

The practices of the social intranets

Usage, benefits and success factors

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PREFACE

During the autumn of 2011 the research team CORE at Mid Sweden University began a new research project on social media and internal communication in collaboration with companies and public organizations. We were interested to see a new research domain emerge as an increasing number of companies are contemplating how to use social tools in their internal communication. This is an interesting, but also challenging, field to study, because up until now, not much research has been published and the researchers have not yet been able to develop coherent theories.

The project has been funded by Arla, PostNord, Sigma, Sundsvall Municipality and Sveriges Informationsförening (The Swedish Information Association). Two studies have been carried out within the frame of the project: one field investigation of pilot groups at PostNord prior to the introduction of social features in a future corporate intranet, and one field investigation with people in charge of intranet/internal communication in organizations that have been using social media in their internal communication for some time. This scientific report presents the results of the field investigation carried out with the intranet/internal communication managers. In the appendix of this report there is a summary of the results of the PostNord study. The research team consisted of Kicki Strandh, Lena Lundgren and Catrin Johansson. Kicki was mainly involved in the PostNord pilot and Lena in the field study which is accounted for here. Catrin's part was that of initiator, advisor and research leader.

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INTRODUCTION

Social media is a top priority for many organizations today. Executive groups as well as hired consultants are trying to find out how to use applications such as wikis, YouTube, Facebook, Second Life and Twitter in a way that is benefits the the organization's different operations (bin Husin & Swatman, 2010; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009).

While social media have been used in the organizations' external communication since 2005, it was not until the last few years that social media have been incorporated into the internal communication, into the organizations' intranet. Many organizations are ready to incorporate social media into the internal communication, but when they turn to the research community to find out the best way of carrying out such a change process, they are unable to find much support. There is, however, some research on social media in the organizations' external communication. For example, Kaplan & Haenlein have described the emerge of the social media and Pérez-Latre, Portilla & Sánchez Blanco have carried out a review of what has been written on this subject so far (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009; Pérez-Latre, Portilla, & Sánchez Blanco, 2011). It is also possible to find some texts on the external social media, such as MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, but these texts are often guides on how to use the tools or how to best use the new technology in marketing (Alba & Stay, 2008; Boyd, 2006; Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Ellison, Steinfeld, & Lampe, 2007; Whitlock & Micek, 2008).

It is more difficult to find texts on using social media in internal communication, or on social intranets, which is another name they go by. We have only been able to find two or three articles, which indicate that the research in this field needs to be developed (Beverly, 2010; Tredinnick, 2006; Vaast, 2004).

The aim of this report is to provide know-how to the organizations who are about to introduce social media into their internal communication, and who would like to learn from the researchers' as well as other organizations' experiences of this type of work.

The empirical results have been collected from a field investigation with intranet/internal communication managers in nine Swedish organizations, who use social media in their internal communication. These results have been compared with the field theory described below. We will begin by reviewing the concepts and digital tools used in the field, and move on to discuss the research results published up to now. Next, we will present the field investigation and analyse the results in connection to the theory. Finally, we will make a comprehensive discussion, which will also include recommendations for organizations who are about to implement social intranets.

SOCIAL MEDIA THEORIES

There are not a lot of scientific articles describing social media in general and their applications internally in particular. In the following we describe the most important of these.

Social media, Web 2.0 and User Generated Content

Kaplan & Haenlein (2009) explain the connection between the three concepts *social media*, *Web 2.0* and *User Generated Content*. Social media has its origin in Usenet, a worldwide system where Internet users were able to write messages that anyone could read. Usenet was created in 1979 by Tom Truscott and Jim Ellis, but 20 years earlier, Bruce and Susan Abelson had started *Open Diary*, a website gathering Internet users writing journal entries in an online *community*. At the same time, the term weblog gained popularity. One year later, the term *blog* was created when a blogger divided the word weblog into two, as a pun. Due to the increased access to high-speed Internet the concept evolved into social network sites such as *MySpace* (2003) and *Facebook* (2004).

Web 2.0 is a term first used in 2004 to describe the software developers' and the end users' new way of using the World Wide Web. Content and applications are no longer created and published by individuals, but by the users' continuous and collaborative modification of the new *platforms*. There is a set of basic features that are essential for Web 2.0 to work, such as Adobe Flash (a popular method of adding animations, interactivity and audio/video streams to websites), RSS (Really Simple Syndications, used to publish content which is frequently updated in a standardized format) and AJAX (Asynchronous JavaScript, a technique making it possible to update all online content without affecting the appearance of the entire page.) Web 2.0 can be seen as the platform for the development of social media.

User Generated Content (UGC) is a term that was first used in 2005 and described the different types of media content that are publically available and that have been created by end users. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2007), UGC has to meet three basic requirements:

1. The content has to be published in a publicly accessible website or in a social network that is accessible for a select group of people (e-mails, in other words, are not included).
2. The content has to demonstrate a creative presentation (i.e. forwarding someone else's newspaper article without modification or comment is not included).
3. The content has to have been created by amateurs (content produced for the commercial market is not included).

Definitions of social media

One definition of social media is *"anything using the Internet to create a dialogue between people"* (Breakenridge, 2008). The Swedish National Encyclopaedia provides a somewhat narrower definition: *"a blanket term for channels of communication allowing users to communicate directly with each other through, for example, text, images or audio"* (NE, 2011).

Based on the above descriptions of Web 2.0 and User Generated Content, Kaplan & Haenlein (2009) arrive at the following definition of social media:

Social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (UGC).

In this report we use Kaplan & Haenlein's definition of social media.

Intranets, Enterprise 2.0 and social intranets

In the mid 1990s, organizations began building electronic networks for their internal communication. These came to be known as intranets (cf. Internet) and have three components: hardware, various web standards, and various virtual meeting places for information and communication (Gonzalez, 1998). Heide describes an intranet as (Heide, 2002a, s. 15):

/... /an organization's internal Internet, protected from the public Internet through firewalls, i.e. software preventing trespassing of unauthorized within the computer network.

At the beginning the intranets were created by technology enthusiasts (Bark, 1997b), and evolved into indispensable tools of communication for the organizations. Today, nearly all organizations have set up their own intranets as a part of the internal communication (Bark, 1997a). As the intranets have become essential for the operation, it has become an issue for the executives of a number of companies and organizations (Heide, 2002).

Up until now the intranets have mostly been used as a support for the formal, downward communication in the organizations. The closest the intranets have been to serve as social tools is as a public place to post information on social activities. The organizations are now facing the challenge of making informal social software collaborate with the formal systems, i.e. the already existing intranets (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011). Niall Cook, head of marketing technique at the communication consulting firm Hill & Knowlton, says that the most important task for the organizations right now is to reduce the gap between the formal and the social communication in the organization.

Enterprise 2.0 is a blanket term describing the usage of social platforms within, or between, different organizations and their partners and clients.

The intranet could be such a platform within the organization and that is when it is known as a social intranet (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Cook, 2008).

Definition of social intranet

We would like to define social intranet as:

An intranet containing several different social features where the employees are easily able to make contact, communicate and share knowledge with each other.

In this report we use the above definition of social intranet.

The users

Forrester Research (Jackson, P, Gownder, J.P., Wiramihardja, L, 2009) divide the users of social media into the following five categories:

1. *The Creators* creating what other users consume. They create the intranet, write blog entries and articles, record and publish videos etc.
2. *The Critics* react to what the creators produce. They comment on blog entries, review videos and articles etc.
3. *The Collectors* collect links, photos, videos, and use RSS feeds (a way to subscribe to information).
4. *The Participants* use social media to network by having profiles on sites such as Facebook. They are often active on these sites.
5. *The Spectators* are pure consumers of information; they read blogs, listen to podcasts, watch videos, read discussion group posts, but they do not write or create anything themselves. They make up the largest group of users, in Sweden as well as internationally (Carlsson, 2010; Ström, 2010).

Innovations and early adopters

Social media can be seen as an innovation and therefore the users of social media can be categorized according to how quickly they adopt the new innovation (Rogers, 2003):

- *Innovators* (2.5% of a population) are the first to adopt a new innovation. They are often well-educated, inclined to take risks, and have an interest in following the state-of-the-art development.
- *Early adopters* (13.5%) is the second group to adopt a new innovation. Early adopters are often well-educated and serve as social leaders.
- *Early majority* (34%) are cautious users avoiding taking risks.

- *Late majority* (34%) are sceptic and traditional.
- *Laggards* (16%) are the last to adopt an innovation.

Unlike the very first customers investing in a new and risky product, early adopters do usually not require any changes in the specification; they are just interested in setting the trend by being the first to have and use the latest. Early adopters are usually popular individuals, well-educated and seen as role models in their circle of friends (Rogers, 2003). Rogers has created a five-stage timeline describing how an innovation is spread to an individual or in an organization. The five stages are:

1. *Knowledge*: The user learns about the existence of the innovation and its function.
2. *Persuasion*: The process where the user is persuaded of the benefits of the innovation.
3. *Decision*: The user's decision to adopt the innovation (purchase, introduction of an idea etc.)
4. *Implementation*: The user begins to use the innovation and attempts to make use of its benefits.
5. *Confirmation*: The final stage where the user uses the innovation to its fullest potential (Rogers, 2003).

Reasons for the popularity of the social intranets

There are three reasons why the social intranets have become so popular with organizations:

1. Simple, free of charge publishing platforms where the users are able to express themselves (e.g. blogs).
2. Tools allowing the users develop their own ideas in gradually emerging structures (rather than forcing already complete structures on the user).
3. Tools making filtering and sorting the quantity of new information quick, easy and efficient (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; bin Husin & Swatman, 2010).

There are six components that Enterprise 2.0 technologies should include; Search, Links, Authoring, Tags, Extensions and Signals (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; McAfee, 2006; Passant, Laublete, Breslin, & Decker, 2009).

Search implies that finding what the user is looking for should be easy using search words and keywords. The intranet user uses search words and keywords rather than navigating through the intranet (McAfee, 2006).

Links show the user what is important and at the same time they help the search engines to determine which pages have the “right” content.

Previously, only a few people were able to create links (McAfee, 2006), but today all users are usually able to create their own links. The importance linking increases when all intranet users share their links (Cook, 2008).

Authoring refers to the users' desire to express themselves. On the social intranet the user is able to express their ideas and knowledge through comments and links. The more users using the intranet to express themselves, the more likely the intranet's content is to change from static information to organic communication where knowledge is shared (Cook, 2008). Blogs are used by employees who would like to express themselves individually. The blog content increases as the blogger authors new entries and the blog's readers comment on the entries. Wikis are used by several employees who would like to collaborate on the content in different texts. They do this by revision and additions in texts authored by others (McAfee, 2006).

Tags are created by the users and are one-word descriptions of the content of an intranet page. The tags are used to categorize the content on the intranet, something several studies have revealed to be requested by the users of the intranet (McAfee, 2006).

Extensions are a combination of Tags and Authoring and Links making it possible for different systems to find connections between the information and suggest other information that could also be of interest. Extensions make it possible for tags to spread knowledge throughout the organization and not just in the small groups in which it was authored (Cook, 2008; McAfee, 2006).

Signals are used when interesting content is authored or updated. The user decides which content should be notified via RSS feeds or e-mail messages. The signals will help the user to filter and sort the information feed of the organization (McAfee, 2006).

4C

Cook (2008) has categorized Enterprise 2.0 and its elements in what he calls "The 4 Cs". The four Cs are Communication, Cooperation, Collaboration and Connection and the two dimensions are Social Interaction and Formality. Within all areas there are applications for internal as well as external social media. The four components and the two dimensions are illustrated below.

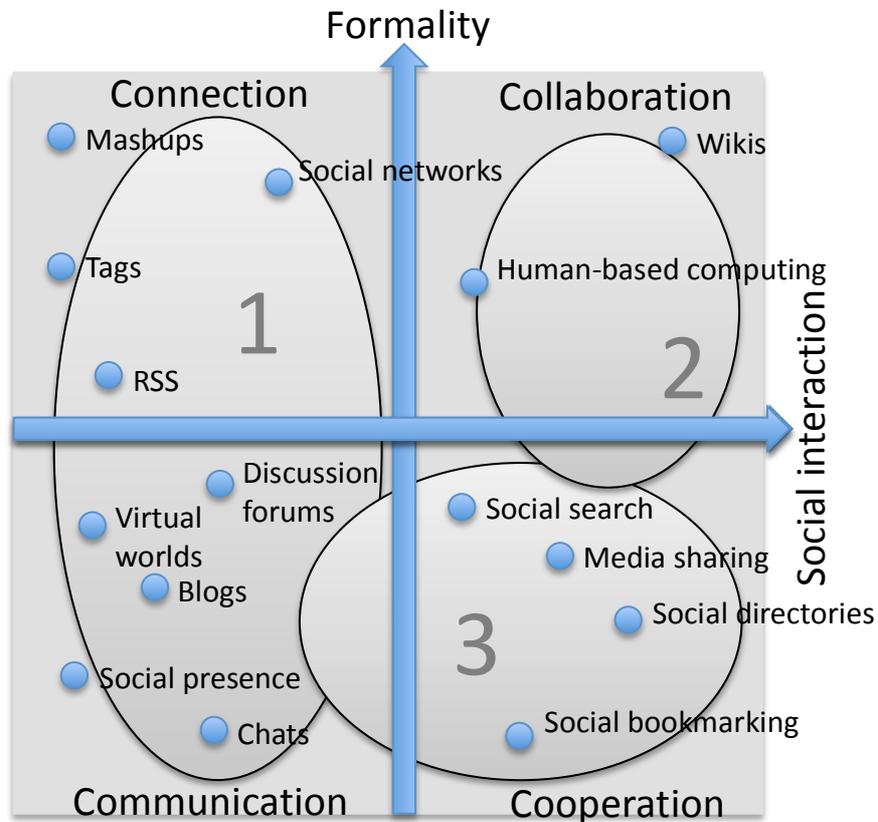


Figure 1: The 4Cs and various Enterprise 2.0 technologies, from bin Husin & Swatman, page 277.

The three circles in Figure 1 show three different cultures in an organization:

- A combination of formal and informal culture focusing on the performance of the individual while recognizing that problems at times are solved by a group
- Strongly formal, collaborative culture
- Strongly informal, collaborative culture (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Cook, 2008).

Using the parameters **Formality** and **Social interaction** in the above figure, organizations are able to choose the social software best suited for the organization and its culture. If the organization's culture corresponds most closely to what is described first in the list, then chats, blogs, and discussion groups should be the social software most appropriate for the organization.

The new social tools of communication and collaboration should also be useful when there is a need to implement an organizational change; where an organization, for example, is trying to encourage the employees to move from an individualized to a group oriented culture. Using the two parameters Formality and Social interaction in the figure above, the figure suggest that a development from chats, blogs, and discussion groups towards wikis, sharing media and social directories could contribute to such an organizational change.

Communication

The first field of the figure is “Communication”, which includes social platforms helping the users to communicate with each other through text, image and sound. The paradigm is: I tell, you tell. It could be discussion groups, blogs, and chats making it possible for the participants to share information, ideas and opinions.

Discussion groups are where discussions takes place with a history of what has previously been discussed. The subjects and entries are displayed in chronological order forming a thread. In an intranet, a discussion group could support spontaneous communication (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Cook, 2008).

Blogs are a type of online diaries where different people reflect on what is going on. The blogger often allows the readers to comment on their entries. In organizations the blogs are used to convey information concerning the organization as a whole, and they are also used by research groups to keep the group members updated. A blog may have one or several authors and, as the information is saved, the blogs contribute to an intellectual value even if the original authors were to leave the organization. In this way, the blogs encourage learning and systematic gathering of information; in other words, Knowledge Management and Business Intelligence (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Cook, 2008).

Chats make real time online communication with another individual or a group possible. The users are able to create their own list of contacts, adding friends and colleagues to the list. A status feature shows the user as available or away from the computer. This implies that the communication is an ongoing conversation between those displayed as available at the same time. Most chats are text-based, but there are also features for audio, image and video (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Cook, 2008).

Social presence is real-time communication including updates on the user’s location, as well as information on what the user is currently doing. The updates are sent and received online, via e-mail, text messages or other computer or mobile applications. In an organization, a collective environment including social presence could be an easy way to keep track of what the employees are doing and where they are located.

The social presence makes it easier for the users to send the right information to the right person, at the right place when they are working (Cook, 2008).

Virtual worlds are a computer-based environments resembling reality. It is where the users meet to interact with each other. The user is represented by a small graphic (an avatar) controlled by the user. Up until now, virtual worlds have mainly been used in games, but they are becoming increasingly common in social networks where the idea is to meet and communicate (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Cook, 2008).

Cooperation

The second field in the figure includes software making it easy for the users to share content with each other in a structured or unstructured way. Cooperation means informal collaboration, for a shorter period of time without any defined goal. Cooperative social tools are used to share and spread the content of social networks. The greater the user's activity and participation, the greater the value for the individual user as well as for the organization as a whole (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Cook, 2008). The paradigm is: 'Write your own, comment on others'.

Media sharing means that the user shares images, videos, documents or presentations. The material is shared on the user's own webpage, in a social network or through any other channel where it is directly displayed, without the user having to redirect the traffic to the source. In this way for example videos can be effectively used in in-house training. In order for the tool to become as effective as possible, the users should not only be able to publish, but also download the material, in addition to being able to tag and comment on the content. Also, the tool has to be able to find connections to other related content and the user has to, without difficulties, be able to filter the information, for themselves as well as for others (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Cook, 2008).

Social bookmarking is a feature where the users are able to share interesting links with each other. It is also possible to tag the content of the link which facilitates finding relations and connections. Cook claims that there is a great potential in an increased shared knowledge within the organization, but so far, no software that is good enough has been developed for the business community. Social bookmarking is also a way of finding colleagues with a certain expertise or similar interests within the organization, as the users are likely to share links that they find interesting, or link to areas where they have specific knowledge (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Cook, 2008).

Social directories are knowledge banks the users fill with content such as books, music products or academic works.

Because the employees enter the content, with information on competitors, suppliers, customers and contact information, it is not necessary for the organization to appoint someone to manage and update the information (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Cook, 2008).

Cooperative tools work best in organizations with an informal culture where the aim is to encourage interactivity. For more formal organizations, the collaborative tools are a better choice, because it is a way to share content with one another in a more structured fashion (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Cook, 2008).

Collaboration

The third field in the figure includes collaborative tools that are used to solve problems when working with others. The aim of collaboration is to collect knowledge from the collaborative process. The paradigm is: 'Write yours, write others'.

Wikis can be compared to a webpage that can be edited by anyone who has been given the authorization to modify the page. What is special about a wiki is that to make revisions, only little technical knowledge is required. In addition, all changes made are saved, making it easy to revise or remove faulty changes. Wikis are used by organizations mostly for documentation, as it is information that is continuously altered. One of the benefits of wikis is that several users are able to edit the page at the same time, in real time. This makes wikis an effective tool to integrate with organizations' already existing intranet or document management system (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Cook, 2008).

Human-based computation is a technique that is different from the regular technique where humans enter data into a computer and the computer calculates a solution to the problem. Human-based computation means going through the process once or several times more; people are expected to provide the computer with additional data, which result in a new calculation once processed etc. This way of working is quite complicated and used e.g. when calculating genetic algorithms for the programming of artificial intelligence in robots and computers (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Cook, 2008).

Connection

The fourth field in the figure, "Connection", includes tools requiring little communication between the employees, and the interaction does not have to be direct or continuous. In connection the interaction takes place over a long period of time by several users sharing content with each other. Different platforms clarify and expand the users' social network, either by making connections or by real time messages. The paradigm is: Making a connection, staying connected (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Cook, 2008).

Social networks enable virtual meetings between the users. The user creates a profile and through this profile the user is able to make friends with others.

Those who would like to become friends get in contact via a friend request that has to be accepted. In this way the user is in control of which friend activities he or she would like to follow, at the same time the user is able to control who is allowed to follow and contact his or her own profile. It is also possible to create networks and groups in the same way. Social networks mix personal and professional interests, which is one of the reasons behind its popularity. Within organizations, those who often work individually benefit from the social networks.

Through the social networks these employees are better able to feel a sense of community, at the same time as knowledge can be preserved and shared in the organization (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Cook, 2008).

Tags are labels used to make it easy to search for and find information over time, at the same time as they help the user to organise and group content (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Cook, 2008).

Search and social search helps the user to search for information within the organization. Research has shown that the employees are often dissatisfied with the internal search engines because they are unable to retrieve the best and most relevant hits. The search engines on the Internet are considered to be working well, while searches in the organization's databases and intranets are not working quite as well (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Cook, 2008).

RSS (Really Simple Syndication) or Syndication is used to filter information feeds. The user subscribes to feeds or subjects they are interested in. The content of the subscription is delivered via e-mail, phone or another type of feed. In this way the user need only take part of the information he or she is interested in, and does not have to search for it or read through all information on the subject. Using RSS, the user is able to receive notifications when something is updated in e.g. different projects or teamwork. Without the RSS technology the blog and wiki users would not have received messages on updates and without these updates the users would not have been commenting or contributing with their own information, which is the core of the social networks (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Cook, 2008).

Mashups are used to combine different online services. This provides the organizations with the opportunity to merge external services with internal services they have developed themselves. The content of the different services are combined to create an added value for the organization. By for example combining the company's customer register with Google Maps you are able to see where the customers are located (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Cook, 2008).

Benefits of social intranets

McAfee notes several benefits of Enterprise 2.0 (McAfee, 2006). Benefits for the users are that they are able to collaborate with one another without hierarchical or geographic boundaries; to quickly find information and help; and there is a decreased risk of duplication of work. This way, organizations as a whole are able to become more innovative; the collective intelligence in the organization is collected in one place, and information and knowledge is always up to date. This means that the users are able to find more accurate answers to questions asked.

Disadvantages of social intranets

Of course, social intranets are not only beneficial – there are also a number of disadvantages, or risks, connected to them. A few of these disadvantages are legal risks, security and privacy, industrial right, copyright, the resistance of the employees and abuse of the intranet (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Hoover, 2007; Steinhart, 2009).

Legal risks include violation of the law and could for example be inappropriate, abusive language in blogs. It could also be false information, abuse and discrimination which, in a worst case scenario, may end up in court (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Hoover, 2007; Steinhart, 2009).

Security and privacy includes confidential or sensitive information becoming available for users who should not have access to this information (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Hoover, 2007).

Industrial rights and copyright risks include copyrighted material or material without individual permissions being published (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Turban, Bolloju, & Liang, 2011)

The resistance of the employees means the employees choosing not to use the social intranet (Bennett, 2007; Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Turban et al., 2011). This is prevented through training and access to support (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Raman, 2006; Turban et al., 2011)

What is implied by *abuse of the intranet* is that the users' involvement in the social network takes time away from regular work tasks. This could in some cases lead to abuse (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Turban et al., 2011).

In an article published 2010, Computerworld addresses three additional risks of social intranets (Gaudin, 2010):

1. That the employees are left with too little time to think and relax, because they are expected to be online and active all the time.
2. That the employees feel isolated when collaborations and contacts take place online rather than in real life.

3. That it is not the “right” colleague, i.e. the one with the most knowledge, who gets involved, who makes the most noise and who is influential on the social intranets.

The real experts might not be doing all the talking in these communities, [...] The experts might want to be working in their labs or working with customers, and they aren't posting all the time. Just because someone is posting doesn't mean they're an expert and everyone should be taking their advice.

The problem that the person who makes the most noise may not be the most knowledgeable is nothing new, but in a physical meeting, together in a room it could be easier to activate the quiet ones, than it is in a digital forum.

Dealing with and preventing disadvantages

One way to deal with the disadvantages of the social intranets is for the organization to develop rules describing the use of the intranet. The employees should receive training in and informed of the rules as well as the consequences of violating the rules. Someone should also be appointed in charge of the social intranet. A well-planned implementation phase is important for the social intranet to become a success, but follow-up checks and actions are also important following the implementation (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; Turban et al., 2011).

We know that the executives have a fear of letting the employees contribute content in the organization's social intranet without any restrictions. There are many questions: “What if someone posts abusive or illegal contents?”, “What if the managers are publically criticized?”, “Will it facilitate leakage of critical information?”, “What happens if the employees contribute false information in a discussion group?” and “Will the employees spend too much time ‘socialising?’” These are theoretical risks, but rarely any real risks, says McAfee, who despite many years of research has encountered only a few horror stories. He mentions four factors contributing to the fears not coming true:

The users use their own names on the social intranets, which makes public criticism of colleagues improbable. If, however, it were to happen, the employer will have to educate the user on how to behave in the future. Because the users of social intranets often feel a sense of solidarity with the other users, they will react quickly if someone does not abide by the norms. Counterproductive contributions are usually met with a flood of responses on why the content is inappropriate or why it is against the rules of the social intranet.

Informal leaders exert great influence on how other users behave and may serve as a counterweight to the more formal leaders.

Because the Internet has been used for over a decade, most users know how to behave correctly in social media (Berner & Wildt-Persson, 2011; McAfee, 2006).

Summary

The above outline shows that the technical development in this field has led to a number of new tools of communication making it possible to spread information, transfer knowledge, and create shared information and knowledge.

In addition, the literature search shows that so far, research results on how these tools are used and their effects have not been published to any greater extent. This is obviously because the social media has quite recently been developed and the research on how they are used develops in parallel with the actual use.

Consequently, we conclude that there seems to a great need of studying the social intranets' features, usage, possibilities and problems and discuss their benefits for organizations.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this report has been to contribute knowledge to the organizations about to introduce social media into their internal communication and who would like to learn from researchers' as well as other organizations' experiences of this type of work.

This report aimed to address the following research questions:

1. In what way/s are the social media best implemented into the internal communication?

In order to find an answer to this research question, the following questions have been asked:

- Which social media do organizations use in their internal communication work?
- How are they used?
- Who uses them?
- What are important factors for whether or not they are used?
- What is the value in/benefits of using them?

2. What are the success factors when you are about to implement social media into the internal communication?

In order to find an answer to this research question, the following question has been asked:

- What has worked well when implementing social media into the internal communication?

3. What problems/risks should be considered when implementing social media into the internal communication?

In order to find an answer to this research question, the following question has been asked:

- What problems could the use of social media lead to?

METHODS

The aim of this substudy was to select a few organizations that have come quite far in using the new social communication tools in their internal communication and study how the tools are used and how the employees are perceived them. However, it turned out to be quite difficult to find organizations who have used these tools for a longer period of time and who were also able to participate in a study.

We had to think again; this time we chose to interview people in charge of the intranet/internal communication in a number of organizations where social media has been used in the internal communication for some time. Initially, approximately twenty organizations were contacted through e-mail and asked whether they were using social media in their internal communication (which was a prerequisite for participation in the field study).

A few of the organizations had not yet begun using social media in the internal communication and some of the organizations were otherwise unable to participate in the study.

Finally, the following nine organizations remained: IBM, Electrolux, Securitas, SBAB, Wallenstam, Lindex, Umeå Energi, Kommunal (the Swedish Municipal Workers' Union) and Toyota Industries Corporation. During the period 22 November – 7 December 2011, phone interviews were carried out with the people in charge of the intranet/internal communication at these organizations. The below examples are based on their answers to the interview questions.

SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

In the following we describe how social media is used in the internal communication in the organizations who participated in the study. We will also draw conclusions and compare the results with the theory.

What social media is used

The most common social function in the investigated organizations' internal communication is what is called "my pages", which is used to find the contact information for all employees of the organization. In a joint second place we find discussion groups and virtual meetings, which in the majority of the organizations is included in the employees' daily arsenal of social media tools. Blogs and microblogs share third place followed by various types of collaboration spaces. Wikis, chats and social bookmarking are used in barely half of the organizations.

One of the interviewees tells us that they have a social feature called idea generation blogs. In these blogs it is possible to vote on blogs and generate ideas in different fields where you would like to contribute. The blogs can be closed or open for all employees. In this organization there is also something called a media gallery where it is easy for employees to search for, and upload, pictures and videos. A feature called Activities is connected to activities you often carry out with one or several people. The Activities feature is connected to your e-mail which means that if you receive an e-mail message, you are able to drag it to the Activities space and invite others to a conversation instead of carrying out the conversations through e-mail, which is quite common today.

The users

It appears as if the employees of the investigated organizations represent all five user categories. According to Carlsson and Ström, the *Spectators* constitute the largest group of users, but in the social intranets, most users have moved up several categories and ended up in the *Participants* and *Creators* category; they are using their own profiles, participating in discussion groups and virtual meetings as well as writing in blogs and microblogs. We assume that as the social intranets evolves; the users' roles will develop from passive observation to active participation and the more "social" the intranets will become.

Aims of the social media

The different organizations have expressed a number of reasons for introducing social media into the internal communication. These different reasons can be divided into the four categories *Strengthen internal communication*, *Build organizational culture*, *Fulfil employee demands* and *Inspiration*.

In the category *Strengthen the internal communication* we will find the objectives aiming to streamline and strengthen the internal communication of the organizations. There is a desire to reduce the e-mailing, be able to quickly find employees with the right qualifications, facilitate contact regardless of geographic location, share information and share, exchange and build knowledge in the organization. One organization aspires to make all employees share their information and has a somewhat peculiar objective: to save and share the unstructured information that could be very useful for other people (i.e. information previously available in notebooks, binders or on someone else's hard drive).

An analysis based on Cook's 4Cs shows that it is possible to decrease e-mailing by using discussion groups, chats and blogs. Social presence and social networks will also facilitate contacts regardless of geographic location. Information is quickly shared using media share, social bookmarking and wikis, and knowledge is shared through social directories, mashups and human-based computing. Saving and sharing unstructured information is facilitated by tags, RSS and the features search and social search.

Belonging to the category *Build organization culture* is a desire to strengthen the sense of community, building culture by conveying the management's aspirations, creating an added value for the organization's members and creating a meeting place for employees, members and elected representatives.

Trying to place the different parts mentioned as belonging to build organizational culture into Cook's 4C diagram, it would seem as if the organizations will transform from a combination of formal and informal culture focusing on the individual (Communication and Connection) towards a strongly informal, collaborating culture focusing on Cooperation.

In one organization the objective was to *Fulfill employee demands*, which originated in the results of an evaluation of a blog project that lasted for six months. In this project a new employee blogged each week, and in the evaluation the employees mentioned that they would like additional tools to communicate with each other. That is, in this organization it was the demand from the employees that controlled the objective, unlike in the other organizations where the objectives of the social media came from the management. This demand, an interviewee claimed, was largely due to most of the employees already using social media such as Facebook and YouTube on the Internet.

Demands from the employees who are already using social media on the Internet, points to the users of these media having moved through one or more of Rogers' stages of adaption. Facebook, with its many users, has probably managed to already include innovators, early adopters, early majority and late majority, i.e. approximately 80% of the potential users.

The people in charge of communication in this organization have a great advantage when they implement the social intranet, because a majority of the employees are already active in other social media and should have a lower learning threshold to cross. This means that the introduction of the social intranet should be quicker and more time could be spent on getting the laggards of the organization on board.

In the category *Inspiration* there is really just one organization who had anything to contribute, but because the answer is so interesting, it has its very own category. The objective here is to increase the scope of inspiration and coincidence in the employees. By offering a place to socialize in a virtual, social way on the intranet it is possible to suddenly discover that “*Oh, this person is coming to Sweden to work with something I’m interested in*” and so you get in touch and are able to start a collaboration. These coincidental discoveries and meetings, they say, could lead to innovation as well as new business.

To increase the scope of inspiration and coincidence in the employees could be considered highly ambitious and, indeed, out of all the investigated organizations, it is in this organization that social media has been used the longest. Employees and organization should have had the time to move through Rogers’ five-stage innovation timeline describing how innovation spreads from one individual or organization: Knowledge, Persuasion, Decision, Implementation and Confirmation.

In the final stage, Confirmation, the innovation is fully used, which is a prerequisite for succeeding with the objective increasing the scope for inspiration and coincidence in the employees.

How the social tools are used and by whom

Several of the investigated organizations have not yet produced any usage statistics, as the implementation of the social media into the internal communication was quite recent.

In one of the organizations, the IT department started using social media, while the remaining departments were able to join if they wanted. There has been no attempt to force social media on anyone; rather the different departments have been allowed to report their interest in using them. All departments are not on board yet, but out of those who are using social media, approximately 30% use them daily and 90% use them from time to time.

Another interviewee reports that while 60% of the users are using the intranet on a daily basis, only 10% use the social media regularly.

The answers show that implementing a social intranet could be quite a lengthy process.

If you apply Rogers' innovation stages on the two organizations above, innovators, early adopters and part of the category early majority have been able to assimilate the social intranet while the perhaps most difficult categories to get on board, late majority and laggards, still have to be coaxed to cross the initial learning threshold.

In another organization, more than half of the employees have registered a profile of some kind. There are thousands of wikis and several hundred communities where the employees work in groups. Wikis, communities and blogs have been popular ever since these features were introduced. The person in charge of internal communication believes that development is possible because the employees keep on learning more, and says:

I interpret it as a learning process because we have not had an intranet before. In this case we released the entire intranet, based on social media and user generated, at once and of course this requires a certain time to learn before you are fully able to grasp how it works. At the beginning we got a lot of questions about simple things such as login and how do I fill out this field. Just very basic things. The few questions we get today are about a lot more complex matters. How to improve the structure, for example. Today, the tool is used in an entirely different way.

The discussion above shows that Rogers' five-stage timeline describing how innovation spreads from an individual or organization corresponds well to what has happened in this organization. From having been in the Implementation stage, where the user puts the innovation to use and tries to make use of its benefits, the users as well as the organization has begun to move closer to the Confirmation stage where the innovation is used fully.

In one organization the guest blog serves as something that brightens up the day and as a way to take a break from the regular work tasks. While the CEO blog contains practical information, the guest blog has more of an entertaining function. The CEO blog and the guest blog are the most frequently used features in one of the other organizations. The guest blog is by far the most popular on the intranet where 28% of the visits, at any given moment, are to the guest blog.

The person in charge of internal communication tells us that since March 2011, when the social media was implemented; approximately 50 employees have been guest bloggers, which has been a terrific way to promote the intranet and communication within the organization as a whole. The guest bloggers have, together with a few so-called early adopters, become ambassadors of the intranet and the social media.

The CEO blog is not as popular as the guest blog, largely due to quite infrequent updates.

The shared corporate blog is the most popular blog, says one of the interviewees from another organization.

This blog started in February 2010 and during the first six months, each week saw a new employee blogger. Today, the blog is regularly “dusted off” in connection to an event or if there is something special happening. The blog is equipped with a comment feature, but it is rarely used because the comments have to be written in English. This is why the department of communication has added a “like” feature in the shape of a heart which the user may click to show that he or she has read the information. It is a quite frequently used feature. During the week of 28 November 2011, between 400 and 500 out of the 1,000 employees (in actuality around 5,000 employees as the manager is registered as one logged in and the entire work group as another) visited and read the blog on a daily basis.

The answers from the two organizations above show that the employees are curious to know what other employees have to say about themselves in different blogs. Therefore, guest blogs, where the employees are able to write about themselves and their work, could be a good way to lure the users into a new social intranet. In an organization with three hundred employees, where one employee guest blogs each week, approximately one in six employees have had the opportunity to write in the guest blog within the course of a year. If the department of communication is strategic when it selects who should write in the guest blog, the department will make sure that each department or division is represented by one guest blogger during the first year when the social intranet is implemented. This way you can be quite confident that all employees have visited and read the guest blog at some point during the year, because the employees generally do want to read what the colleague they already know has written.

Hopefully the visit to the guest blog will make the employees interested in using the other tools of the social intranet. Another advantage is that the employee who has guest blogged is more than likely to serve as an ambassador of the social intranet within the organization.

Another interviewee says:

The discussion group is what is most popular and the only thing that works reasonably well. But our work groups are incredibly inactive.

The discussion group is frequently used by its members as a place to ask quite specific questions and get an answer from someone who is an expert on the subject. But mostly it serves as an internal discussion group for employees and elected representatives who, for example, discuss how to recruit new members. The new members registering for the discussion group are aged up to 40 years old.

The person in charge of the internal communication guesses that those who registered recently are people who do not have a personal contact with the organization yet, but who would like to know more. The organization has approximately 15,000 registered users out of 500,000 potential users.

In a discussion group it is possible to support spontaneous communication in an intranet, but a prerequisite is that the users have already found the social intranet. The above is an obvious example of this. Among the organization's employees and elected representatives, who are already "in the system", the discussion group is quite frequently used. But out of the organization's members only 3% have found their way to the organization's social intranet (which largely consists of the discussion group). In order to reach their 500,000 members, this organization has elected to, from now on, focus on external social media, rather than internal (see below).

One of the interviewees has observed some differences in the usage of the social media depending on what work you perform. The more knowledge intensive work you carry out, such as that carried out by for example consultants, salespeople and business developers, the greater the inclination to use tools such as social media, because their work benefits from this use. The more repetitive the work or processes you perform, for example dealing only with travel expenses, the less you use this type of tools. A certain connection to age has also been observed. Younger employees adopt the social media quicker than those slightly older. But otherwise no difference in e.g. gender or level of education has been noted, other than if you have a higher education degree or qualification you are unlikely to administer travel expenses and invoices.

If the above discussion is true, that would mean that it could be useful to identify older employees and professional groups performing repetitive tasks in order to deploy special resources when implementing a social intranet. In this way the people in charge of communication would be able to help these groups to more quickly overcome the initial learning threshold.

Factors having an effect on whether or not the social media is used

The factors having an effect on whether or not the social media is used seem to depend on the type of organization and user. A few of the interviewees claim that an interest for the social media as well as for the information found there is what is most important:

The main factor is that you are used to other social media. Those using our own community the most are those using other social media a lot.

She has also noted that their discussion groups are used in order to feel less lonely in the professional role:

But also those feeling very lonely in their work place use social media a lot, that is something we have noticed. To make contact with others or to have social contact at all.

In this organization it seems as if social media is able to contribute to minimizing the gap between the formal and social communication, which is consistent with Cook's advice. The social media is sometimes used more as a way of creating social contacts rather than a way to take part of the organization's formal communication.

For the organization using their "social net" to collect the unstructured information of the organization, the most important factor is to be able to quickly find what you are looking for. This makes a good search engine the most important factor and the goal is for it to work almost like Google. But there has to be something to look for as well, it is necessary to collect a critical mass of information so that performing a search becomes interesting. But when the users notice that it is possible to find a lot of good information on the "social net", it becomes a positive spiral which will generate more frequent use.

The answer from another of the interviewees is in the same spirit; the social media is used to be able to quickly find an answer to any questions you may have and to share your experiences with others. User-friendliness is also mentioned as very important, because for many users this is a new medium you are learning to use.

An important part of the user-friendliness is that the social media should be adapted to the target group, meaning that they could be quite different in different companies and operations, especially when the social media is used internally.

When it comes to social media, it is in many respects the users themselves who generate the content and this makes it important for the medium to be adapted to the user. Otherwise no content will be generated, that is a simple enough equation.

That an efficient search engine is important corresponds to bin Husin & Swatman's third reason for Enterprise 2.0 gaining popularity in organizations, as Enterprise 2.0 and social intranets offers "*tools making it possible to filter and sort through the quantity of new information quickly, easily and effectively*" (bin Husin & Swatman 2010).

The need for an efficient search engine is connected to the user-friendliness and that it is the users themselves who generate the new content in the intranet. The more people who are able to generate new content, the greater the quantity of information on the intranet and this will result in an increased demand to be able to filter and sort.

In one organization, it is believed that the social media will not be used if the user does not feel the support of the organization:

Unless the executive group and key managers tell them to use the tool, then the rest of the organization won't be using it either.

In many cases, it could be the executive group's fear that the social media will take time from regular work, or that criticism will be publically displayed, that are the underlying reasons to why the managers do not publically endorse the new tools. But that is only because of an inability to see the benefits of the new ways of working in the long term perspective. The benefits of knowing where your colleagues are and what they are doing (through status updates), to find people with the right skills or getting help to solve a problem through a discussion group, will no doubt make work more efficient. At least criticism published on the social intranets has a sender, which cannot be said for the criticism surfacing as gossip.

Factors having an effect on the usage of social media can be summarised by the interviewee who believes that it is about self-interest:

It all comes back to self-interest. That goes for everything. If you are going to use anything with intensity and enthusiasm it has to serve a purpose, otherwise you will use it as little as possible because someone told you that you have to.

In order to highlight the personal interest the employees could have collaboration without hierarchical and geographic boundaries, that information and knowledge is always up to date and that the collected knowledge will result in more precise answers to your questions.

One factor resulting in the social media not being used to a great extent is that it takes time to learn how to use the new tools. One interviewee mentioned that they are still trying to get the users to write status updates rather than sending e-mails, an example of how it takes time to get the users to learn how to use the new features.

As previously mentioned, it is worthwhile for the people in charge of communication to identify groups that could have difficulties getting over the initial learning threshold for the social intranets. Once the employees are over the threshold and are able to start using the social tools more actively, they will also be able to take advantage of the benefits of the social intranet, such as writing status updates rather than sending e-mail messages.

The benefits of social media for internal communication

The greatest benefit the organizations have been able to observe is that it facilitates contact within the organization. The status updates allow the user to see what the added friends on their contact list are recommending.

You are also able to ask questions in chats and in discussion groups to quickly find someone with the right skills to answer. It is also possible to make inquiries for the skills you are looking for on the microblog. One organization has already been able to see the business advantages of this:

We've had commercial use of finding the right person with a direct connection to the use of social tools and business prospects.

The above responses demonstrate that one of the greatest benefits of the social intranets, making contacts and building networks, has already paid off in several of the investigated organizations.

The involvement has increased in the organizations due to better being able to spread of information and knowledge; the increased knowledge what work others do has facilitated collaboration and communication between different departments. But sharing knowledge is not something that comes naturally to all users, according to one internal communication manager.

People cannot be forced to share knowledge, they have to want to share

While it takes little time to adopt the benefits of the social intranets such as making contacts, it will most likely take longer to get the knowledge sharing to really take root in the different organizations. The reluctance to share knowledge could be connected to previous experiences of organizational changes, where sharing knowledge is precisely one of the prerequisites to be able to downsize.

The social media has led to an increased dialogue and openness bringing people together. Several users have mentioned that they have learned things they did not previously know. The e-mailing is reduced, but only in the long term. Some find that it is too soon to talk about business advantages, but in one organization it is believed that the capacity for innovation has increased as a result of work being more efficient. In another organization it has been noted that the new ways or working makes “the sum of the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts”:

When the organization learns this new way of interacting and communicating, that's when things start to happen, that is the thing.

The different organizations in the study have of course reached different stages in the use of the social intranets and because they have not been used for long it has not yet been possible to make any comprehensive evaluations of the effects, even if positive tendencies as a result of the usage have been observed.

One organization has an official “thank you system” as one of their social intranet features. It is a kind of confirmation system where you are able to choose to make the thanks received from other users visible for the user only, for the manager or for everyone. Choosing to have the thank-yous visible for everyone could help build a good reputation in the organization and that is valuable in itself, even if it does not result in any business advantage.

This is a benefit aiming to build the personal brand internally, an area not mentioned in the literature dealing with the social intranets, but which has been quite relevant when it comes to external social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

A benefit one of the organizations has observed is that the users have been able to post extremely specific questions and received answers from experts in the area, “*But we could just as well do that on Facebook*”, says the interviewee.

The answer confirms that the users are able to quickly find help and information in the internal social media. Hardly a surprise, the final comment comes from the organization who is likely to shut down their internal community in favour of Facebook, but the answer also points to how the internal and external social media is able to complete (and replace) one another, depending on the organization and the aims of using the social media.

Success factors

Most organizations mention benefits and efficiency as success factors. It is not enough that social media is cool; they have to contribute something as well. For example, you want the employees to stop e-mailing, with mailing lists of hundreds of people, and instead start a conversation in a public or private community.

As previously mentioned, it will take time and commitment from the people in charge of communication to get the users over the initial learning threshold. But once the job is done, the organization will be able to see an increased efficiency as a result of the social intranets and with an increased efficiency, benefits will follow, many of the interviewees claim.

One factor of success, mentioned by several of the organizations, is that the managers take the lead and show their employees the benefits of the social media:

If your manager is unable to see the benefits, then you will be hard pressed to start using the new media.

If the managers realize that the social intranets do not take time from of the regular work and that there is no need to be afraid of anonymous criticism of the organization, they could become the most important ambassadors of the social intranets of in the organization.

Several organizations claim that using *ambassadors* (often early adopters, but in some organizations also guest bloggers) to convey a positive message on the social media, has contributed to the success. The ambassadors have been in charge of in-house training and answered questions on functionality, which has facilitated the work of the communication department in many ways.

Especially in major organizations the department of communication could be able make good use of ambassadors in the form of managers with a positive attitude, early adopters and guest bloggers, as they are able to relieve the people in charge of communication by giving in-house training and answering their colleagues' questions.

Information and education have been success factors in several of the organizations. One of the interviewees says that one of their main success factors has been that they developed good training material so that those who were not that used to working with computers also "got on board". It is also important that time is reserved to go over the new tools, otherwise the employees will never start to use them, she continues.

Information and education could be compared to the first stage in Rogers' innovation process called knowledge. In order to be able to adopt a new innovation the users have to know that it exists and what problem it will solve, that is, what its function is. This is exactly what the departments of communication would like to achieve with the help of information and education. This first stage is necessary for the users to eventually reach the confirmation stage, where they are using the social intranet fully.

Many organizations name *persistence* as a success factor. As with anything new, there is always an initial resistance that the users have to overcome in order for the social media to become successful. In part it has to do with having to change people's habits and in part their way of thinking, their mindset. To get everyone on board, even those resisting the change the most, persistence is necessary through the implementation phase. Lacking persistence, there is a great risk that only those already converted get on board and the effect of the social media will not spread as far as intended. To *encourage and motivate* the users is something that many departments of communication have been working with and it has, in the long run, turned out to be successful as they have been able to note that also the most reluctant have changed their behaviour.

Persistence, encouragement and motivation are connected to the initial learning threshold mentioned previously. The interviewees have, just like Rogers, come to the conclusion that all employees have to be on board through the confirmation stage in order for the social intranet's benefits to be able to be used fully.

One of the interviewees has an excellent example of how even the most reluctant user can be converted, if this person is able to see the benefits of the social intranet:

I have an amazing example a no-saying little rascal in Germany who barely came to meetings and was just being so difficult. But with this new tool he's everywhere and he wants to help and he's got a lot of knowledge in many areas. He builds his network through skills and by being available. /.../ He still does not want to upload a picture of himself, but he's very confident in conversation. If, for example, we publish an article that no one reflected on previously, he may comment "who wrote this?" and "this is a shot in the head" or "do people not understand that we react this way when we read this?" I, as internal communications manager, will think "Whoops, I didn't think about that". I'll edit the text and he's involved in the process and we'll ask him if it feels better now and he says that it feels better. In this type of respectful conversation everyone grows. They grow in their role.

One of the interviewees says that because social media is user generated, everything has to be on the users' terms. If you are going to be successful you have you cannot have any restrictions on the tool, no sensors or editors should be managing the material, the information has to be able to flow freely and all the time. This means that you have to develop a tool that is so attractive that the users will adopt it and that you will have to investigate what the organisation's employees actually need. There could be unknown needs that would facilitate the workday for the user – this is what has to be investigated.

The answer shows that the interviewee has an insight into what has made the social intranets successful in organizations, that is, user-friendliness. Because the success of the social media depends on how active the users are, it is important that the tools offered have the demanded features combined with these being easy to use. To find out what tools the users need could require resources because the users do not always know what is possible and what tools there are. In cases such as these you simply have to sit down next to the employee and ask how they work and how this work could be made easier. A preliminary study of this type will no doubt pay for itself once the new tools are implemented, because the user will benefit from them from the very start.

What problems may the use of social media lead to?

One problem discovered in one of the investigated organizations is that the social media could have a *dividing power*. Some will end up in the group who uses the social media and others in the group who do not use social media and a conflict between the two groups will easily arise.

The problem is illustrated in Roger's five categories of how quickly the users till adopt a new innovation. Even if you have been able to get the first three categories, innovators, early adopters and early majority, on board, you still have half of the users (late majority 34% and laggards 16%) to convince of the benefits of using the social intranet. This is where persistence becomes important, mentioned by several of the interviewees as a success factor, in order for all employees to start using the social intranet, which reduces the risk of conflicts between users and non-users.

In several organizations there is already *a lot of unstructured information* to manage. That is when a good search engine becomes quite useful, but first and foremost the users have to learn to link information to each other in order to reduce the amount of data in the network.

Bin Husin & Swatman mention tools making it easy and efficient to filter and sort the quantity of new information as one of three reasons for Enterprise 2.0 becoming so popular with organizations. Experience tells us that difficulties filtering and sorting information in different intranets is one of the main complaints from the users, so it should not be difficult to get the users involved in contributing to reduce the information feed by, as suggested, linking information to each other.

Another problem that may arise if the organization does not adopt the social media as a natural way of working is the risk of *social media becoming on-the-side systems*. Therefore it is important that someone owns the information and is ultimately responsible for the processes and routines, that someone could, for example, be the person in charge of communication.

Language barriers have turned out to be a problem in one of the international organizations. But even if English is the corporate language, the employees are encouraged to use the language they know the best when it is what is most practical.

We try to encourage sticking to one language everyone is able to understand. But you are allowed to communicate in your own language within the country or in groups as well. /.../In this new platform we allow people to communicate in their own language. The main reason right now is that you benefit from this and in each country there is a large group of people who don't speak English particularly well.

In another organization like-buttons in the shape of hearts have been added to the comment fields, because it was discovered that some users were unwilling to write comments in English, which is the corporate language. Clicking a like-button is easier, which means that there is an additional way for the department of information to get feedback on what the users would like to see more of.

The problem described is interesting for two reasons: First, we have not encountered anyone who has mentioned English as a corporate language as a problem in connection to social media before.

Second, the statement shows that the users learning to benefit from the social media is of higher priority than using the common corporate language.

One of the interviewees received questions on why this is something you should be doing work; social media is something you do on your own time. To her, it has been difficult to argue what benefits are generated for the company by the employees spending work time on social media. In another organization there is a similar problem, it is believed that “traditionalists” fear people wasting time on status updates. The interviewee believes that people’s attitude to social media could become a problem. In one organization the problem of not being able to control what is written has been discussed, as all employees, basically, become representatives of the organization. The interviewee thinks that this has to do with being unaccustomed to the media. The more accustomed to social media people become, the less likely this type of anxiety, but for the time being a lot of people are worried that criticism could be put into writing and spread quickly, internally as well as externally.

As previously mentioned, the fear that social media is taking time away from regular work tasks is often based in an inability to see the benefits of the new way of working in the long term. The work is likely to become more efficient if you know where your colleagues are and what they are doing through status updates, if finding people with the required skills is easier or if receiving help from a discussion group is possible.

When it comes to the fear of not being able to control what is written, we would like to repeat McAfee’s reasons why these fears generally do not come true; most users know how you should behave as many of them have been using social media on the Internet for years; the users are not anonymous but using their own name and the informal leaders as well as other users will make sure that no one violates the common norms.

CONCLUSIONS

In the following the three research questions will be answered. The answer to the first question “In what way/s are the social media best implemented in the internal communication?” is summed up in these ten points, which could serve as recommendations:

1. Find out what features are needed to facilitate the users’ work. The users do not always know what is possible and what features are available.
2. Inform the user of his or her self-interest in the social intranet, e.g. being able to express yourself (through blogs), to build your own brand internally, tools helping the employee to develop their ideas in gradually growing structures, tools making it quick, easy and efficient to filter and sort information, facilitating finding the right skills, collaboration without hierarchal and geographic boundaries, that information and knowledge is always up to date and that the collective knowledge results in more exact answers to any question.
3. Make time for the users to learn the social features, it will make work more efficient further down the road.
4. Do not be afraid to let the information flow without restrictions. Because all users use their own name, the risks of anonymous attacks and the spreading of rumours are practically eliminated.
5. Identify groups that could have difficulties getting over the initial learning threshold of the social intranets. Invest in extra resources to train and motivate these groups when implementing the social intranets.
6. Make sure that the social intranet first and foremost is used to create social contacts and have the organization’s formal information come in second place.
7. Use guest bloggers to coax other employees into the social intranet (most efficient for organizations with up to a few hundred employees.)
8. User ambassadors (early adopters, guest bloggers and employees who are already accustomed to social media) to lead in-house training and answer user questions.
9. Make sure that you have an efficient search engine; the information feed will increase as the users generate more information.
10. Teach the users to create links instead of sending e-mails.

The answer to the second question “What are the success factors when you are about to implement social media into the internal communication?” is in many ways similar to the answer to the first question and can be summarized in the following eight points or recommendations:

1. Make the users the starting point by not having any restrictions on the tool or the information flow. This means that you have to develop a tool that is attractive enough for the user to adopt, which is done by finding out the actual needs of the organisation's employees.
2. Demonstrate the benefits and efficiency of the tool – it is not enough for the social intranets to be cool, they should contribute something too.
3. Let the managers take the lead and show their employees the benefits of the social intranets.
4. Information and education – develop good training material so that those who are not that used to working with computers also get “on board”.
5. Make time for the users to go through the new tools, otherwise they will never start using them.
6. Encouraging and motivating the users has turned out to lead to good results in the long run, as it has led to the most reluctant also having changed their behaviour.
7. Use ambassadors (usually early adopters, but also the guest bloggers in some organizations) to convey a positive message of the social media. The ambassadors could be in charge of in-house training and answer questions on functionality, which could facilitate the work of the communication department in many ways.
8. Persistence – as with anything new there is a certain resistance the users have to overcome in order for the social media to become successful. In part it is about changing people's habits and in part it is about changing their way of thinking. If only the already converted get on board the effect of the social media will not be as spread to the extent that was intended.

The answer to the third question “What problems/risks should be considered when implementing social media into the internal communication?” could be summarized in the following six points:

1. *Questioning of the benefits of the social media and a fear that the users will waste their time making status updates.* This problem is often based in not being able to see the benefits of the new way of working in the long term. The people in charge of communication have to inform the employees that the work will become more efficient as a result of knowing where a colleague is currently located and what they are doing through status updates, being more easily able to find people with the requested skills or being able to find help to solve a problem in a discussion group.
2. *That you cannot control what is written as all workers become representatives for the organization.* This problem is usually related to being unaccustomed to the medium.

3. The more accustomed to social media the user is the less the anxiety, but for the time being many are worried that if there is criticism it will be put into writing and spread quickly internally as well as externally.
4. *The dividing effect of social media.* Some will end up in the group using social media and some will end up in the group not using social media and a conflict easily arises between the two groups. This is where persistence, as previously mentioned, becomes an important factor in making all of the employees start to use the social intranet, reducing the risk of conflicts between users and non-users.
5. *The great quantity of unstructured information that has to be managed.* An efficient search engine may come in handy, but mainly the users have to learn to link the information to each other to reduce the amount of data in the network.
6. *The risk that the social media become an on-the-side system.* That is why it is important that there is always someone who owns the information and that someone is ultimately responsible for making the processes and routines integrate with other communication systems.
7. *Language barriers* (mainly in international organizations). To get started using the social intranet, the organization could choose to prioritize the users learning to benefit from social media rather than using the common corporate language, in for example discussion groups and chats. Adding a like button to the comment section is one way to get feedback even if the user does not want to write in the foreign, corporate language.

DISCUSSION

A social intranet facilitates for the employees to contact, communicate, collaborate and share knowledge with each other. The social features support the employees' greatest communication need, that is, having access to the right information and the right person in their day-to-day work, unlike the traditional intranet mainly supporting formal top-down information. A common problem is also that the information on the intranet that the users need is difficult to find. The social media will fill a void in many organizations.

But in order to succeed with a social intranet, special efforts in training and information are required, such as persistence and patience. It takes time for people to change their behaviour, and for them to start doing things differently they have to realize the self-interest in the new way of working and they have to be able to see examples of how their own work is facilitated by the new features. The substudy made at PostNord (see summary below) confirmed this clearly; the use of the different features in a pilot was very low. But the most frequently used features had a very clear connection to self-interest for the user.

Measuring the benefits of a social intranet is not entirely easy. In this study the respondents have shared their experiences mainly based on the feedback they have received from their employees in their day-to-day work. Therefore, there is a great need of making proper evaluations to be able to draw conclusions on the benefits of the social intranets for the organizations today. Additional research of the users' opinions and perceptions of the new social features is needed to be able to draw any conclusions on the future benefits and values of the social intranets for the organizations. Right now, we are only at the very beginning of the development.

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APPENDIX – SUMMARY OF NEEDS ANALYSIS FOR POSTNORD

Mid Sweden University has carried out a pilot study for PostNord aiming to investigate the need of social media in the internal communication at PostNord and specify what demands the tool to be used should be able to meet. This is a summary of the report “*Social intranet for PostNord – Needs analysis and evaluation of pilot groups at the introduction of social media into the internal communication at PostNord*”.

In 2010 the Swedish postal office Posten AB fused with the Danish postal office and formed the Nordic logistics group PostNord. During the first two years the two companies had no common intranet and therefore there was no common information platform within the corporation. During 2011 a pilot study for a single corporation intranet was carried out.

In the pilot study it was established that there was a great need of better support for collaboration, sharing knowledge and communication between the employees. However, the pilot study did not go into details on how to design this support and what tools should be included and how they should be implemented and used. The aim of the investigation was to identify PostNord’s need of social media in the internal communication and based on these needs identify which features PostNord should use in order for the needs to be met. Another aim was to give recommendations on the introduction of these tools.

Why social media at PostNord?

PostNord’s goal and intention in introducing social features on the corporate intranet is, according to Robert Zetterlind in charge of the intranet, to “connect people”, facilitating for the employees so that they will feel as if working is easier and so that they will be able to reach decisions and carry out tasks more quickly. Zetterlind also believes that social media could contribute to the development of services by more people being able to give their input on improvements and the development of new services. Other benefits mentioned by the internal communication employees at PostNord are:

- Sharing knowledge – not just opinions
- Speeding up the conversation process
- Finding out things you otherwise would not
- Being able to get help quickly

The idea is that in the future all workers will be able to take part of the intranet; today, only employees who have their own computer login are able to take part of the intranet, i.e. managers, team leaders, the executive management, officials, administration, project leaders; the so-called *knowledge workers*.

These constitute approximately 10,000 of the corporation’s approximate total of 40,000 employees.

Method

Several of the features in question (e.g. blogs, collaboration rooms, wikis) were already available in the standard design in the platform PostNord planned on using (SharePoint 2010) and could be installed without delay. But what is important in this study is to find out what features PostNord are in need of and, perhaps even more importantly, how these should be used.

Therefore, we chose to carry out this study as a pilot study, where, to begin with, a number of social features were introduced as a pilot based on SharePoint's standard design which was then tested and evaluated by a number of groups. Based on the pilot the features went through some adjustments and adaptations prior to a large-scale implementation. Before the pilots were developed, interviews and workshops were carried out in order to investigate the participant's work situation and also what possibilities they saw in using social media in their daily work in order to determine the content of the pilot.

In this study there were four pilot groups. The members of three of these groups have similar work situations in that they are officials/managers with access to their own computer and mobile phone. The fourth group is different from the other three in that these people are active in the core business driving cars and delivering mail. They do not have their own computer and while they do use mobile phones, they are only used for making phone calls and sending text messages. The first three groups are located in Sweden while the fourth group is located in Denmark.

Results

The results show that the three groups of officials imagine similar possibilities in using social media in the internal communication: they would like to use social media in order to facilitate collaboration, reduce the e-mail flow and increase sharing knowledge. The Danish group does not need these tools for collaboration to improve, but in order to more quickly get access to necessary information in their daily work. Today, that information is delivered orally or written on notice boards. The group of managers also expressed this need for their employees.

Low usage

Overall, the usage of the pilot was low; partly due to heavy workload, but also because of the thresholds to adopt new ways of working. The feature most frequently used during the pilot was the blog. Using the blog was a simple way for the groups to publish and start a conversation.

All groups felt that working with the pilot was good: testing in real life something that they had heard of in theory only.

Most found the features to be quite easy to use, but the navigation and design were, in some cases, found difficult to use. The duration of the pilot was perceived as too short. The groups felt that more time was needed to adopt a new way of working.

Benefits and possibilities

The groups felt that using social media in the internal communication offered great opportunities for themselves as individuals, for their corporation and for PostNord as a whole:

- Support processes (for example collaboration, case management, pilot studies, quality, time keeping, meetings)
- Knowledge bank
- Decrease the event management
- Get help in daily work
- Increased dialogue
- Increased competitiveness
- Expand collaboration with others
- Build a closely connected corporation
- Work information
- Quicker and simpler to reach out to the employees
- Greater comfort, participation

Problems and fears

Even if the groups were primarily able to see the opportunities the social media offered, they also expressed certain fears. One of them was that on the executive level you will want to have everything in place before starting up, while they themselves believe that it is possible to model and change as they go along.

The fact that most employees of the corporation do not have their own computer is also a problem. Another problem that could arise is that information that is not supposed to become public becomes public. This where it is believed that guidelines, as well as checkpoints, are needed.

That social media takes time out of the regular work tasks could also be a problem, but it is also believed that this is a problem that will solve itself. In addition, someone mentions that this is already being done today anyway.

The language could be a problem. It is important to be allowed to write in your own language. Another fear mentioned is that people will not want to become visible in the organization.

Starting to use for example “My page” means “outing” yourself and your skills and there are people who simply do not want this.

Today, there is a culture implying that all messages should be very accurate and regulated before they are communicated. This is something that could prevent the spontaneous conversation required in the social media.

Conclusions

Because the social tools were not used to any greater extent during the short test period, it is difficult to draw far-reaching conclusions based on the pilot study. The period is also characterized by a heavy workload.

But the low usage is another important result in itself, showing the difficulties in changing behaviour. In a situation where the employees are under great pressure it becomes more difficult still. Being busy means avoiding all thresholds; it is easier to do it the way you always have. It can be concluded that the pilot has been carried out during a period that was not favourable for trying out new communication tools, and that may have made the threshold for trying out something new more difficult to cross than usual.

Despite the low usage, the study led to several interesting results supported by previously carried out research, mainly by the field investigation accounted for in this report. Based on the success factors described in it, it is possible to draw a number of conclusions.

Benefits and efficiency

In the field investigation described in this report it was evident that the tools have to contribute something to the employees in their daily work. During the pilot study the blog was what was most frequently used.

The reason for this is because the blog filled a need and supported an already existing process. The executive group was able to start communicating with each other more easily and get away from information and communication having to be e-mailed. Also for the Danish group the blog filled a void, but here there were other obstacles to consider: accessibility for employees out in the field.

Executives take the lead to demonstrate benefits for employees

This is something all pilot groups have pointed out as extremely important. The executive group realizes their responsibility and point out the importance of taking the lead and showing the way.

One of the other groups included the team leader in the pilot, who was also one of the respondents in the evaluation. She is very clear on how she cannot expect the employees to be active unless she is too.

Using ambassadors

Using ambassadors, early adopters (Lundgren et al., 2012), to send a positive message about the social media is something that has also been demonstrated by this study. Those participating in the pilot could be said to be ambassadors for the future implementation.

During the pilot, moderators were appointed in each group (excluding Denmark). This seems to have worked best in the executive group, where the moderator has been active and in different ways encouraged the others.

Information and education

A certain information investment is needed for the new intranet in general and social features in particular. This has been pointed out especially by one of the groups. Education is needed, and preferably on regional level across the divisional boundaries.

The Danish mailmen received information of the existence of the blog on a piece of paper including instructions of how to get there. Here, additional information efforts could be needed on behalf of the executives in order to demonstrate what benefits the mailmen could have from taking part of the blog content.

Persistence

It takes time to get everyone on board and for them to change their behaviour. This is confirmed by this study. The duration of the pilot was very short and took place during a busy work period. Great changes in behaviour cannot be expected under these circumstances.

One of the mailmen, interviewed during the evaluation, pointed out that it takes time to learn new things: the blog had just started up and the usage will probably increase in time and more and more will discover it.

The behavioural changes are based on encouragement and motivational efforts and also by letting it happen on the users' terms by not being too controlling. This study confirms that encouragement is important: the executive group, where the moderator had this role, also had the highest participation out of the pilot groups.

User-friendliness

That the features are easy to use contributes to success. This is pointed out by a few of the participants of the study who think certain things in the pilot have been complicated. But there is at least as many who have found the features easy to use.

Benefits and aims of a social intranet

Based on the results of the pilot, it has been difficult to draw conclusions other than referring to what the respondents had to say of what they think the positive effects the features could lead to for PostNord.

After having participated in the pilot study the respondents mainly had the same idea of what benefits the social features could contribute to as they had prior to the pilot. The pilot had no significant effect on what they believed the social features could lead to. The benefits described by the respondents of this study correspond well to what has been established theoretically:

- improved collaboration across borders (McAfee 2006)
- quickly finding information and help (McAfee 2006, Lundgren et al., 2012)
- reduced risk of duplication of work (McAfee 2006)
- quickly arriving at innovation (McAfee 2006)
- easier to contact each other (Lundgren et al., 2012)
- sharing knowledge: information and knowledge is always up to date and this information and knowledge will help the employees to find answers to their questions (McAfee 2006).
- improved work processes (Baehr & Alex-Brown, 2010)

The following benefits of social intranets have emerged in theory and the field investigation has not been mentioned by the respondents of this study to any greater extent.

- gathering the collective intelligence in one place (McAfee 2006).
- a shared understanding of the organizational roles, increased group solidarity and improved professional and personal bonds between the employees of an organization (Baehr & Alex-Brown, 2010).
- increased interest in the organization (Lundgren et al., 2012).



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