Your Business

Traditional collaborative technologies such as email, web portals, and telephony are not going away; in fact, the best ECP systems will use and increase the value of these existing investments by making them more available and accessible. But to say that these tools will suffice is to ignore a strong trend. In the Gartner Social Media 2009 Survey, the firm found that nearly 75 percent of the respondents who use social media for corporate use identified themselves as either mainstream adopters (50 percent) or conservative adopters of IT (24 percent). Another important survey finding is that 52.4 percent of respondents plan to increase their budgets for social media tools and collaboration software in 2010.

Several changes in the workplace make the benefits of an ECP especially valuable for today's businesses. First, expectations have changed. Employees, customers, and partners exist in the world of instant, real-time communications, and everyone expects as-close-to-instant access to people and information as possible. Just ask today's college students how often they leave a phone message, or even check their own voicemail, and the new importance of social software, combined with real-time communications, becomes clear.

Second, employees receive information from more sources and in more formats. New ways of finding and acting on business-relevant information are essential to keep employees focused and productive. Corporate intranets often contain the information that people are looking for, but these networks don't have search capabilities that are sophisticated enough to properly connect people with that information. Corporate directories often fail at this task as well. Enterprise social software, on the other hand, has a greater capacity to expose context and how an organization's people, information, and communities are related to one another.

Third, teams have changed. In the past, teams were largely predefined, based on organizational hierarchies and individual projects inside the company. Now employees now routinely work with people outside their teams, or in completely different functions of the organizations. Over time, as individual expertise becomes increasingly documented and exposed to other employees, teams will form more dynamically and will be comprised of an increasingly diverse and dispersed set of participants.

Enterprise collaboration platforms have the potential to effectively address each of these changes, and empower employees to work more efficiently and interactively. Some of the benefits that enterprises are realizing from ECPs include:

- **Optimized team building:** Social networks and software tools can help companies manage global talent pools to assemble the best possible teams, regardless of the locations of the individuals.
- **Accelerated team performance:** Information-sharing solutions help teams integrate and access the right expertise and information, and interactively solve problems faster.
- **Fully engaged teams and audiences:** Rich, compelling content can be cost-effectively developed, tailored to the communities of interest, and distributed in real time to encourage more interactions and keep the attention of team members and people outside the enterprise, including customers, partners, and analysts.
- **Increased security and compliance:** Employees have increased control over the company's intellectual and digital assets.
- **Higher returns on existing investments:** Delivered over the existing networks and infrastructure, ECPs can extract more value from previous investments and in-place technologies, such as enterprise content management, unified communications, and business applications.

Increasing Sales Productivity and Revenue: A Cisco on Cisco Example

Consider the example of the Cisco® sales organization. This sales force is largely composed of generalist account managers. A much smaller number of technical specialists are available to help them answer detailed customer

questions. These specialists are not assigned one-to-one; instead, they are part of a community that can be called upon by any sales person.

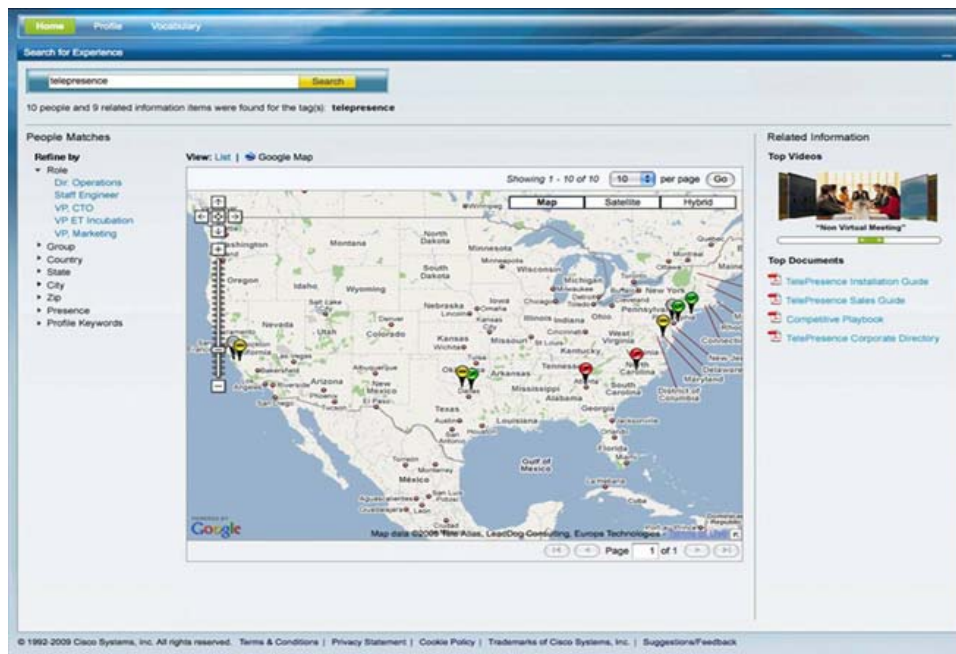
However, with the relevant product experts dispersed across a region or around the world, finding the right answer quickly can be a challenge. In the past, if account managers needed to answer a question for a competitive bid, they used Web 1.0 methods: search the content on the Cisco internal and external website, query the immediate specialists they knew personally, and ultimately, send out an email to a virtual mailing list asking for help.

Unfortunately, this process was not very efficient. Often, the necessary expertise was available, but the sales team just didn't know who to ask.

To address these issues, Cisco leaders developed the Specialist Optimization and Results (SOAR) initiative. SOAR is an example of how an enterprise collaboration platform can advance a business process - in this case, deal management in the sales process. SOAR enables:

- **Self-help access to resources and expertise:** An online workspace with virtual expert and learning communities for each product. The learning space includes searchable discussion forums, so that employees can pose questions to the community and search through past discussion threads. The site also includes access to marketing collateral, product specifications, training materials, and other product resources.
- **Rapid response team:** If employees cannot find the answer through self-help resources, the virtual communities also include access to specialists associated with each product. Employees can view real-time presence information for all experts participating in the community and select any expert to instantly launch an IM session, voice call, or web conference.
- **Expert identification and access:** Even with all of these resources, account managers still encounter customers with unique implementations or questions that require the direct involvement of an expert product specialist. To address these situations, Cisco created an Expertise Locator tool that is a "mash-up" of telephony and presence tools with Google Maps. Account managers can look up any subject or region with the tool - for example, "unified communications; United States" - and view a map showing every Cisco employee who meets the search criteria (see Figure 3). The results show the experts' location and presence information, and users can click to launch a voice or video call, pull up the expert's calendar to schedule a meeting, or start an instant conference.
- **Virtual product demos:** Expert product specialists were spending significant time providing demonstrations to customers, often performing the same demo at multiple customer sites. The SOAR project virtualized those demos. Today, product specialists schedule regular demos through the SOAR portal, and account managers can invite their customers to attend virtually via web conferences. Using interactive conferencing tools, customers can ask questions during the demo, as well as listen to questions from peers who are attending.

Figure 2. SOAR Uses Social Networking to Make Product Experts More Accessible, Allowing Them to Interact with Twice as Many Customers



The new SOAR tools have made it much easier for employees to find resources, whether they exist on a webpage or in the mind of an expert. These tools have significantly increased Cisco's sales. Product specialists report interacting with twice as many customers as they did previously, allowing them to devote much more of their time to customer engagement, instead of to tactical and research activities. In fact, SOAR tools allow Cisco to save the cost of one fulltime employee for every five specialists using SOAR. For a 100-person team of specialists that can now do the work of 120, that savings equates to more than US\$5 million per year.

SOAR has also delivered significant improvements in employee efficiency. Product specialists and sales engineers report saving more than two hours each time they use the Rapid Response Team and Expertise Locator tools. Travel expenses for Cisco product specialists are down by as much as 60 percent in teams using SOAR tools, and specialists report saving 17 hours a week on average, and boosting their productivity by 22 percent.

Strategic Implications and Considerations

As part of the journey toward Enterprise 2.0 and a more productive, interactive work environment, enterprises should consider several social software issues:

- How enterprise social software fits into larger communications and collaboration initiatives:** Enterprise social software (ESS) is often introduced into the workplace without being integrated into existing systems or workflow. Although this can be an appropriate first step if the organization needs gradual introduction to the technologies, the disadvantage is another disparate application not connected to existing content management systems, transactional systems, productivity applications, and other enterprise investments. Strategic planning should consider the implications of introducing ESS alone versus an enterprise collaboration platform that provides standards-based integration points to encompass content management, business systems and communications platforms.

- **Consumer social software and ESS:** Organizations are finding that popular consumer tools (for example, Facebook and Twitter) as well as ESS applications each have their place in the enterprise. Huge business benefits are currently being gained from the use of consumer social networks, especially for external-facing functional areas such as marketing, sales, and customer care. Enterprise collaboration platforms should provide an integration point into these consumer social software tools that is managed by IT, and give users a single, integrated experience.
- **Governance and security:** Businesses must have the ability to define both open and restricted communities, based on the purpose of each group. Similarly, authorization to carry out various functions within the social network must be role-based and rule-driven. Granular, rules-based policy management is required to allow ECP solutions to be properly governed and to prove compliance with industry requirements.

Conclusions: Recommendations and Next Steps

- Step 1. **Begin with business goals.** How will you measure the success of your Enterprise 2.0 journey? Analysts estimate that more than half of enterprises that begin with ESS deployments will fail because of a lack of connection to business objectives. So, whether it's in improving innovation, being able to take on more corporate priorities, improving access to expertise or specialists, reducing communications and travel costs, decreasing time to market or increasing employee retention, your first step is to determine the desired effect you want your ECP strategy to have.
- Step 2. **Build a business case.** Once you've determined the business goals you want to focus on, think through exactly how ESS capabilities or a broader ECP strategy will help achieve those goals. You can do this most effectively in the context of business processes, where it's easier to see where inefficiencies and bottlenecks occur. By using social software in combination with your existing enterprise systems and business applications, you can measure improvements in these processes through pilot deployments that, in themselves, can serve as compelling business cases.
- Step 3. **Identify business owners and leaders.** Technology is only one piece of the equation. Driving the adoption of a fundamentally new way of working requires commitment on a cultural and change-management level as well. This process must start at the top, with line-of-business leaders in partnership with the CIO and CEO.
- Step 4. **Evangelize early and often.** People, by nature, tend to resist change. The best way to drive fast adoption and broad acceptance of new collaboration tools is through consistent communication that demonstrates how these solutions will enable employees to be more efficient in executing business goals. Articulate how technologies will be integrated into employee activities and workflows and how business processes will change, and find ways to encourage and incentivize participation. The success of collaboration, especially social collaboration, is directly tied to the degree to which employees participate.

Partnering with Cisco can help you evolve your existing collaboration strategy to adapt to today's changing workforce and technologies. Cisco's open enterprise collaboration platform allows you to start at any point, so that you can match the collaboration technology with your business goals, whether your goal is increasing your responsiveness to customers, facilitating innovation, saving on travel costs, or improving employee productivity. Cisco Enterprise Social Software, along with services from Cisco and our partners, may help your business deliver profits and successful collaborative experiences.

For More Information

For more information about Cisco Enterprise Social Software, visit: <http://www.cisco.com/go/enterprisesocialsoftware>.

For more information about a framework for moving from Enterprise 1.0 to Enterprise 2.0, visit: [Cisco Collaboration Framework](#).

About Cisco Collaboration

From award-winning IP communications to mobility, customer care, web conferencing, messaging, enterprise social software, and interoperable Cisco TelePresence™ experiences, Cisco brings together network-based, integrated collaboration solutions based on open standards. These solutions, as well as services from Cisco and our partners, help promote business growth, innovation, and productivity. They also help accelerate team performance, protect investments, and simplify the process of finding the right people and information.



Americas Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
San Jose, CA

Asia Pacific Headquarters
Cisco Systems (USA) Pte. Ltd.
Singapore

Europe Headquarters
Cisco Systems International BV
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Cisco has more than 200 offices worldwide. Addresses, phone numbers, and fax numbers are listed on the Cisco Website at www.cisco.com/go/offices.

Cisco and the Cisco Logo are trademarks of Cisco Systems, Inc. and/or its affiliates in the U.S. and other countries. A listing of Cisco's trademarks can be found at www.cisco.com/go/trademarks. Third party trademarks mentioned are the property of their respective owners. The use of the word partner does not imply a partnership relationship between Cisco and any other company. (1005R)