

Which enterprise social tool is right for you?

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Enterprise social is big business. The figures speak for themselves:



- 90% of Fortune 500 companies will have partially or fully implemented an enterprise social network by the end of 2013 ([Deloitte](#))
- Global enterprise social software applications revenue to grow from \$1 billion in 2011 to \$2.7 billion in 2017 ([IDC](#))
- 20-25% potential improvement in knowledge worker productivity ([McKinsey & Co](#))



With numbers like these it's understandable that businesses are scrambling to integrate collaborative and social tools into their processes. However this recognition of the importance of enterprise social networking is tempered by other warnings. Most strikingly, industry analyst [Gartner](#) warns that 80% of enterprises will fail to achieve their intended social business efforts.

It is therefore absolutely essential that you choose the enterprise social software platform that is right for your business. Here are the key considerations when making that determination.

1. Does the platform 'fit' us?



Becoming a social and collaborative business requires significant cultural changes

which will change many of the ways in which you operate. That said, your ideal enterprise social software platform will be flexible and configurable, allowing you to tailor it to your strategic goals and needs. If the software is too rigid to adjust to your business processes, you know that it is not the solution your organisation needs. You should also ensure that any product you consider is flexible enough to adjust to changing business priorities and processes.

2. Does the platform allow for collaboration internally and externally?



Social communications between brands and consumers are relatively commonplace. But to get the greatest benefits, an enterprise social software platform must be able to facilitate internal

collaboration that crosses traditional business unit delineations. This means reducing the internal hierarchy so that all staff regardless of "rank" can work together with the sole focus of greater efficiency.

For the most forward thinking businesses, selecting a platform that facilitates collaboration with customers, suppliers and other supply chain participants may provide even greater efficiencies and cost savings.

“ Knowledge is an infinite resource. The most important knowledge is not inside the boundaries of a company. You don't achieve it through containerization, you achieve it through collaboration.”

Don Tapscott - interview with McKinsey & Co 2013

3. What level of cross-platform integration is available?

Your business undoubtedly operates several different applications, each with differing levels of interoperability. Studies have shown that knowledge workers spend up to **30%** of their working day looking for data.



Your ideal enterprise social software platform will unite your disparate systems to create a single, searchable starting point for employees when sourcing the information they need. Verify the systems that any social platform can link to and how important this integration is for your organisation's workflow.

“Removing silos acts as a catalyst for innovation”

Delphine Manceau - Report sur l'innovation

4. Does the tool offer tools for “onboarding”?

Getting staff involved with your internal social network and regularly connecting and contributing is critical to its ongoing success.

Although your business can mandate use by all staff, genuinely valuable contributions tend to flow from a genuine desire to participate and help.

To maximise uptake, your company should investigate the additional functions that any enterprise social software platform offers. For example, using gamification tools encourages staff to get involved and stay connected, creating a core of users who will encourage colleagues to join and share.

According to one leading enterprise social software vendor, businesses using social business tools and processes also see a **24%** drop in employee turnover.



5. Is social embedded or augmented?

Many established tools, particularly those that have evolved from traditional company intranets, now offer social capabilities. However these

intranet-based solutions have often added social tools at a later date, meaning that social is not an integral part of the platform. They tend to focus on data and documents rather than relationships and sharing knowledge.



Enterprise social software that has been built from the ground up on the principle of connecting people and information is better placed to yield the efficiency and knowledge sharing benefits your company is seeking.

6. What type of reporting and analysis is provided?

Without hard statistics on enterprise social software usage throughout your business, it is impossible to accurately

ascertain progress. Only by understanding how and where your platform is being used will you be able to nurture adoption and build on successes as they occur.



Your chosen enterprise social software platform should allow you to report on usage and participation at all levels. And ideally you'll be able to export data to carry out more advanced analytics by combining platform metrics with other data sets. This information can then be used to focus investment and training efforts, identify potential for improvement and demonstrate a return on investment.

7. How will you drive behavioural and cultural change?

As well as the purely technical aspects of any potential enterprise social software platform, you should also consider the behavioural change needed to generate

effective outcomes. Successful social business projects require a change in business culture that cannot be affected through technology alone.

You should therefore examine how to get help with the ‘people’ aspects of encouraging platform adoption. Whether this is managed by your in-house team, or by calling on external expertise, make sure you have a clear plan and the right resources to handle this critical element.

Finding a single product that adequately covers each of your own business requirements could be difficult. However making a decision without considering your exact needs and what you hope to achieve could result in a failed enterprise social software implementation.



Need help identifying the right enterprise social platform?

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Register Now!



For tips on getting your organisation ready to collaborate effectively, download our free eGuide:

Top tips to collaborative readiness

Download Now!

