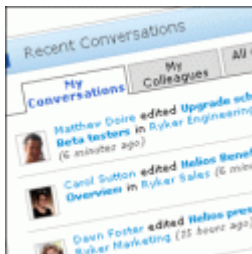




A Guide to IT Success With Social Software



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The purpose of this IT Guide

If your organization is typical, most of your employees are actively using social networking services for personal use, and many are already using social software for work purposes. Many of the social software applications and services being used by employees were not introduced by their IT department, and have not been reviewed or approved by IT.

A recent Cisco survey¹ found that 68% of employees use unsupported social networking applications and 47% use unsupported collaboration applications. More than half (51%) of the IT professionals surveyed listed participation in unsupported social networking as one of the top three biggest security risks to their organization, while one in five (19%) considers it the highest risk.

IT groups want to deliver social software to their organizations to address employee demands that information silos be broken down. But they want to do so in a way that fits into the IT strategy, and minimizes any IT burdens and risk. The purpose of this paper is to serve as a guide to these IT departments. It will guide your strategic planning and requirements definition so you can introduce social software into your organizations in a way that breaks down silos quickly and effectively, while at the same time fitting in with your IT strategy and minimizing burdens, risks and surprises.

This guide outlines the elements to consider so you can best answer each of these key IT questions regarding social software:

- Is it architected for a global organization?
- Is it comprehensive yet also flexible?
- Does it have the lowest total cost of ownership?
- Will it eliminate information silos?
- Will it produce noticeable business impact, easily and quickly?

We hope this guide provides invaluable insight as you start your strategic planning and requirements definition for social software.

¹ "Cisco Security Survey Spotlights Consumers' Influence on Enterprise IT," June 24, 2010
http://newsroom.cisco.com/dlls/2010/prod_062410.html

#1: Is it architected for global organizations?

Fits with your security infrastructure & standards

As networks become increasingly borderless, the challenges of protecting sensitive and proprietary enterprise information become more difficult. The following set of product requirements will ensure any social software you choose will give you the baseline control and flexibility you need to maintain your enterprise security standards.

Directory integration

With any social software platform you consider, you want to make sure the user profiles are auto-populated from your LDAP directory or Microsoft Active Directory. Directory integration eliminates the security risk that an application may be giving access to users who no longer work for the company, and it eliminates the redundant cost and needless overhead of managing separate user directories.

Single sign-on integration

You want your social software to integrate with your single-sign-on solution for access control and authentication, as well as user management. Single sign-on also eliminates the helpdesk overhead of managing a redundant set of user logins, and removes a significant barrier to user adoption.

Lets you enforce corporate security & compliance standards

The social software platform must allow IT to control group membership and content. Internal conversations are often about proprietary company information, and you need to be able to ensure only authorized company employees are listening to those conversations. The solution must also allow you to enforce corporate policies, for example, to remove banned content.

Sits behind your firewall

Enterprises that demand the highest level of security typically deploy applications behind their firewall. But these same organizations find it difficult to devote IT resources to lengthy deployment projects, and they seek to avoid projects that introduce new infrastructure that needs to be maintained on an ongoing basis.

A self-contained appliance with hosted software is the best strategic fit for these organizations. An appliance is fast and easy to deploy, and does not introduce any infrastructure that needs to be maintained. With the social software application hosted on the appliance, IT can enjoy rapid software update cycles without any IT overhead. Once the managed service appliance is deployed, IT can keep resources focused on strategic initiatives and core competencies, rather than on maintaining software and infrastructure.

Allows integration with your enterprise applications

A rapidly emerging IT trend is to integrate enterprise systems of record with social software. When information changes in a system of record such as a CRM or ERP system, that change often indicates an important enterprise event, such as a new customer win, an order being fulfilled, or inventory falling below a critical threshold. IT departments want the ability to automatically notify employees when these events occur. What is needed is the ability to notify any employees you choose, not just the employees who have access to each specialized system of record. Since the social software platform is used every day by employees across the organization, it makes sense to use

the social software to communicate these important enterprise events. The social software should let you notify a broad set of employees, or a specific group.

This type of integration allows the social software to serve as a social layer for all of your business applications. This integration can greatly improve knowledge flow across the organization as it makes key information accessible to everyone, regardless of whether they have access to the business application where it is stored. You also want the ability to use these enterprise events to trigger processes in your social software, and the ability for your social software to trigger processes in your business applications.

Scalable

The business value of social software increases as the percent of your employees using it increases, since the larger and more diverse the network, the more value each individual derives from participation in that network. Even if you choose to contain your initial deployment to a defined set of employees, you need to ensure the solution will scale to all employees. And you want to make sure you'll get the same feature set whether your initial deployment includes 500 or 5,000 or 50,000 employees.

Get the control you need, without taking on IT burdens

Often when an application gives control to IT, it also gives a burden of responsibility to IT. Since social software will likely be used by every employee in an organization, taking responsibility for even a small task can often blossom into a large IT burden. But at the same time, IT needs to retain control over some elements of how the application is used. What you need is the ability to take control selectively; that is, the ability to take control where you want it, without having to own any task you don't need to own.

For example, many social software applications provide users with their own home page. As an IT person you may want to control what each user can display on their home page, but at the same time, you don't want to take on the burden of managing changes to each user's home page. In this case you want to control the company's widget library while granting users the ability to freely drop and drag the widgets of their choice from this IT-controlled library. You may also want the ability to lock one or more common elements onto every user's home page, such a widget for corporate announcements, the company calendar, executive blogs, and so forth.

Built to open web standards

Social software provides a platform for employees in corporations around the globe to filter in information from virtually any source. As such, existing communication and information providers are delivering standards-based widgets that integrate their applications into standards-based social software applications. These widgets allow for rich integration of a myriad of applications into the social software platform without requiring any IT development. There are over 200,000 widgets built to the Google OpenSocial standard, with more being delivered each day. To take advantage of the rapid innovation taking place in the social software ecosystem, you want to make sure to deploy a social software platform that is built to open web standards. Widgets for Gmail, Google calendar, Microsoft Outlook e-mail and calendar, Wikipedia, world time zones and many more can be very useful to employees.

#2: Is it comprehensive yet also flexible?

In a given day or even hour, an information worker has a variety of communication needs. Different technologies are best suited to meet different communication needs. The table below gives some examples of some common needs, and the best-fit technology for each.

To help people work together more effectively across the broad set of functions that make up their day, you need a variety of social technologies. But at the same time, you don't want the burden of maintaining multiple applications. As such, you need a single application that provides the best of social technologies working together in one integrated package.

Communication need	Best technology options
Keep a specific team informed of progress, setbacks, and changes.	Post a short microblogging message to a subscriber group. - or - Update a master calendar on a wiki page. Perhaps also opt for the social software to send an automated alert about that update to a subscriber group.
Share information that increases corporate intelligence (such as competitive insight or product feedback).	Create a new post in an internal blog dedicated to the topic, for example, the Customer Feedback blog.
Share information that will later change.	Create a go-to place for information via a wiki page. Relevant others will automatically be alerted to content updates, and everyone who views the page will always see the latest.
Disseminate information that people may need to find later.	Whether the information is shared via a wiki page, a blog entry, a microblogging message or other social means, the social software should provide the ability to do a single integrated search across all these information sources.
Ask a time-urgent question when you don't know who might have answers.	Post a short microblogging message to a broad audience. Since microblogging is "reply optional," this does not add to to-do lists or clutter "inboxes."
Open a topic that will spur a dialog with multiple people.	Create a single, shared go-to place for the topic via a wiki page.
Find the latest draft of a thought piece, like a press release or a case study.	Search by tag, by keywords in title, by keywords in content (including attachments). Search in a specific workspace, across all workspaces; search microblogging messages, or activity streams, or across all mediums. Check the author's activity stream. Check a group's activity stream.

Pay only for modules you need

While you want to take advantage of the best social software technologies, you may not want to deploy all of them at the same time. There are six distinct implementation strategies that lead to success with social software. Each has its own set of risks and rewards. The implementation strategies are outlined in this companion paper, "[6 Ways to Get Business Value from Social Software](#)."

One implementation strategy is to introduce microblogging broadly across the organization and wait until you show measurable business impact with that technology before paying for more social capabilities. For those choosing this path, you want to make sure the solution allows you to pay for microblogging alone, with the ability to do an in-place upgrade and turn on additional social capabilities when you are ready.

Pay only for capacity you need

With licensed software, capacity needs are especially hard to predict for an unfamiliar application, so the organization typically faces one of two evils: over-provisioning infrastructure, which underutilizes capacity, or under-provisioning infrastructure, which delivers poor performance. Since software licenses tend to be highly discounted based on volume, organizations are inclined to buy more capacity than needed in the initial license purchase. In contrast, with a subscription service, you can easily expand the capacity of applications as needed. Except for additional Internet bandwidth, there are typically no incremental infrastructure costs to handle additional capacity. And since the SaaS vendor relies on recurring revenue, their focus is on ensuring high loyalty and adoption over time rather than on providing incentives to buy more than is needed in the initial purchase.

Keep your up-front investment small

Since social software is a new product category, the market is still rapidly evolving and an organization likely has not had a chance to experience and quantify the benefits first-hand. As such, it makes sense to de-risk your initial investment as much as possible. With traditional licensed software, you typically have to invest in hardware and software infrastructure for the initial application deployment. This usually represents a large up-front cost. Avoiding these high up-front investments is another reason SaaS is recommended for social software. With a subscription model, there is no infrastructure to acquire.

#3: Does it have the lowest total cost of ownership?

Don't underestimate the people services

Every software application requires human labor to administer and support it. The cost of the people services can be the most significant cost in the total cost of ownership (TCO) calculation. According to Gartner Group, the cost of the people services to own and manage a licensed software application can be four times the cost of the software license per year. When a company has no prior experience with an application, which is typically the case with enterprise social software, these costs will typically be higher as IT must get trained and certified to administer and support the unfamiliar application.

IT overhead costs for licensed software are significant and can be underestimated. Accurately predicting the licensed software overhead is even more difficult for a new application category, as there is no history to draw on. Since this is typically the biggest cost that needs to be considered, if it is incorrectly estimated the projected bottom line results can be grossly overstated.

For these reasons, in cases where the application category is new the software-as-a-service (SaaS) subscription model makes especially good business sense. It eliminates the risk of underestimating the overhead effort, which is exacerbated by the newness of the product category, it avoids large up-front investments, and it provides all the traditional cost benefits of software-as-a-service.

Avoid ongoing infrastructure costs

Gartner Group estimates that more than 75% of the typical IT budget is spent simply maintaining and running licensed software and its required infrastructure. This means 75% of the IT budget is not focused on strategic initiatives and core competencies. In difficult economic times where IT budgets are constrained, this is especially problematic as IT needs to effect change with what remains of their budget after keeping existing systems running. Subscription software allows this discretionary IT budget to go further, which is especially important in uncertain economic times. It also frees IT from the risks associated with hidden costs that can wreak havoc on a tightly bounded budget.

Avoid lengthy on-premise upgrades

When a product category is new and highly competitive, software applications are evolving rapidly. This means updates and upgrades come faster than they do with a more mature product category. SaaS eliminates the costs of the frequent updates and upgrades typical with a new product category, and in this way further drives down costs for social software applications. With licensed software, a major on-premise upgrade can cost as much as 30% of the initial deployment cost². This not only drives up the total cost of ownership, but it causes upgrades to be delayed because of their high costs, which mean businesses don't get the benefits of the new capabilities.

² "FactChecking: The Five Most Common SaaS Assumptions," January 16, 2009, Gartner Group

Users can self-serve their needs

Social software solutions can create a significant and unexpected new cost if they require IT to get needlessly involved in making changes that should be left to the users. The nature of collaboration is such that change is constant: needs change, projects come and go, new topics are introduced, priorities change, new people get involved, new information sources become available. Users must be able to adjust their choices and settings on the fly – subscriptions, notifications, memberships, etc - as part of the process of learning how to use the solution to best fit their needs.

Unlike today where IT has to get involved just to change an e-mail distribution list, with social software you want your people to readily serve their own needs. For example:

- The deployment team assembled for a new customer should be able to create a home page for their team complete with a membership list, a microblogging channel, and a shared workspace.
- A user should be able to easily set up a workspace and invite others as they choose. They should also be able to specify who else can add and approve new users to the workspace.
- Your people should be able to subscribe to activity streams, channels and alerts as they see fit to do their jobs, easily and on the fly.
- Each person should be able to set up and change their own personal home page. Each user will go through an iterative process of trying new things, and will change their home page when they learn from others interesting ways to use widgets, when new web-based applications are delivered, when their projects change, and so forth. Users must be able to adjust their choices and settings on the fly, as part of the process of learning how to use the solution to best fit their needs.

If IT has to be the gatekeeper for common changes like these, costs will rise. In addition, friction will grow between users and IT, a significant barrier to adoption will be created, and business results will be diluted. Any social software solution you consider should give users the ability to do the common tasks that should rightfully be left to the users. If IT needs to get involved to add users to discussions, to create subscriber groups, to add workspaces or the like, the total cost of ownership will grow considerably.

Mobile devices supported without IT intervention

Today's workers rely heavily on mobile devices. For the lowest total cost of ownership, the social software should automatically detect mobile device access, and present the appropriate interface across a wide range of devices.

Switching costs are low

In a new product category such as social software, the market is rapidly evolving. As an IT person, you will do everything you can to choose a product that will evolve in the direction you need, at the pace you need. Despite your best efforts, however, it may turn out that at some point in the future the vendor you chose no longer meets your needs. Because of this potential risk, you want to make sure to avoid products that will leave you with a large sunk cost if you decide later to switch vendors. The best insurance is a subscription-based product that lets you pay as you go.

Does not tie up application development resources

Licensed software application vendors often recommend that organizations devote a half to full-time developer not only during deployment, but also for the lifetime of the social software application. With the exception of custom integrations with other enterprise applications, you should not need to tie up application developers to manage your social software application.

Reduces e-mail by at least 30%

The bulk of organizational communications to date has been accomplished via e-mail simply because it was the only technology available to everyone in the organization. Social software gives employees technologies that better address many communications needs, and as such can greatly reduce organizational e-mail and many of the associated IT costs. The degree to which the social software is embraced and adopted by users determines the degree to which organizational e-mail is reduced. Look for a solution that has reduced e-mail at other companies like yours by at least 30%.

#4: Does it eliminate information silos?*Stay better informed with less effort*

Social software provides a new, much easier way for colleagues to share and stay synchronized. In contrast to traditional means of communications such as e-mail and instant messaging, social software allows those who benefit from the information to subscribe to the channels and notifications they need to do their jobs. With its dynamic information streams, social software does an excellent job of keeping teams synchronized while at the same time reducing communications overhead. In addition, the social software serves as a social layer for all of the organization's business applications. It takes important events that originate in the systems of record, and makes those events known broadly across the organization, regardless of who has access to each specialized business application.

Eliminate captive information

Knowledge worker processes are severely hampered by captive information in files (e.g. documents), on different physical storage sites (individuals' hard drives, individuals' e-mail inboxes, shared folders). A document is a very poor delivery paradigm for sharing information for the purpose of staying in sync and getting work done. To break down the barriers to sharing that exist today, the social software platform must allow employees to work openly and transparently in shared spaces, where everyone sees the same current information, and where activity streams, subscriptions, and automated alerting mechanisms keep co-workers informed and teams synchronized.

An integrated platform

As mentioned in question #2, different technologies are better suited for different communications needs. To serve the broad array of employee communications needs, most organizations will ultimately deploy a variety of social technologies, such as social networking, wikis, microblogging, groups, internal blogs and the like. The business value these technologies can deliver increases as the level of integration between the technologies increases. When these technologies leverage a common set of services such as linking, tagging, revisioning, and alerting, they can eliminate information silos in a way independent applications cannot. With an integrated platform, each module also takes advantage of events and information from the others, delivering higher user value and a unified user experience.

A holistic way to find and discover information

To break down information silos effectively, the social software platform must provide an easy way to find and discover information regardless of data type or location. Users should be able to do a single integrated search, without a requirement that they know how the content or item was originally shared or where it might be found. The search results should present the user with every data type that is relevant – page content, files, links, microblogging messages, “likes,” tags, etc. And it should present the user with this information across all the places where the information appears – in spreadsheet pages, wiki pages, blog posts, microblogging messages, profile pages etc. It should allow users to do broad, comprehensive searches as well as pinpointed searches. It should, for example, allow users to search just for links, or to pinpoint their search for keywords appearing just in page titles.

#5: Does it deploy quickly and deliver fast business impact?*No developers required for deployment*

In a typical IT organization, application developers are in scarce supply and high demand. While a social software platform should allow for a great deal of customization, it should not require application developers to ready the solution for deployment. Licensed software applications often recommend that organizations devote a half to full-time developer for tasks related to the cache, database, and managing and troubleshooting the application during deployment. Requiring application developers for deployment not only increases costs and risks, but also greatly lengthens the time required to deploy. Likewise, the IT dollars spent on vendor professional services during deployment should largely be spent on expert guidance on rollout methodology and driving fast user adoption, not on developing code. You want to look for an enterprise-grade solution that requires no developers for deployment, so you get the fastest time-to-results.

Fast deployment

A product with which an organization has no prior experience is typically under tight scrutiny to show results. Given this, time-to-results is an especially important consideration for social software. In this regard the subscription model again makes most sense. SaaS deployments provide much quicker time-to-results because the organization does not need to concern itself with installing underlying infrastructure, and because the SaaS vendor takes responsibility for the end-to-end delivery of the application. With SaaS, a social software platform can be deployed in days, returning tangible results in weeks. With licensed software, deployment alone can take months, with payback deferred until well after the one year mark.

Vendor success is dependent on your success

Social software increases group productivity, and as such broad adoption is critical to success. A group productivity product can only benefit the group if it is used by the group. For adoption to take off organically, the product itself must be “highly adoptable.” The product capabilities most critical to adoption success are outlined in our whitepaper, “[The 5 Most Critical Requirements for Enterprise Social Software](#).”

In addition to product requirements, the product delivery model can also greatly affect adoption. Subscription-based products are much better suited than others to drive user

adoption. Since software-as-a-service vendors sell a recurring service, the sale does not end when the initial contract is signed. SaaS vendors have a significant financial interest in driving adoption and creating a broad base of happy and loyal users.

Gives you the ability to rapidly replace rogue applications

As mentioned, employee usage of unsupported social software is one of the top security concerns for IT professionals.³ For IT to solve the immediate problem of rogue application usage you need more than just a secure, scalable, enterprise-ready solution; you also need one that is in a form factor that is fast to deploy. For this reason it is recommended that you look for a hosted service or self-contained appliance.

Summary

Social software provides a much better way for employees to stay informed and in touch. As such, it can improve organizational effectiveness to a degree not achievable with any other product. We hope that as an IT person, this paper has served to guide your strategic planning and requirements definition for social software. Our goal is to help you introduce social software into your organization in a way that fits your IT strategy, minimizes risks, and gets fast and noticeable results.

³ "Cisco Security Survey Spotlights Consumers' Influence on Enterprise IT," June 24, 2010
http://newsroom.cisco.com/dlls/2010/prod_062410.html

About Socialtext

Architected for global organizational requirements

The Socialtext collaboration platform is designed to fit with enterprise security infrastructures and scales from 500 to 50,000. It gives you the benefits of a subscription service with the security of a behind-the-firewall appliance. A variety of subscription options – hosted in the cloud or on an appliance – allow you to meet security requirements and benefit from agile development cycles. Built to open web standards, Socialtext also allows you to take advantage of the rapid innovation taking place in the social software ecosystem.

Comprehensive & flexible

Socialtext provides the best of social technologies – social networking, microblogging, internal blogs, wikis, social spreadsheets, subscriber channels and notifications, information streams and more – all working together in one integrated platform. As a subscription-based service, you pay only for the capacity you need. Socialtext also gives you the option of paying for a sub-set of social capabilities, then turning on the full social capabilities, with an in-place upgrade, when you are ready.

Lowest TCO of all major providers

Socialtext is the only social collaboration product that gives IT all the cost benefits and risk avoidance of a subscription-based product, while at the same time providing behind-the-firewall security. Since the product is both highly intuitive and designed for user self-service, it does not create new IT overhead like other social collaborations products. The Socialtext collaboration platform also provides automated mobile device support, presenting the appropriate mobile interface automatically across all major mobile devices.

Integrates information from enterprise applications

Socialtext integrates with virtually any traditional system of record, such as CRM and ERP systems, allowing you to trigger new information flows and business processes.

Established, innovative firm

Established in 2002, Socialtext is recognized as the first company to deliver social software to businesses. Socialtext's enterprise social networking products provide simpler ways for employees to share vital information and work together in real-time. The Socialtext platform unlocks knowledge flows, removes information silos, and increases business performance. More than 6,500 businesses worldwide have accelerated their business performance with Socialtext, including Oxford University Press, Mayo Clinic, Getty Images, Symantec, Meredith Corporation, NYU Stern, OSIsoft, The Washington Post, and Eptaph Records.