21 Ways You Can Benefit From Social Business Software Today
Social business is a term that has been thrown around over the last couple of years.

The question of whether “social” is measurable and provides a positive ROI for your business is a question we often hear. As a result, many companies are still reluctant to implement social business practices.

*No doubt social has its costs, but can such costs be justified with a measurable ROI?*

*Yes, we believe it can.*

Organizations are now able to tap into knowledge with employees, partners, customers, and the broader public in ways not previously possible.

The emergence and integration of communication tools like blogs, wikis, web conferencing, and instant messaging enable access to this crucial information.
Is a 900% ROI really possible?
CASE IN POINT:

Cisco Systems, Inc.

REPORT:

“Creating a Collaborative Enterprise – A Guide to Accelerating Business Value with a Collaborative Framework”

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To provide organizations with a clear evolutionary path and a portfolio of structured methodologies that organizations can use to improve the way that information and expertise is shared among employees.

RESULTS:

Cisco was able to save up to $691 million while increasing productivity by 4.9%.
According to the report:

Social technologies can raise the productivity of workers by 20% to 25% when fully utilized.

A fully networked enterprise can expect to see a 25% reduction in email use, which further frees up 7% to 8% of a workweek.
Since collaboration involves getting the right information at the right time to the right people in order to make the right decision, it thus helps to improve on efficiency, scale, and capacity of processes and in developing new ways of doing business.

The report makes a claim that just as databases revolutionized sales and marketing efforts, and email transformed communications, social collaboration technologies are radically improving interaction and sharing of information in the workplace.

Organizations are now able to tap into latent knowledge within employees, partners, customers, and the broader public in ways not previously possible. The emergence and integration of communication tools like blogs, wikis, web conferencing, and instant messaging enable access to this crucial information.
We believe that collaboration is still the next big thing.
Social collaboration is and will continue to transform commerce, enable exceptional productivity levels, and increase business agility.

Cisco and many other companies are already benefiting ... and small and medium sized businesses are positioned to benefit as well.

We encourage organizations looking to develop a collaboration workplace to “just get started.”

Once you dig in, you’ll not only benefit from the high-level usage, you’ll begin to find new ways to connect your employees, provide better customer support, and ultimately better your entire business.
Increased Organizational Productivity
While social business is still in its early days, there are many organizations trying to replace their different channels of communication, including email, with social technologies.

Social is believed to offer more genuine and real-time communication that is so crucial to increasing productivity.

Businesses are spending more money on knowledge workers and this huge investment is better put to use by ensuring they offer more value.

Capturing their potential is vital.

Social collaboration, where they are able to co-create content, makes them more productive.

Companies that have a culture of experimentation and pushing new technologies to the edge are benefiting most from these relatively new technologies.
aligned shared goals
Social tools are helping organizations shift from one-to-one communication modes and optimize social channels for many-to-many communication.

With most of the enterprise knowledge still locked up in email inboxes, it can be challenging to enable goal sharing.

When such knowledge becomes accessible and searchable, people derive greater satisfaction as they work toward the same goals.

Social technologies change how companies distribute and organize work.

They allow users to identify with like-minded people, stay in touch with them, and coordinate activities with them without intermediaries.
Reducing Communication Costs
It used to be that email was the primary means of communication within and beyond organizations.

Times have changed however, and social communication tools have replaced these legacy communication tools for very obvious reasons.

For one, social tools are more integrated into the average employee’s lifestyle, which means that they are used longer and have more intensity.

These tools are constantly updated with social activity resulting in a more open and productive collaborative interaction.
Break Down the “Location” Barrier
Social intranets that live on the web have the potential to allow collaboration across the board.

Regardless of where teams are located, employees can get insights from different departments and experts who share their knowledge on blogs, wikis, and other places on the intranet.

Location is no longer a limitation, and just like social networking tools like Facebook enable global communication, organizations can similarly benefit when knowledge is unlimited by location.
Reduction in Travel Costs
According to a McKinsey study, Web 2.0 technologies that offer collaboration are reaping great benefits, with 44% of them cutting travel costs through such implementations.

In-house teleconferencing and real-time chat features have made it unnecessary to travel long distances to meet with partners, suppliers, and work teams.

The reduction in communication rates has seen many small and medium-sized businesses adopt social collaboration software that offer packaged features to enable web communication.

Whether you are considering a communication channel that enables impromptu meetings, telepresence, or videoconferencing, social collaboration software now has everything you need to better communicate and cut on travel costs.
Unify Your Sales Force
In most organizations, the sales team is very mobile and generally scattered across locations and always on the move.

This usually results in a lack of a unified platform for sharing intelligence and best practices that would otherwise result in a more coordinated and efficient effort.

Training and development of sales reps in order to enhance their skills and keep them constantly updated is usually an inefficient process.

A social collaboration platform addresses this problem in many ways.

It fosters an environment of idea sharing, resulting in the spread of best practices, a rapid turnaround time regarding product updates and other topics, better objection handling, a constant development process, visibility into operations and
recognition of performers, and it offers a single platform for content distribution, communication, and planning.

In short, social collaboration software enables sales reps to act like a unified sales force that brings home the results.
Increased Innovation Through Ideation
Innovative organizations are aware that capturing and nurturing good ideas will help them solve problems while encouraging innovative thinking.

When employees recognize a social system in place to help them put across their ideas, they are stimulated to speak up.

According to a report by the Harvard Business Review, encouraging employees to first discuss their ideas with their colleagues enhances the ideas’ value which aids in adoption.

The greater the number of perspectives an idea gets, the higher the chances of the idea being adopted.

KeyGene, a biotechnology firm, encourages its employees to post ideas on an intranet site after which catalysts select the most promising ones and invite support from others.
Eventually, a member is asked to present the concept to a line manager.

This approach to idea development has enhanced motivation with efficiency and high quality idea generation as a clear payoff.
Gamification
Gamification is the application of game design techniques and mechanics to business processes.

A gamified system has the potential to unlock wasted talent, increase interactions, and drive performance improvements.

One company that has achieved success by use of a gamified social intranet is FedEx.

The company was able to change an existing cultural model of rewarding people for having knowledge to one that rewarded knowledge sharing.

For example, when an employee wrote a blog post, they received an honor badge.

This sharing of expertise enabled the company to benefit from 40 years worth of knowledge tucked within its walls.
Gamification on social collaboration software can be achieved by implementing role-based missions and challenges, knowledge badges, and personalizing them to motivate and reward.

Achievement badges, achievement levels, reward systems, and leader boards encourage user adoption and participation.

Since gamification drives employee engagement, it results in increased productivity and efficiency.

Knowing what behaviors you want to elicit will allow you to understand the game mechanics that need to be applied.
Improved Employee Engagement
There is no doubt that employee engagement is highest where social tools are freely in use.

The universal appeal of social is seen in the billions already using social networking sites everyday, and the same appeal and passion can be developed and nurtured within your business.

Social collaboration tools offer a similar platform that your employees are already used to on public social networks.

The drive to socialize will result in higher engagement and collaboration when you put the right platform in place.
Employee Onboarding
It is estimated that more than 50 percent of all hires fail within 18 months on the job.

This is largely due to ineffective onboarding to help a new employee get adjusted to the social and performance aspects of their new jobs.

Successful onboarding needs to be done quickly and smoothly, and this is where most organizations fail to deliver.

Social collaboration software tools, however, are made for that.

These platforms are perfect for designing and implementing formal and consistent orientation programs, monitoring progress over time, utilizing technology, engagement with new hires, and getting rid of bureaucracy.

Interestingly, the best practices for effective onboarding are at the core of most social collaboration software.
Closely related to effective onboarding is employee retention.

You want to retain your workforce that you train and bring the employee turnover as low as possible.

To achieve this, you need to create an environment that allows your employees to thrive and grow and social tools offer just that.

According to the social business expert, Vala Afshar,

“introducing social business improves attitudes, performance, and company culture -- and today's cloud services and social collaboration tools make that opportunity easier and cheaper than ever to explore in the workplace.”

According to Afshar, open and transparent social communications at all levels within an organization leads to a lower need to hire additional staff.
This also results in efficiency gains.

When employees are included in communications, they feel a stronger connection to the company, resulting in more engagement and reduced turnover.
Identify Experts in Your Organization
When knowledge sharing is encouraged through open dialogue and gamification, it becomes easy to identify experts in your organization.

As they share their knowledge and experience, these pockets of information can be picked and amended as needed.

Tools like Communifire are even able to retrieve information uploaded onto public social network profiles.

This captures the expertise and best practices of various employees and partners based on usage.

We have a fundamental need to seek identity and connectedness.

Social technologies give us the ability to do this at the speed and scale of the internet.
Companies with a high percentage of knowledge workers, those that rely on brand recognition and consumer perception, those with a digital distribution, and those that have experiential or inspirational offerings stand to benefit most from social collaboration software.

Of course, anybody can benefit from these tools if they leverage them the right way.
Talent Acquisition
Social is a prime ground for fetching talent for various reasons. It is personal, transparent, and shareable.

A lot of the talent within companies can be tapped by looking at employee passions, which are usually personal.

This is best shared on social platforms. In addition, long-term employees will usually share their experience on such platforms, which can provide a clue into the insights of individual employees.

It is easiest to screen, assess, select, train, develop, and manage talent on social platforms than anywhere else ... since there is no effort or learning curve involved in using these tools.

In addition, this can be done without raising suspicion or fear on the part of employees.

Talent acquisition through social collaboration tools is more accurate as it follows a more natural path.
Crowdsourcing
There's no doubt that social collaboration is at the heart of crowdsourcing ideas.

Companies that adopt new collaboration processes are able to better draw from a deeper base of information within and beyond their organization.

Effective collaborative sharing and decision making is only achievable with the right tools and in the right environment ... and social collaboration software does a good job of that.

Your employees have a wealth of experience into what works and what doesn’t in your organization.

They know what customers are looking for and what might accelerate growth.

However, tapping into this vast knowledge is not easy, even with formal systems in place to address such challenges.
Employees share a lot about their work activities with other employees on social networks and face-to-face.

By encouraging idea expression in open spaces confined within the organization, crowdsourcing of ideas can be cultivated.

They will be in a position to describe experiences, their feelings, and what counterproductive measures are not helping.

Your employees are astute observers and they are strategically positioned to offer you a competitive advantage if you listen to them.

They understand your company positioning in the marketplace and they have untapped expertise.

Encouraging your employees to openly express their ideas will be met with reluctance.
Their ideas may mean change, uncertainty, and hard work in implementation, hence they may feel that expressing them may result in blame or rejection.

Setting up spaces where they can freely express themselves can open up a door to idea generation and innovation.
Customer Satisfaction
Nothing irritates customers worse than scripted responses they receive from customer care reps.

Such responses tend to come across as robotic, inhuman, and impersonal. But it doesn’t have to be like this.

Interestingly, social business platforms enable employees to offer the kind of experience customers expect.

Social customer service is usually more personal, involving, and almost always resolves the problem.

Social collaboration software offers a similar experience since interactions are perceived to be less formal and more like one-on-one conversations.

Today’s consumers are also much more advanced and knowledgeable.
As a result, they are programmed to prefer self-service and seek out their own answers without having to directly engage with you.

Self-help resources like blogs, wikis, and Q&As are some of the ways to empower your customers.

This is especially true of tech-savvy customers who seek greater autonomy and immediate results that they can only get via a self-service option.
Increased Lead Generation
Capturing and stimulating interest in a product or service involves a lot of testing and experimentation.

The whole process can sometimes get ugly when one has little knowledge of their target market.

Social collaboration software, however, enables you to map social into your business.

Integrating social media into your collaboration software will enable you to listen and respond to customer conversations, build and mobilize evangelists, offer a great customer experience and funnel back their feedback into your existing process.

This will have a much greater impact in stimulating interest than running ads or hiring marketing agencies.
Increased Brand Recognition
For customers to vouch for your brand, an emotional connection has to exist.

This usually starts with your employees. Your internal team is a powerful tool that can be used to rack up a loyal following.

This, however, can only be done if they are regularly updated on your brand vision and social happenings.

Having a platform for sharing ideas and enhancing their social presence is key to building and increasing brand recognition from the inside.

As these interactions take place, relationships will move beyond the walls of your company and spill over to the outside world. Your employees, partners, and suppliers will help you do that, but only if they are positioned and infused with a passion for what your brand represents.
Contextual Discussion and Content
By organizing discussions and topics into private or public spaces, social collaboration software allows employees and partners to easily locate topics and conversations and pull only the needed information.

This saves both time and improves efficiency.

It is also much easier to join ongoing discussions and participate in forums where knowledge sharing usually takes place in informal settings.
Creating Collective Knowledge
Collective knowledge can be created when people connect with people, people connect with experts, and when people connect with information.

People get better at doing something as they interact regularly with others or with the activity ... and this is what social collaboration software helps employees and partners achieve.

By creating and sharing content, employees can be keep in step with industry trends and learn problem-solving techniques directly from experts and their peers.
Increasing the Speed of Access to Knowledge
Employee-facing social collaboration tools have proven to not only increase engagement in the workplace, but also reduce the time to locate relevant information.

Since every conversation, memo, and document is on the network, access to it is just as fast. Where such knowledge is not available, knowledgeable personnel are just a chat or message away.

A report produced by Deloitte highlighted how OSIsoft, a software company, was able to improve problem-solving times by 22% by deploying a social collaboration platform.

Employees at the company were able to use wikis within its IT groups to dramatically decrease the time they spent ensuring policy and regulatory compliance.

This is the power of social collaboration on enterprises and the impact it can have on knowledge workers.
Knowledge Outsourcing
In order to develop new products, processes, and enhance existing ones, you need to source for knowledge.

For large firms, this is relatively easy, but for small and medium-sized organizations, it is vital to establish platforms or seek ways to harvest such knowledge.

One way to do this without incurring costs is to leverage knowledge from within.

Your employees have a wealth of knowledge and experience about your organization, your products, your services, and your customers.

They know what works and what doesn’t.

This knowledge, however, can only be shared within the right circles.
By establishing a social platform, you can begin to tap into this vast resource and benefit from years of experience tucked away right from within.

Social psychology argues that when people are intrinsically motivated, they are proactive and share knowledge.

Social collaboration tools not only foster such environments, but are built to collect, preserve, and share that knowledge with others.
Tips For Implementing Social Collaboration Into Your Business
If social collaboration is catching on for any reason in particular, it’s because it’s extremely beneficial to businesses of many different industries.

For one, it allows remote workers to communicate and work with one another in a streamlined manner, which up until now has been easier said than done in many circumstances.

This not only improves efficiency, but also lets workers who might not have the chance to get to know each other find ways to work in harmony and build relationships.

Social collaboration is progressive in nature, making it an ideal platform for forward-thinking businesses.

It fosters the creation of ideas that might not otherwise come to fruition, nips potential issues in the bud and generally creates a more enjoyable, stress-free work environment.
The concept of social collaboration makes perfect sense.

**Start Slow, But Start Now**

Transitioning to an entirely new type of work environment can be exciting and motivating, especially for team members who have never utilized social business software in the past.

Starting slow allows you and your team to dip your toes into the water rather than dive in head first, which typically results in less stress and associated issues.

If higher productivity, increased engagement, and stronger customer relationships are what you’re looking for, then social collaboration software is a dream come true.
Now that you know the benefits of social business software, would you like to know what you’re actually paying for?

You’ll learn:

• Why the social business software giants (like Jive Software, Sharepoint, IBM, etc.) charge so much for their products - and what this means for you.
• Where your money goes when you buy social business software - and what it is used for.
• How you can make an informed and educated decision about what you are really paying for.

Then, when you’re ready to put a social business strategy in place, you’ll be armed with the information you need to benefit your company, your customers, and your own bottom line.

What are you paying for when you buy social business software?

Learn why some systems cost more than others.

In this guide you’ll get a transparent insiders perspective into what you are paying for when you buy social business software.

Download My Free Report
Communifire integrates social networking, collaboration, and knowledge sharing into a secure online environment.

Learn more about Communifire and how it can help your business collaborate, share ideas, and work together on projects.

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