



THOUGHTLEADERS

Navigating the Social Networking Labyrinth

By Sonar Thekdi
Director of Operations
Cisco I&D Coalition member

AS AN ORGANIZATION committed to attracting, engaging and developing a diverse workforce, we recognize the value of social networking. We know it can help us bring people from different backgrounds, departments, and geographies together to support one another, swap ideas, and problem solve. However, we also know that to be effective, the company needs to be able to embrace and support the diversity it's meant to connect.

In today's connected world, you can quickly and simultaneously find content and lose your way. Social networking has made it easy to access an abundance of information and connect with all sorts of people; it's also made it easy to be overwhelmed, distracted, and frustrated by the sheer deluge of it all.

Dealing with so many different cultures, generations, expectations, and work styles, we needed a social networking platform that allowed everyone to partake in

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a way that was comfortable and relevant for them. The classic mantra of inclusion and diversity practitioners, “one size never fits all,” certainly applied as we set out to create something that could cater to the different needs of our diverse employee-base to truly foster a culture of inclusion.

Cisco's Integrated Workforce Experience (IWE), which is an internal implementation of our enterprise social software platform called Quad, gave us the opportunity we were looking for to unleash the power of social networking to support some of our inclusion and diversity objectives.

IWE allows us to intelligently connect diverse people, communities and information, so they can communicate, collaborate, and learn. It offers personal profiles to help people get to know one another; searches by name to deliver a more complete picture of not only who they are, but also what they know and care about; and the ability to go viral with information you contribute, creating connections and personal networks that cross all usual boundaries.

Customizable watch lists and information management tools ensure what's important to each employee is right up front—from their communities and interests to their work groups—so they can make a difference in a way that may have been difficult before. For example, employees can easily share documents, create discussions, or post questions to solicit input and participation from a diverse set of stakeholders to facilitate productive brainstorming and collaboration where locations, time zones and other borders are irrelevant.

As employees find and engage their co-workers and develop their skills, networks and interests by joining diverse communities and working together on IWE, they start to see the real value of diversity and inclusion. With IWE, it's easy for people to understand what's happening, get engaged and contribute, which helps us turn our large organization into a small, more navigable one.

IWE supports employees so they don't get lost; rather, it creates an inclusive environment where they can be themselves, celebrate, leverage, and share their unique perspectives and experiences to find success. **PDJ**

Sonar Thekdi is a Director in the Engineering Operations team where she is responsible for establishing an inclusive culture for recruiting, retaining, and developing the best talent for the 20,000+ global engineering team at Cisco. Her goal is to ensure that the workforce represents the diverse global marketplace, and that the culture promotes a creative, innovative, and collaborative environment.