Enterprise Social Computing

Accelerating communications and innovations inside the enterprise
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Introduction

Businesses are no longer single-location, single-building entities. They are distributed across the country and around the globe. Employees need to reach across the global enterprise to contact subject-matter experts in any location — a communications requirement that can be fully supported by enterprise social computing initiatives.

Enterprise social computing, as addressed in this white paper, focuses on innovations within the enterprise. This paper does not cover the relationship between the consumer packaged goods (CPG) corporation and its customers or suppliers facilitated by digital advertising, e-commerce and marketing analytics. It explores a proven road map for integrating social computing within the four walls of the enterprise, driving an accelerated and enhanced communications culture that can help organizations leverage their greatest assets: people and their relationships.

Social computing sites and tools make it easy for employees to spend nearly 11 percent of their personal Internet time engaged in social computing. Businesses can take advantage of this interest by using social tools to connect employees, improve the creative process and increase collaboration — helping enterprises put new products on shelves in record time. Social computing solutions enable knowledge to be discovered in a timely manner, whether it is searching for a specific document, reviewing key-performance indicators or locating the right subject-matter expertise. Facilitating these connections encourages the mentoring of new employees, reduces training costs and improves the retention of knowledge within the enterprise.

Enterprise Social Computing

At its essence, enterprise social computing is the connection of people to people, data to data and people to data within a corporate environment. The discovery, connection and collaboration occurring among employees through social interaction promote the collection of ideas and the encouragement of transparent information sharing, as well as eliminate tacit information loss through long-term employee attrition.

By connecting knowledge, content and people, organizations can discover their full potential. For example, a scientist in Paris who has a proven solution for improving product quality while reducing the cost and complexity of the supply chain can instantly share ideas with her peers across the globe by using social enterprise computing. Enterprise 2.0 initiatives allow information and people to be discoverable through blogging, microblogging and communities — allowing employees to make themselves discoverable through the creation of high-quality content while adding to the corporate knowledge base.

1 ConsumerGoods.com, Social Media Initiatives, September 2010
This interconnectivity comes with low bandwidth, data storage and implementation cost, especially when compared with the value of the information being shared and the return investment gained by preserving knowledge that would otherwise be lost.

Achieving Balance with Social Computing

Traditional business models restrict innovation by using a standard chain-of-command communication structure, restricting the creative solutions and ideation that occur when users communicate across a global value chain. These models do not encourage the accelerated problem-solving that can occur when seasoned subject-matter experts can instantaneously transfer knowledge to others.

During a recent Consumergoods.com research study, almost half of the respondents attributed no revenue to their social computing endeavors, yet the majority of respondents could not quantify profitability because of their lack of formal initiatives. When queried about barriers to adopting enterprise social computing, almost 32 percent simply were not making it a priority while another 30 percent were unsure of its applicability because of a lack of available metrics. Uneasy or not, barriers to the adoption of social computing are being taken down by the need for organizations to solve business problems that stem from enterprisewide communications and collaboration obstacles.

Employees require knowledge and resources to work effectively and efficiently. They need to coordinate product development and consumer research with packaging and brand marketing to improve business efficiency and achieve an accelerated time-to-market schedule. Getting employees access to needed knowledge ultimately allows CPG firms to accelerate and execute new product launches, resolve out-of-stocks faster and better manage product recalls, all while reducing costs and increasing employee morale — in essence, becoming a more competitive and connected organization in a global marketplace.

The communications agility enabled through an enterprise social computing platform allows CPG firms to adapt seamlessly to unexpected events, including natural disasters affecting suppliers, as well as changes to local and international import and export policies.

Companies will benefit from a willingness to explore innovative new technologies and solutions to handle these issues. Social computing tools can serve as the foundation for improved remediation of difficult-to-solve corporate stumbling blocks. Corporations can engage experts inside their organizations to solve complex issues stemming from supplier management, whether they are related to governmental policy changes or severe weather conditions affecting delivery schedules. CPG executives will have more control over product execution on the plant floor. Trade marketing professionals will be able to receive more precise feedback on new-item performance at the trade. Human resources specialists and departmental managers will be able to identify and implement the procedures, tools and policies that assist them in retaining and developing leaders.

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2 ConsumerGoods.com, Social Media Initiatives, September 2010
Security and Governance with Social Computing

Two of the largest concerns with social computing are security and governance. By their very nature, social computing tools encourage both personal and professional interactions that potentially bring previously private matters into the public eye. Without governance, the release of corporate policies, procedures, critical methods, processes and intellectual property poses a security risk to organizations.

To do their jobs properly, the IT staff of CPG firms need tools that support the freedom inherent in social computing, with the governance to control the process by which potentially proprietary information is released. Securing data and defining policies for data and records management that meet corporations’ legal and archival requirements becomes one of the main drives for IT departments. CPG companies can embed a corporate code of conduct, as defined by their legal and human resources departments, into their governance policies. By empowering trusted staff members with the ability to monitor communications and provide solid consequences to inappropriate actions, companies can begin supporting corporate social computing endeavors.

Enterprise Social Computing Road Map

In 2006, 39 percent of Internet users were active in personal social media endeavors. By 2009, that number had risen to 59 percent. With the speed at which social computing is growing in the private sector, it is only natural for corporations to feel pressure to internally incorporate many of the benefits of social computing. But as with all new technologies, there will be hurdles to jump along the way.

By striving to connect people to the people, data and information that they require to do their jobs, corporations can take advantage of the available tools to promote the innovation, creativity and accelerated problem-solving that their corporate goals and their employees require. A company’s social computing experience expands as it completes the growth process from initial experimentation with enterprise social computing to a fully implemented solution. This process is broken into four phases:

- Phase I: Social media experimentation
- Phase II: Enterprise social availability
- Phase III: Operationalized social engagement
- Phase IV: Infused social culture

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3 Universal McCann Social Media Tracker, July 2009
As a corporation travels through each phase, from experimentation to the creation of an infused social culture, it will grow and change in potentially unexpected ways. These changes affect all areas of your enterprise, including the following:

- Corporate awareness
- Corporate standards
- Corporate policies and legal enforcement
- Infrastructure adoption and support
- Future planning for growth and product development
- Staffing
- Identity and access management
- Profile maintenance
- Data retention policies and systems
- Training and internal IT support
- Templates created and integrated into communications systems

**Social Media Experimentation (Phase I)**

Deploying enterprise social computing capabilities across your organization has to start somewhere. Most businesses get their start with social media tools as employees bring their fascination with Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other social applications into the office.
During the social media experimentation phase, companies will have small groups experimenting with different types of social media-based solutions on an individual or departmental level, with no corporate support or endorsement. For instance, one team leader requires each team member to be logged in to an instant messenger client each day so improved communications can occur during a new-item launch. Some document sharing might occur through a document management system, but team members are more familiar with searching for their documents or data on a variety of individual file shares. These employees have never experienced a platform for discovering information and people, and tagging documents with searchable keywords is a completely new paradigm altogether. The team still uses phone and email for the majority of its internal and external communications. At this point, governance of data and information focuses strictly on securing documents through a built-in permissions system.

These types of siloed social computing initiatives allow companies to get a glimpse at the business benefits with very little investment. Experimentation allows a pilot team to gain some visibility into a wider variety of solutions because each individual or group is choosing its own social collaboration tools. In sum, this phase enables different groups across the company to experience firsthand how communications can be streamlined, enterprise search can be implemented, information can be found in a timely and efficient manner, and undocumented data and tacit knowledge can be discovered and tagged within the corporate structure.

**Key Considerations**

Some of the key corporate changes to consider during social media experimentation include awareness of existing corporate standards and policies and an understanding of the infrastructure support that will be needed as social computing grows in your organization. As your corporate management becomes aware of the social media experimentation taking place, the corporate legal and human resources departments can begin to set standards and policies for the communications and information sharing that occurs. The IT department can begin evaluating the changes in software and hardware infrastructure that might be required. This is a stage at which every facet of your corporation is planning and evaluating the effect that social media can have on its operations.

**Enterprise Social Availability (Phase II)**

As enterprise social computing endeavors mature, social capabilities will become available to everyone inside the walls of the organization; however, their usage remains informal and ad hoc. Companies functioning at the enterprise social availability level will typically have deployed a unified communications platform across the enterprise. Using their unified communications systems, employees can locate the presence of subject-matter experts and chat with content owners through a cloud productivity and social collaboration platform. In the second phase, departments have standardized on specific social computing tools without mandating employee participation.
“There is a proliferation of tools available that enable social communications. As Bush Brothers considers different kinds of social communications, we evaluate the level of security and governance we require to ensure our proprietary information remains protected while filtering the good information from the noise.”

— Steve Savell
Director of Information Services,
Bush Brothers & Co.

Companies in the second phase are still using their document management systems to manage written documentation and information while configuring the system to work with their existing job flows. They might have created personal sites or team portals to facilitate information sharing between groups, but the system has not yet been implemented companywide. Users are no longer limited to finding data located in documents; they can access streaming video blogs, images and voice recordings that have been identified by tagged keywords that improve the speed with which information is discovered.

At this point, companies are gaining experience with social media improving the interactions within individual departments, and those department leaders are beginning to push for the expansion of these solutions across the entire corporation.

**Key Considerations**

The corporation will continue to evolve as its social media endeavors reach the enterprise social availability phase. General planning will continue. Corporate standards and policies will continue to change and grow in response to the specific types of social interactions that your company has chosen to implement. Templates will start being created that work to streamline communications in siloed departments and help reduce the noise created by people sharing information through multiple channels in a nonstandard format. The IT department will continue evaluating social media software, sometimes incorporating new, more secure solutions instead of the initial software being experimented with in the previous phase. Access management solutions based on user identity will need to be implemented, along with the need for managing those users and their personal profiles. Some users require training on tools with which they are unfamiliar. All this might require additional staff or the retasking of existing staff to cover these new job roles.

**Operationalized Social Engagement (Phase III)**

Corporations entering the third phase of enterprise social computing, operationalized social engagement, have taken the next step toward providing their employees with a fully integrated social computing environment.

At this point, blogging has become mainstream. Discussion forums support threaded communications in product development ideation and many other teams and groups across the enterprise — all of which facilitate companywide collection and sharing of knowledge. Cross-group communications are proving their worth to the entire organization by facilitating innovation within the corporation through well-structured, phase-gated ideation funnels. In this phase, it is common to see even the highest levels of executives writing and publishing
executive blogs about their experiences — creating transparency between executives and their organization while simultaneously creating a culture of accessibility and collaboration. The integration of social tools, such as chat and presence indicators, into pre-existing systems enhances the employee experience.

Companies in the third phase have been able to operationalize social computing, creating an engaged corporate structure in which enterprisewide governance controls how information is handled. Security groups provide controls for data access, and access to financial information. Every area of the company has an integrated security system that ensures that only individuals who have the correct access can open, read or modify content. This allows the department managers to focus on governing individualized communications that occur daily through email, instant messaging and microblogging, just as they monitor chats around the coffee machine today.

Corporations in the third phase are just one step below having a fully integrated solution that ties every aspect of their businesses together and merges the needs of management, security and employee relationships into a cohesive operationalized social engagement approach.

### Key Considerations

When the corporation has evolved its social media endeavors to reach the operationalized social engagement phase, it is doing less planning and focusing more on engagement. Corporate standards and policies have changed, but they are not yet stable and will continue to grow in response to the specific types of social interactions that your company has chosen to implement. Templated communications are fully implemented, although they might need to be standardized for the entire company. Staffing and training are still a concern for larger companies, yet smaller organizations might have already met their staffing needs. IT departments have identified their needs, but they might still be implementing solutions that can grow with continual corporate changes.

### Infused Social Culture (Phase IV)

When corporations reach the fourth phase, infused social culture, they drive tremendous business value and synergies across the extended value chain. A fully integrated enterprise solution has been placed at the fingertips of every employee, in every department, across a global supply chain. Enterprisewide deployment creates an enterprisewide discovery network. Virtual teams can collaborate, ideation can take place across the entire corporation, and participation in crowd sourcing allows the collection of data from divergent groups both within and without a corporation’s four walls. Companies gain the ability to identify the best individuals for a specific task, such as dealing with a public relations issue — for example, a product recall. During this process, information within the company becomes transparent. Employee morale is maintained through knowledge and facilitated by an open leadership that is engaged in corresponding with employees through blogs and community forums.

Hiring is streamlined, and the company is more attractive to new hires who can enjoy the social aspects at work with which they have become familiar in their private lives. Training on social tools is not mandated because the knowledge required for using these tools has already been learned.
When companies embrace the enterprise social computing experience, they create an environment in which information is truly empowering to their employees—driving enhanced collaboration and accelerating innovation cycles.

Key Considerations

In the infused social culture phase of social media development within a CPG corporation, the planning is complete, and the focus is on maintenance and discreet growth within highly focused areas of potential growth. Corporate standards and policies have stabilized and require only regular reviews. Templated communications are standardized for the entire company and integrated closely into the tools that are being used. Staffing and training needs should be met, although they might remain an active concern, as social tools change and evolve. IT departments have created the infrastructure that is required by social tools, but they will need constant reevaluation to maintain support levels for corporate growth.

The Future: Where to Go From Here

The future of enterprise social computing will head outside the CPG organizations and into the world of the consumer as brand monitoring and brand listening becomes a mature capability. By processing information collected from the comments of thousands of satisfied and dissatisfied business partners, retailers and customers, businesses can better align to their customers’ needs. Some would refer to this type of data collection as digital marketing; however, at some point, digital marketing and enterprise social computing will complement each other. For more information on digital marketing and e-commerce, read the “Creating a Connected Consumer Experience” white paper.

Enabling Social Computing for Consumer Goods

Enterprise social computing connects people to people and people to knowledge in a way that allows company and department managers to make information discoverable and more actionable with their corporate responsibilities. Technology makes it happen by connecting the information, whether it is documented, raw data or stored in the minds of employees. Employees at all levels of an organization use the information to enhance their job performance.

Product designers have traditionally used a lengthy design methodology that began with a design proposal and went through multiple iterations of prototyping and testing until the optimal solution was reached. Using social computing tools and technology, product designers have been able to turn this around. Now, using a test-then-design methodology, they are able to study the relationships that exist between their product and the consumer experience. Using this approach, aided by document management and collaboration software, corporations are able to collect all their research, researchers’ information and historical performance data in one location. The results allow the design team to complete new research faster and create more focused designs from day one.

IT staff have discovered that by keeping employee’s desktops loaded with current standardized software, they can improve worker productivity and create a thriving environment for knowledge sharing and ideation. By enabling enterprise social computing...
tools on the corporate intranet, employees can create collaboration sites to share documents and discussion boards to share ideas, and they can streamline business processes through the implementation of workflows. No longer are employees just creating content. Tagging tools allow document creators to make their information discoverable to people and services across the enterprise.

“If our people can collaborate better, it gives them a huge advantage in working with internal colleagues, partners and customers.”

— Randy Benz
Vice President and Chief Information Officer, Energizer Holdings, Inc.

Mobile users can use enterprise social computing tools to stay connected with subject-matter experts within the global corporation while maintaining their productivity on the road. A unified communications and collaboration solution connects and integrates voice, instant messaging, audio, video and webconferencing, providing real-time presence for geographically dispersed team members. The entire experience is seamless for all personnel.

Strategies for Consumer Goods Firms

Having strong business value, return-on-investment and time-to-value arguments for implementing new tools make change management more acceptable to stakeholders and employees. New processes might save an employee time in the future, but they typically slow their productivity today. The incorporation of enterprise social computing as a solution is an exception to this rule of thumb.

Employee Communications

Employee communications have always been a challenge. Employees require enough information to complete their jobs, yet companies need to protect information that is inappropriate for the employee’s position. New hires need to be integrated quickly without overwhelming them with the intricacies of corporate hierarchies and multiple mentors. Special projects must continue moving forward, securing proprietary information, while maintaining lines of communication to reduce the duplication of work. Companies can retain good employees by providing them with tools that make their work lives comfortable.

"Social networking tools such as presence, desktop video, community sites and unified communications allow me to collaborate with my staff, without expensive travel or long-distance calls."

— Sue Simonett
Vice President, Global Infrastructure Services, General Mills, Inc.
Enterprise social computing tools allow corporations to address each of these issues. Blogs and communities allow the sharing of information to select groups of individuals. For instance, a leadership blog can be made available to all employees while a separate management community allows for conversations among the managers.

Mentors can be made available to new hires or the newly promoted through presence-based instant chat systems. Using these systems, the mentor can be anywhere, in or out of the office, and still be available to answer quick questions or explain complex corporate relationship concepts. Mentoring can occur via telepresence, video presence and shared desktops, enabling accelerated real-time collaboration for training or any other communication need.

Employees create relationships with their co-workers by using personal portal sites, which map and analyze social patterns across organizations and recommend prime networking opportunities. Identifying employee standing within an organization lends to a sense of corporate social cohesion — an empowering way to see connections across the organization. The traditional organizational chart cannot give insight into this new world of work with the precision of social graphs. Enhancing employees’ ability to work closely together through sharing personal knowledge creates virtual teams that work effectively and efficiently together, even when they are physically remote. Corporations can drive competitive advantages by fully utilizing every knowledge resource through social concepts such as crowd sourcing.

**Product Development**

The foundation of a CPG firm is its product ideas. Without products, there are no finished goods, no sales, and, therefore, no satisfied shoppers and consumers. One of the biggest struggles for corporations is the identification of potentially successful product ideas. Social computing can streamline this process, making their results more focused on what their ultimate consumers are looking for and getting them to market faster.

Ideation — the two-fold process of analyzing a problem and, in the case of CPG companies, developing a product-based solution — can be accelerated through the use of social media tools, including enterprise search, activity streams and collaboration. Document collaboration portals will typically provide fully itemized tag-based searching, allowing for the quick incorporation of additional data — leading to improved problem-solving. Tracking streams of information, whether through document versioning or forum-based communications, allows an entire process to be recorded, maintaining the goal of the team in the event of staffing changes. Instant messaging applications allow personnel to reach out and tap into the tacit knowledge of other individuals in other locations.

When products are developed, hundreds of hours are spent focusing on branding and marketing endeavors. By incorporating divergent interest groups into the ideation and conception processes, companies can expand their pool of creative ideas, eventually landing on a marketing theme that will reach their intended audiences. Social analytics tools provide the ability to access identifiable statistics that relate to the specific social groups that a product is trying to reach. Crowd sourcing can identify how a focus group will interpret a proposed message. Microblogging can create excitement for a product before it is released. Podcasting can show the features of the product in such a way that creates interest and proves to potential consumers that they cannot live without this new creation.
Risk management is a continual concern for all corporations. At various times, the focus is on reducing financial risk during a product launch while, at others, the focus is on maintaining proprietary information and protecting intellectual assets from competitors. Employee profiles control who has access to information, allowing proprietary data to be safely stored in tagged and bookmarked locations within a document storage facility. Permissions-based activity streams allow for the right information to reach the right people without fear of it reaching beyond the corporate walls.

**Information Collaboration**

Context and continuity of information are critical to breaking down silos and walls within the modern CPG corporation. The primary purpose of collaboration is to capture, organize and share the knowledge of enterprise workers as they labor toward a common goal. Collaboration around key line-of-business areas, such as trade promotion management, continues to be a critical challenge across the consumer goods industry.

Effective trade promotion planning and execution involves coordination between the finance, sales, operations and marketing departments. Enabling successful enterprise planning processes, such as trade promotion management with the power of social computing, can drive a competitive advantage for CPG companies. Through the power of collaboration and social computing, knowledge workers who are involved in the trade promotion planning process can now publish plans or scenarios by using “what if?” analysis and capture vital comments and feedback through common social tools, including instant messaging, microblogging, wikis, forums and social profiles.

"To remain competitive in today’s environment, consumer goods companies need modern capabilities to keep pace with the technology available to consumers. Corporate performance is driven by employees. Modern technology, such as cloud computing, social tools, mobility, collaboration and analytics designed to empower employees, is the fastest path to improving corporate performance in the consumer goods industry."

--- Kevin Tigges  
**Industry Director, US Consumer Goods, Microsoft Corp.**

Incorporating these social tools into the enterprise increases the performance, accuracy and speed of knowledge workers, which ultimately translates into agility and profitability for consumer goods companies.

**Human Resources**

These days, hiring is a careful mix of balancing the needs of the department with the needs of the employee. So many people are looking to find employment that human resources departments have more applications to review than ever. And the desperation of the unemployed makes them stretch their experiences to more closely align their résumés with the
interpreted needs of the jobs to which they are applying. To help minimize the influx of requests, more than 80 percent of companies plan to recruit through social networks in the coming year. Social computing allows job applicants to provide corporate human resources staff with more in-depth personal history and references to help facilitate the hiring and interview process.

Interviewing has become a crowd-sourcing endeavor, allowing groups of interviewers to look at a single potential hire and ultimately find the right person for a variety of open positions faster and more effectively than before. When the new employee is hired, available communities, enterprise search and instant messaging access to mentors allows the employee to become trained for the position faster with less confusion and more support from within their organizational structure.

Human resources can further use tools such as presence trackers and activity streams to ensure that their processes are efficient and provide employees with timely solutions to their issues. Imagine for an instant that an employee can place a benefits change request with the human resources department, check online every few days and stay on top of the status of the change request, and even escalate the issue through management channels if it should become necessary.

**External Communications**

Although not the focus of enterprise social computing, CPG firms must be able to communicate with their supply chains. The level of communication coordination among the employees of CPG companies and contacts within their supply networks directly influences the abilities of both organizations to operate smoothly. Employees can see where others are located, identify their availability and discover how best to reach them. People in both organizations will also benefit by creating closer social connections through general social interactions and the discovery of common interests.

Adding a level of social networking to supply chain communications empowers entire networks to connect quickly to the right people in a collaborative virtual team environment that has the agility to respond to any crisis.

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4 Jobvite 2010 Social Recruiting Survey
Conclusion

It is obvious that enterprise social computing is having a huge effect on our business world. According to the International Data Corp. (IDC), companies use social tools primarily for blogs (70 percent) and wikis (40 percent) and as an idea- or crowd-sourcing tool (63 percent). More than 30 percent of companies currently use blogs, with another 15 percent planning to implement them in the next 12 months. Forty-five percent of companies use collaboration platforms, with an additional 18 percent planning to implement this solution within the next year. All across the corporate world, a definite trend toward implementing enterprise social computing can be seen.

NetProspex tracks the most active social computing companies around the globe, and it shows that CPG corporations are joining the front lines by connecting people to people, data to data and people to data in a way that supports innovation, streamlines the creative process and accelerates problem-solving.

The end result is improved knowledge management, better talent management, faster onboarding, and easier discovery of relevant information and people expertise. Ultimately, enterprise social computing increases corporate productivity and enterprise agility by connecting employees to the people, data and assets that they need instantly — no matter where on the globe that resource is located.

5 IDC’s AppStat Survey, October 2009
6 NetProspex Social Report, September 2009
Grocery Manufacturers Association

Based in Washington, D.C., the Grocery Manufacturers Association is the voice of more than 300 leading food, beverage and consumer product companies that sustain and enhance the quality of life for hundreds of millions of people in the United States and around the globe.

Founded in 1908, GMA is an active, vocal advocate for its member companies and a trusted source of information about the industry and the products consumers rely on and enjoy every day. The association and its member companies are committed to meeting the needs of consumers through product innovation, responsible business practices and effective public policy solutions developed through a genuine partnership with policymakers and other stakeholders.

In keeping with its founding principles, GMA helps its members produce safe products through a strong and ongoing commitment to scientific research, testing and evaluation and to providing consumers with the products, tools and information they need to achieve a healthy diet and an active lifestyle.

The food, beverage and consumer packaged goods industry in the United States generates sales of $2.1 trillion annually, employs 14 million workers and contributes $1 trillion in added value to the economy every year. For more information, visit www.gmaonline.org.

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In collaboration with GMA Information Systems Committee

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