

By Daniel W. Rasmus



The Tens—Adopting Enterprise Social Media

1 Stop thinking e-mail Although e-mail may be the original social software, it is often applied in anti-social ways. E-mail is opaque, given over to politics and back doors with carbon copies (CCs) and even worse, blind carbon copies (BCCs,) leaving doubt about the completeness of any thread. And e-mail doesn't integrate well into work flows, unless people, as many have, choose to work in e-mail. Consider social media the replacement for e-mail or run the risk of e-mail overwhelming your social ambitions.

2 Don't let it just happen Organizational tradition and momentum can be important deterrents to the adoption of new software. The sponsors of enterprise social media just can't wait for magic to occur. They need to seed social media with groups, encourage profile sharing and lead by doing. People need to realize value, not just be told about it. Orchestrate value generating experiences that give people a real sense for how these tools can help them. Also encourage people to post meaningful information in profiles by engaging in non-social media management discussions about competencies and make sure those reflections make it back into the system.

3 Don't insist on ROI Period. If you insist on an ROI you will fail because there is no calculation for pre-implementation ROI that works. People cannot anticipate how they will employ social media, and therefore, they can't forecast how social media will affect their work, neither positively nor negatively.

4 Integrate it into the work If enterprise social media is deployed without a sense for where it may provide value, it may not get a second look. Although not knowing precisely where value will be realized, current work patterns can inform places to start, like projects, account management and proposal development. Get started with areas where you know people work together toward shared goals, and then be willing to...

5 Watch what happens Social media does spark emergent behavior. But you have to watch for it. That means putting in a feedback loop, using the tool itself, so people can share what they have learned about the effective use of social media through stories and links.

6 Measure the Before You can't tell if you have changed anything if you don't have an accurate picture of the "before state." This is a too-often missed component of software deployment, and the primary omission that leads to anecdotal evidence being the only evidence. If you are serious about understanding the impact of social media on the enterprise, document the communications practices before you deploy, with good metrics, so you can understand how things have improved, decreased in effectiveness or just changed.

7 Discover what's new The emergent aspects of social media means new things will happen. Not all new things are bad, but they aren't all good. Encourage people to seek out and evaluate new behaviors so they can be evaluated for effectiveness over time. Let things simmer, but be willing to make tough calls and abandon emergent practices that don't add value—and be equally quick to encourage new practices that shout innovation.

8 Make it the center Many social media platforms integrate so much of the work-stream that they can become the center for work. Does a group become the anchor for meetings, with the agenda and other shared links as central pointers to the work being done? Does the dialog coming out of the meeting take place entirely in the social media stream, negating the need for minutes and follow-up e-mail? If the social environment becomes the working environment it can be a powerful integrator for information, and a strong tool for driving change.

9 Don't reward bad behavior If work centers on social media and people receive comfort in their discomfort through side channels using other tools (like e-mail), then the implementation is doomed. Serious managers will manage through social media.

10 Don't compare everything to Facebook and Twitter Enterprises aren't the Internet and your social media investment isn't a consumer tool. Focus the investment on getting done what needs getting done by making it engaging, productive and effective. The tool is only being deployed because it helps meet a business need. Keep that front and center always.