Corporate Social Networking

"Enterprise 2.0, or the corporate adoption of social networking tools, has been considerable due to their effectiveness in cutting across barriers in large corporations."

- Rachel Dappe, IDC

Enterprise Snockles ESn8 – Social is good for Business™

Social networking sites have been attracting massive online audience. In June 2007, total US visitors to social networking sites totaled 115 million, or 64% of total U.S. Internet users.

MySpace, the largest social networking site, attracted 70.5 million unique visitors in June 2007. Facebook is the fastest growing social network (103%); it attracted 27.9 million unique visitors in June 2007.

Social networking makes business sense. Smart corporations are looking at ways to reap the maximum benefits from this social networking revolution. Corporate Social networking is fast catching on.

The Dow Chemical Company, JPMorgan Chase, Eli Lilly and many others have implemented social networks in their organization.

Corporate Social Networking allows employees to find information quickly, share ideas and innovation, collaborate online, form interest groups, and increase efficiency and innovation.

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Introduction: Are you logged in?

"Enterprise social software will be the biggest new workplace technology success story of this decade. Thirty percent of enterprises will openly sponsor internal MySpace-like social sharing spaces to help employees find others with similar interests, skills, backgrounds and experiences."

- Gartner

Social networking has taken the world by storm. Social networking has been growing tremendously over the past three years and has become a popular form of information distribution and consumption. Social networking has everyone from kids to teens to professionals to the baby boomers hooked on to it.

The ability to socialize and share experiences, photos, videos, etc. with the help of simple tools has been the key to the success of social networks. According to comScore, about 65% of the American Internet audience and 60% of the global Internet audience currently visit social networking sites. Approximately 40% of users of social networking sites are between the age group 35 and 54.
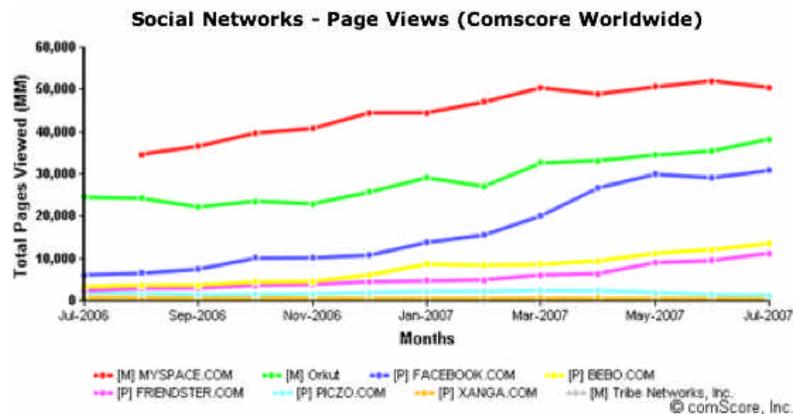
Source: Techcrunch.com

The digital-savvy Generation Y employee is not far behind. More and more 30-plus employees are signing up with MySpace or Facebook or LinkedIn. They see this as an opportunity to share their experiences with colleagues and friends. Over 11,000 Ernst & Young workers have Facebook accounts. But many organizations have been blocking social networking sites on security grounds, as they are worried that information and sensitive data might be leaked.

Social Networking has hit the workplace. Companies like Dow Chemical, Starcom MediaVest, Lockheed Martin and JP Morgan Chase have created their own social networks. Says Starcom MediaVest Group, Vice-President Pam Daniels: "Giving our employees a way to connect over the Internet around the globe made sense- because they're just doing it anyway."

What is Corporate Social Networking?

A Corporate Social Network is an association of all the employees of an organization; the employees and other constituents of the organization come together to share their views, ideas and work.

Corporate Social Network is mostly a closed and secured network, which is a part of the organization; it may be closed to outsiders, or they may get only limited access. Corporate Social Networking allows users (employees) to build their profiles, update them regularly, interact, and share ideas, photos, videos, etc. External constituents like vendors or suppliers may have access to a Company's Social Network.

Corporate Social Network could also be used to look up employees, share information, collaborate at work, form interest groups, etc. A Corporate Social Network encourages knowledge sharing within peers and builds trust among them. It also allows member to share information in real time and thereby create business value.

Why Corporate Social Networking?

The Generation X and Y have grown up with mobile phones and the latest gadgets. They are used to keeping in touch with their friends and family through SMS and email. They have also adopted social networking and are heavy users of social networking and professional networking sites like MySpace, Facebook, Orkut, LinkedIn, etc.

The business environment has also changed, and today we are conducting business in a rapidly changing economic scenario with information obsolescence a key concern. Today accompanies are focusing on innovation to drive business growth; differentiating on the basis of service, increased level of automation and working in teams have become a norm. Today corporations are much more dynamic and they are looking at ways to allow their employees and other stakeholders to work in a more seamless manner; faster information flow, better networking, sharing of ideas and thoughts, and collaboration among them is critical to maintain leadership position in the industry.

Corporate Social Networking is allowing companies to manage their information flow better, share new ideas and collaborate at work. It is also allowing companies to stay in touch with their key stakeholders - customers, vendors and suppliers. Employees are getting an outlet to create their own blogs, share their views, ideas, photos, videos and network with each other, which the HR of many companies claim to have resulted in better networking among employees, sharing of information and ideas, employee satisfaction, recruitment of new talent and retention.

What are the advantages of a Corporate Social Network?

"Companies that invest time and energy to understand their networks and collaborative relationships greatly improve their chances of making successful organizational changes. Formal organization charts mask the invisible networks that employees use to get things done."

- The McKinsey Quarterly

Corporate Social Networking has clear benefits. Corporates both big and small can utilize them to improve their CRM, KM, HR and increase overall business efficiency. Corporate Social Networking could enable companies win customers, support innovation, create greater cohesion and foster collaboration. Corporate social networks help in reaching across silos, or through an extended enterprise of suppliers and customers.

Corporate Social Networking could benefit corporates in a number of ways. In a large organization, or in an organization that is spread across the globe in different countries, it could enable users to find people and information quickly. It would also aid an organization to create common culture and understand communication patterns within the organization.

Following are the benefits of a corporate social network:

1. **Build Better Customer Relationships -** Social networking will enable companies to have and maintain better customer relationship and in the process bring down support costs. It could aid companies in obtaining feedback on products and services, test new products, enable networking among customers, streamline processes, improve support services and thereby develop a sense of belonging among the vendors and customers, which would translate into brand loyalty.

2. **Improve Knowledge Management -** Corporate Social Networking could be a wonderful tool in knowledge management and sharing. Managers and employees can use the service to search for people from different domains, regions or

departments and seek help online. It will reduce the time of searching and communication among the constituents significantly. Users can also use the social network to collaborate and work online and share documents and file through the network.

3. **Facilitates Recruiting and Retention -** According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development almost half of UK employers offer staff an incentive to solicit job applications from friends and associates. Corporate Social Networks will aid companies in having a robust referral program in place and thereby cut recruitment budgets significantly. Another advantage is the sharing of the values and culture of the organization with the prospective employees. A network of retirees or alumni could also prove helpful in spotting and attracting talent, and in some cases getting back some of the top employees.

4. **Increase Business Opportunities -** Companies grow through innovation and social network in the corporate space could foster innovation, aid collaboration, and accomplish more in a shorter span of time. Social networking could make both inter and intra organizational communication easier and effective. Social networking when integrated with CRM aids faster closure of deals. Social networks could create new business opportunities by enabling companies to win new customers. The social network of a company could be expanded to include partners, associates, suppliers, vendors, key customers, and industry bodies and thereby expand the business opportunity. Former employees or alumni of organizations can be utilized for new business purposes.

5. **Build Community -** Corporate Social Networking is a wonderful way of spreading the corporate culture within the organization, attracting talent, receiving referrals, sharing pictures, videos and light moments within the organization. In the age of the Internet, the corporate social network could be much more effective than the corporate newsletter. It could help in developing interest groups based on professional as well as hobbies or interests within the organization. A combination of video, photos and blogs will definitely increase employee participation. Corporate Social Networking could help organizations to engage all generations in sharing their time, talents, expertise and experiences so that collaboration, high morale, and productivity become prevalent.

6. **Enhance Productivity -** Social networking helps in increasing productivity by disseminating information quickly, allowing users to communicate and collaborate online. Online social networking increases the density of connections among individuals and drives business value.

7. **Speed-up Innovation -** Corporate Social Networking can aid in speeding up the innovation cycle as it allows sharing of information and ideas among users. Bouncing ideas among employees is very simple in a Corporate Social Network and the community feature encourages participation. The informal nature also allows people from different levels to freely participate in it thereby increasing participation.

What is Enterprise Snockles?

Enterprise Snockles is a pioneering product in the social software for business category and amongst the world's first on-demand and mobile enterprise solution for business social networking and collaboration.

A Snockle is a message that one posts on his/ her own Snockline (a.k.a. message board), which is broadcast to all the people who are tracking this person. Similarly, a person receives Snockles from people whom he or she is tracking. Snockles can also be sent and received via SMS after one registers his or her mobile phone.

Snockles Enterprise incorporates the features of social network along with microblogging and mobile communication. Snockles Enterprise has been developed keeping in mind the need for social networking for organizations. Snockles Enterprise will allow an organization to have its own closed or open social network.

A closed social network will allow employees within the organization and vendors having access to the company's server to maintain their own profiles, upload photos and videos, make posts, have their own blogs and communicate through an instant messenger. Users can tag their posts, so that others can retrieve it easily. Discussion boards could aid in generating new business ideas, come up with quick solutions and share market related information.

The network will allow users to form groups and these groups can be formed on the basis of their work, department or areas of interest. The idea is to aid the users to collaborate and work over the Internet. We believe this could lead to sharing of ideas, increase efficiency and help in socializing among the employees. It will also help in building a better community within the organization. It will allow users to search for other users by name, location, skills, qualification, projects, department, etc. The network will aid in making networking within the organization better.

Snockles Enterprise, through its profiles will allow users to locate others quickly and expand their professional network. The Mobile SMS feature is the USP of Snockles Enterprise and we believe it could have a significant impact on handling troubleshooting and customer satisfaction.

Let's assume Bikes Inc. (a motorcycle company) has launched a bike today and a dealer suddenly discovers that there is a problem with the engine. Under normal circumstances he would have either called up the regional manger of sales of Bikes Inc. or informed the technical people in the company, who would have contacted others and informed them about the problem. It would have taken a lot of time to turn around.

Now let's assume our vendor has access to Bikes Inc's Social Network and the moment he comes across the problem he sends an SMS from his mobile to inform his peer group about the problem. Since he is a member with the dealer's group as well as a part of the other groups all the members get the message instantly, which cuts down communication time significantly.

It could also happen that one of the engineers at a dealer would have come across the problem. On receiving this SMS and having already solved the problem earlier he can respond immediately. In such a situation he can reply immediately by sending a SMS saying that it is not a problem with the engine but with the tuning of the vehicle, which could be solved easily by setting the tuning at a particular level.

Now think of the impact of these two SMS. One got the whole group informed about a particular problem that could have happened at a number of locations and resulted in customer dissatisfaction and loss of brand image. The second SMS on the other hand helped all the dealers of the vehicle to rectify the problem in a short span of time leading to quick turnaround, increased customer satisfaction and brand loyalty.

Thus SMS could be used to inform a group of users involved in a key project to update the other members through a single message instantly. This could also be used in situations where one doesn't have Internet access but needs to communicate something important urgently.

Enterprise Snockles will have bookmarking facility and allow the users to share their bookmarks within their community. Bookmarks could also be saved as 'private'. Bookmark sharing could lead others to find important information or data quickly and thereby save valuable time. Snockles Enterprise will allow users to use the planner to plan and organize their work, manage and collaborate online on different projects at the same time, share their diaries and reduce miscommunication.

What are the Features of Enterprise Snockles?

1. **Self Managed Profiles**

Users can manage every minute detail of their profiles in Enterprise Snockles. Often all details about a person (new skills/ interests/ hobbies) are not available to the organization as a whole. This feature allows the users to update their profiles speedily and in detail; and makes that information searchable through Snockles. So when people with specific skills/ knowledge are required, they can be traced across the whole organization in a matter of seconds. Individuals can also be located through a simple search based on name, location, organization, skills, reporting structure, etc.

These profiles will be portable and collect and amalgamate information from that individual's interactions with his or her associated corporate networks. It will also allow knowledge sharing among the groups.

2. **Social Messaging**

This feature brings the power of social networks to the enterprise. So even within the organization, people can interact continuously, easily keep tabs on new developments, communicate on an open platform, expand their professional networks, and share data and ideas in a group, even if they are spread across the world. Using Enterprise Snockles ensures that no internal communication leaks out, and all communication is archived for future use if required.

3. **Groups**

Groups in Enterprise Snockles give users the option to collaborate with others on various projects by sharing ideas and information with others users who have similar areas of expertise or common responsibilities. Members can easily create/ join/ search for specific Groups, depending on project requirements/ interests; and meet online to interact, irrespective of physical location. Groups can have their own blogs where members can post their thoughts and share ideas. Enterprise Snockles Groups can be public or private (within the organization) depending on specific needs.

4. **Social Bookmarks**

Social Bookmarks in Enterprise Snockles allows people within an organization to connect and work together in completely novel ways. Members can save their bookmarks

through Snockles (private or shared), so that all their required resources on the Web can be accessed conveniently and quickly. It also ensures that others with related interests can speedily locate the information required to complete their tasks. Finding information becomes easier once it's tagged and described by other users in the business network; and by searching/ subscribing to bookmarks of communities and experts, members can stay abreast of the latest developments in their fields of interest.

5. Search Social graphs

Quality relationships are one of the primary drivers of success for an individual or business. Enterprise Snockles helps you leverage the "who knows whom" social graph within your organization. Through Snockles, a user can locate and interact with experts in his/ her field, effortlessly find people (and information about them) across the length and breadth of the organization, and build closer relationships based on similar interests. This helps members to become more productive and innovative, as they are easily able to build high value networks of co-workers and customers, forming new business contacts and expanding their professional networks across organizational boundaries.

6. Multimedia (Photos, Video)

Through Enterprise Snockles, users can not only exchange ideas and information, but also share audio, video, photos, etc. Photo- and multimedia-sharing capabilities are integrated into the Snockles interface. Users can send files directly, or post them on their personal/ community blogs. Users may set individual privacy levels for their multimedia files.

7. Mobile Integration

Mobile Integration is the primary USP of Enterprise Snockles. This feature allows enterprise social networking to go beyond to the confines of the desktop and ensures that users can stay connected even while on the move. Enterprise Snockles seamlessly integrates the mobile phone and the Web for networking purposes. Users can thus get company updates in real-time both on the Web and over the phone; and they can also communicate (one-to-many) simply with the help of their mobile phones.

What are the Benefits of Enterprise Snockles?

Snockles for Enterprises provides a scalable (no user limit), on-demand (no maintenance overhead and quick go-live) and mobile phone integrated social software for businesses

to achieve the same level of collaboration and networking as with consumer social networking sites.

Snockles provides unprecedented value in unlocking individual relationships and knowledge base embedded deep within the employee hierarchies of a company.

1. Uncover Knowledge through relationships: Most businesses achieve success by the value of relationships. Snockles helps you leverage the "who knows whom" social graph within your company.

2. Discover the full potential and skill sets of your people. Allow each person to manage his own profile data to make it most current.

3. Get company updates in real-time on the Web and over the phone

4. Organize Communities within the organization to leverage project based communication and special interest groups.

5. Provide each person a social messaging platform for one-to-many communication over the Web or phone

6. Create a "kaizen" culture for knowledge management and collaboration.

7. Go beyond the PC and leverage the mobile phone as an entry point to knowledge collaboration.

Conclusion

Businesses are slowly waking up to social networking. While a large number of companies are looking at social networks as a way to reach out to its target audience, a group of very smart companies have been working to build their own social networks to allow their employees to communicate, share experiences and documents, collaborate and work online, mine for talent, discover new recruits, and easily share information.

Corporate Social Networking results in a high performing organization with the ability to innovate quickly increase productivity and hire and retain key talent. Better connectivity and networking within the employees will enable companies to search and share information and ideas, increase efficiency, create new business opportunities and provide better service to customers and vendors.

Enterprise Snockles will aid companies and its employees to share information and corporate vision, share ideas, collaborate and work online from different locations, enhance business performance, recruit and retain talent, build communities within the organization, foster a culture of innovation, maintain and update individual blogs and form interest groups.