WHITE PAPER

Social PPM:

Enhancing your collaboration platform for the evolving project workforce

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Abstract

Properly applied social media conventions can be a huge asset to project management organizations. Open collaboration and concentrating project information in a single interface improves productivity, decreases costs and cuts down on errors. Curbing the "social" part of social media overcomes one of the most persuasive cases against social media in project management: information security. By creating closed communities accessible only by project teams, companies secure proprietary information and prevent stakeholders – customers, partners, vendors – from seeing and hearing things they shouldn't.

Nevertheless, some organizations are not ready or are not culturally geared to integrate social media into their project management infrastructures. This white paper will discuss how organizations can adapt the useful elements of social networking into powerful project portfolio management tools. It will detail the goals of a social media strategy: closed networks versus open networks; strengthening work groups; sharing business information; collaboration; productivity and transparency.

Evolution of the Information Worker

During the last 15 years the information worker has evolved from an individual that was chained to his or her desk in order to act upon mission critical information only accessible from a desktop PC, to a mobile worker accessing information on multiple devices on the go. In turn, this has resulted in a more demanding work environment with a different set of expectations. As a result, both information workers and the stakeholders they serve have increased their expectations for response times to bottlenecks and in making strategic decisions.

At the heart of this world lies the project workforce that is changing with the times. Smart phones have become an extension to their world and easily accessible web tools have transformed the way they interact with information and colleagues. Today's project workforce cannot hide behind the excuse of limited access to information or the typical effort "it used to take" to prepare for customers in the pre-internet age. With instant access to information, enhanced productivity tools and mobile communications, the project workforce must quickly respond to their stakeholders. Moreover, social media tools have been recently introduced to the mix empowering the information worker to better access and filter through the immense amount of data and improve their ability to deliver on new expectations.

In many ways, for the first time since the introduction of the PC, this generation of new workers does not separate the use of the technology they employ in their personal lives and that used in their professional activities. The familiarity and habitual use of social media tools have become second nature in human interaction from communicating the most mundane activities of life to collaborating on strategic decisions that can impact an entire business. With that being said, businesses have recognized the force behind these tools and are heavily investing effort and money in strategically leveraging the disruptive technologies offered up by social media.

Social Media in the Workplace

Although today it would seem that social media has touched everyone around the world to some extent, the reality is that the term has only been around for a number of years and has taken on many different meanings. In fact, most definitions of social media are as ambiguous as the technology itself. The Oxford Dictionary defines Social Media as, "Dedicated websites and applications to communicate with other users, or to find people with similar interests to one's own." This definition alone can lump together both traditional tools such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter in the same category as an intranet or a Web forum. With this reality, there is a lot of confusion on what businesses can leverage from social media to enhance their workforce and customer interactions.

Social Media: Typical Vs. Business

Typical	Business
Open Social Network	Closed Network
Bring together all groups of interest	Strengthen existing work groups
Uncensored instant sharing of information	Improved sharing of business specific information
Focus is on connecting	Focus is on collaborating
Goal is professional and personal growth	Goal is to improve productivity and increase transparency

It important to point out that although social media is broad in its application, the technologies themselves are quite basic in delivering a web platform connecting similar groups of interest. The challenge businesses face is defining the best strategy and tool sets that will positively impact their workforce. For businesses, this means a social media strategy that will enhance the collaboration among stakeholders that reside both internal and external to the organization. Unlike traditional social media tools that encourage the growing of professional and personal networks, as well as the freedom of ideas, social media within a business context demands a more disciplined approach to enhancing the existing collaboration platform by leveraging the existing social interfaces that are growing in their usage and adoption. That fact is businesses need to carefully adopt the right tools and set the appropriate guidelines of use to effectively benefit from social media. These tools need to help improve the sharing of information, increase productivity, strengthen the communication of the existing workforce and ultimately deliver better collaboration.

Social PPM: Where do you draw the line?

The biggest challenge project-centric environments face is how to develop and integrate a social media strategy that is in line with their current processes. Depending on an organization's maturity level in establishing a collaboration platform, governance framework and knowledge management strategy, social media tools can pose various levels of benefit and danger. Understanding the intent of the various tools will determine what strategy to take or if a social media strategy even makes sense altogether in your organization. As a result, social media needs to be carefully defined and assessed to reap its true benefits of enhanced collaboration in a project-centric environment.

The true nature of effective project-centric environments is highly collaborative. Their success can be attributed to establishing a collaboration strategy that centralizes project information, optimizes communication and delivers better visibility. In this respect, social media tools need to be aligned with the overall collaboration strategy by using social interfaces similar to "LinkedIn", "Facebook" and "Twitter" that will deliver the superior usability of these common tools within the confines of the controlled project workforce teams and stakeholders.

At the end of the day, social media for PPM needs to enhance collaboration. It's about improving the user experience of collaboration without compromising the integrity of the data being shared. For example, a good use of social media in a project environment is the ability to create a social network around your resource pool in which you can easily reach out to others in your closed network to assist you with best practices and share knowledge; or perhaps search your closed social network for resources with the right skills. On the other hand, a dangerous use would be to expose unstructured dialogues in a Wiki that can potentially hurt a project by revealing sensitive information to the wrong parties (e.g. customer or stakeholders).

Are you ready to get Social?

If not applied in the right manner, social media can be detrimental to your projects and the stakeholders and teams that inappropriately use the tools. BUYER BEWARE - these tools introduce a level of transparency and unstructured element that can be dangerous if they do not fit with your existing business culture.

To avoid falling into the trap of riding the social media wave blindly, the following questions can assist you in gauging your readiness for Social PPM:

Social PPM Checklist

Would you classify your organization as early adopters of technology?
Organizations need to gauge their readiness for progressive technology offered up by social media. If the business is resistant to adopt new technology the chances for success will be slim.

Do you currently use any social media tools for projects?
The informal use of social media tools is typically a good indicator that your organization will successfully embrace a Social PPM strategy that is in line with your current collaboration tools.

Do you encourage transparency with project information?
Social media tools inherently encourage the transparency in sharing information. When implementing a Social PPM strategy an organization needs to be selective in integrating the best social media tools that will reveal the right information to the right stakeholders.

Do you work with dispersed and remote project teams? Are mobile devices integral to your project workforce?
Organizations with decentralized project teams that regularly collaborate and work from multiple locations can quickly benefit from the "on the go" nature delivered by social media tools designed to be accessed via multiple mobile platforms.

Is collaborative document sharing mature in your organization?
Prior to adopting the latest collaboration tools offered up by social media, it is critical to assess your current collaboration platform. In a project-centric environment social media tools are more effective when they are able to enhance an already existing collaboration environment that delivers robust web and document management capabilities to its current workforce.

Is your project organization resistant to change?
With the introduction of any new process or technology the change management question cannot be ignored. Including a change management component as part of the Social PPM strategy can mean the difference between the smooth adoption and a painful rejection of the new tool sets.

Genius Live! Social Collaboration for the Project Workforce

Genius Live! is Genius Project's social collaboration platform that takes enterprise project and portfolio management to the next level. Genius Live! will empower your users by delivering a collaboration platform that will introduce powerful social media capabilities familiar to today's information worker. Project stakeholders will benefit from Genius Live!'s social interface improving team collaboration, providing a better end user experience, streamlining the flow of project information and increasing productivity among project teams and application adoption.

Genius Live! facilitates social collaboration by providing the following features:

- Delivers familiar social media tools accessible on multiple devices.
- Single-page view – akin to a social media wall – aggregates project updates and statuses.
- Provides project managers and team members' instant access to vital project information.
- Increases user adoption and reduces email exchanges.

To learn more about Genius Live!'s social collaboration capabilities, please go to:

http://www.geniusinside.com/solutions/software_features/project_team_collaboration