



# Six Steps to Drive Social Software Adoption



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## About the Author



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## Adoption is everything

Companies are deploying social software solutions – Web 2.0 technologies such as microblogging, social networking, wikis, and internal blogs – because they can dramatically improve decision cycle times and organizational effectiveness. But social software only produces these results to the extent it is adopted by users. Business social software drives group productivity product vs. personal productivity, and because of this large-scale adoption is critical to its success. A group productivity product can only benefit the group if it is used by the group.

Since the success or failure of any social software solution you consider will be a direct result of its adoption rate, it is critical that you have absolute confidence in adoption before you begin. There are plenty of examples of failed social software projects. Why did they fail? Because they were not embraced by users.

While certain strategies encourage faster adoption, adoption is not something that can be mandated. Adoption occurs when users decide for themselves that the solution provides them with a net benefit. It happens when users want to use the product, and when they take action as a result. Users very quickly weigh “what’s in it for me?” against any perceived pain, such as giving up the comfort of an old way of doing something.

A short list of the 5 product capabilities most critical to adoption success is outlined in our separate whitepaper, “*The 5 Most Critical Requirements for Enterprise Social Software.*”

This paper assumes the social software you choose has this short list of product capabilities and is therefore “highly adoptable.” The purpose of this companion paper is to outline a carefully planned roll-out process for social software; one that will generate the fastest adoption across your enterprise.

## Six Steps to Drive Social Software Adoption

### ***Step #1: Encourage a range of use cases***

To get started with an enterprise social software solution, you should choose 3-5 lead use cases to pursue in your initial implementation. We recommend a mix of company-wide and group-specific use cases. Company-wide use cases deliver a broad exposure within your company, while group-specific use cases generate deep business value. Below are some potential highest value initial use cases.

Top company-wide use cases:

- Company intranet
- Company directory
- New hire onboarding
- Employee suggestion box
- Competitive intelligence
- Company off-site meetings and events

Group-specific use cases:

- Project teams
- Departments or business units
- Professional communities (e.g., office assistants, finance managers, etc.)
- Social communities (e.g., golfers, running club, reading clubs)
- Customer / partner extranets

Check to see if the social software solution comes with templates to help you get up and running quickly on your initial use cases. These templates will let you take advantage of best practices and learnings of other companies who have installed the product, and will help you get results more quickly.

## ***Step #2: Recruit energetic champions***

Successful implementation is typically driven by a core group of energetic champions committed to making your company more open, efficient and effective. You should look for these individuals to help drive adoption within your company. Ideally, there will be at least one champion helping to drive each use case. While each champion is different, there are a few common characteristics you should look for:

- Well-networked within the company (professionally and/or socially)
- Personally enthusiastic and willing to take a stand
- Interested in new uses of technology (though not necessarily technically skilled)
- Well-respected within their areas of influence (though not necessarily senior)

Check to see if the social software vendor provides materials to help your new champions understand the product, how it will benefit them, their group and the company, and their role as champion. These materials will help you speed up your role-out. As you find new champions, you should help them connect to each other through their own dedicated social network, through using blogs, a dedicated workspace and activity feeds in the social software solution, and through regularly scheduled conference calls.

## ***Step #3: Launch with hands-on activities for new users***

You have made sure to choose a social software solution that is dead easy to use, with benefits that are self-evident to users. Now you have to get your colleagues to try it. Champions should introduce the social software in a hands-on way that encourages colleagues to “get their feet wet” immediately. Road shows, lunch-and-learns, and other live presentations, augmented by a live microblogging “backchannel” are a great way to introduce your company to the new social software. We recommend that you ask participants to bring their computers and try the solution for themselves right then and there, with hands-on exercises. Here are some fun and effective ways to get colleagues engaged:

**Social networking:** Get going immediately with the social networking part of the solution: Have everyone in your company fill out their personal profile. Encourage them to add photos, background information, professional experience, expertise, interests, links and any stories that will help others get to know them. This will give them a “personality” stamp for each of their

microblogs, and in all activity feeds. Have each person choose at least five colleagues to “follow,” and place a tag on at least five personal profile pages of others.

**Desktop application:** If the social software solution comes with a desktop application, make sure every user downloads it. The desktop application provides an “always on” interface into the social software without a browser. At Socialtext we have found more users engage, and engage significantly faster when they have the desktop app.

**Microblogging:** Augment every meeting with microblogging, especially conference calls with multiple co-workers.

- Prior to the meeting, make sure everyone downloads the desktop application.
- At the beginning of the meeting, have everyone pull up the microblogging app.
- Open the meeting by asking a question, and tell people to post their response as a microblog.
- As the meeting progresses, find an opportunity to share links and information relevant to what is being discussed in the meeting.
- As people see how this works, they will follow suit and soon you will soon be augmenting the meeting in a powerful way.

**Personal dashboards:** Show everyone how to create their own personal dashboard. Make sure they include widgets that pull in external information such as Outlook e-mail, Google calendars, Twitter, MapQuest, Wikipedia, Del.icio.us, Flickr or whatever information they find most useful to have all in one place.

**Scavenger hunt:** Sponsor a contest, with token prizes for the first person or team who can find 20 specified pieces of information using the social software.

**Hands-on training:** Train new users on the social software by having their hands (not yours) on the keyboard.

Check to see if the social software vendor provides pre-packaged training and communications materials to help you with these sessions.

## **Step #4: Focus on repeated activities**

Your social software solution can shine when people use it to make everyday work processes more collaborative and social. To show your company the power of the social software, you and your champions should route repeated activities through it. Here are some of the most effective ways that other companies have done this:

- Share exciting news like customer wins, customer quotes etc via microblogging.
- Post interesting and useful materials you’ve found (e.g., articles, reports, etc.), and microblog the link.
- Create e-mail aliases for page tags by topic, and add those aliases to e-mail groups that are used to discuss specific topics, issues and ideas.
- Post meeting agendas and pre-reading, and take meeting notes in the wiki.
- Post standard documentation (reports, specs, etc.).
- Create Question-and-Answer forums about products, customers, processes, etc.
- Track to-do lists, responsibilities, and progress against completion.
- Use the solution’s internal blog to create dedicated and persistent channels for stories about customer interactions, product feedback, leadership lessons, etc.

Using the social software platform for these activities is much more efficient than previous alternatives. When meeting notes, product documentation, customer stories, etc., are created on wiki pages or blog posts, they become enduring, searchable assets of the company. Their value accrues broadly, rather than just to a select few.

## ***Step #5: Complement existing systems of record***

The more tightly you integrate the social software into the daily flow of work, the more value it delivers. You should facilitate this by making sure that the solution integrates effectively with other systems your company already uses for core business activities. You should be able to use standards-based widgets to let your users pull in information from 3<sup>rd</sup> party applications and external web sites, as well as build proprietary widgets that integrate with your own internal systems. APIs should further enable custom integrations by allowing you to automatically import data to wiki pages directly from your internal systems of record.

Here are some of the most valuable integrations with existing systems of record:

- ***Company directory.*** Use the solution as a company directory with rich user profiles, integrated to your HR data through LDAP or Active Directory.
- ***Company intranet.*** Use links and RSS feeds to integrate with your corporate intranet and other legacy internal websites. You may have a custom skinning option so the interface of the social software has your look and feel.
- ***Document Management.*** Complement your DMS or SharePoint implementation by using the social software for free-form context and discussion.
- ***Customer Relationship Management.*** Complement your CRM implementation by using the social software solution to capture call notes, discussions, and other valuable unstructured content.
- ***E-mail.*** The social software should send users configurable alerts and activity streams via e-mail, should allow users to add content to the wiki via e-mail and send a page via e-mail. Microblogging should replace and offload e-mail, as it is a better vehicle for certain types of sharing. The solution overall should result in a decrease in e-mail volume.

## ***Step #6: Leverage the community***

Many of the best ideas will come from others who use the social software solution. Check to see if the social software vendor offers an infrastructure that lets users create an active community. We encourage you to get involved in the community, post ideas, questions, answers, tips about practices that have worked for you. This way you and other users all learn from each other, and you accelerate your time-to-results.

# About Socialtext

## ***Microblogging + social networking + collaboration***

With Socialtext, your workforce benefits from a powerful combination of social software technologies adapted for business use. Your workers share and connect with private microblogging, social networking, and integrated activity feeds. They see each others' "personality stamp" at every turn and get to know each other better through rich, dynamic profiles. With Socialtext, co-workers connect with each other in a way that is fun and natural, share with each other in a way that is highly productive, and leverage each other continuously. With Socialtext in place, people have a better way to work together.

## ***Highest adoption, lowest TCO***

The Socialtext social software platform is designed for adoption. It is as easy to use as the Internet applications that are so popular today. Users simply click to the interface and start productively using the application. Microblogging and personal productivity features capture the interest of users immediately, and integrated social networking creates self-perpetuating rapid adoption.

## ***Rapid deployment, Software-as-a-Service***

Provided as software-as-a-service, the Socialtext platform can be up and running in days, and returning tangible business results in weeks. Our professional services team provides end-to-end implementation and support services to ensure success.

## ***Business results***

Using Socialtext, companies across the globe have reduced the time employees spend searching for information by 30%, and have sped up their cycle times in virtually all functions across the organization. Socialtext customers have reported compressing project cycles by 25% and reducing e-mail volume by 30% or more.

## ***Learn more about social software for business***

Visit our resources page for more whitepapers, short product videos, and other resources:  
<http://www.socialtext.com/products/resources.php>