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Social Media: Refining I.T. Communication within Education

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Executive Summary

Information Technology departments in higher education often have a difficult time communicating with faculty, staff, students and alumni. Because of the vast amount of information, some of which is more time sensitive than another, it can be a challenge to get the information out to the many different types of users as quickly. After an examination of the functional and nonfunctional communication practices of a few different higher education facilities, our team has put together a proposal on how a university's IT department can use social media to communicate to its entire user base. Our research has been conducted through the use of reading books, articles, blogs, and other online amenities as well as first-hand observations and situations that have been encountered. From our readings and observations we have been able to investigate communication throughout the academic environment from the perspective of faculty, staff, students, and alumni.

We have examined Web 2.0 and how it has changed the way that users communicate online by enabling an interactive means of communication, and real time information sharing; creating more of a "customizable" online experience that can be geared toward a user's personal inclinations. From our research we have been able to provide different software options that could be put in place to help meet the overall goal of effective and

efficient communication throughout a university. These software options include technologies such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, SharePoint, Tumbler, Socialcast, and several other applications. By having the ability to implement these technologies to help ensure more effective communication from the IT department to the rest of the university, there is then the ability to see what technologies best suit the needs of a university. By comparing these technologies, one is then provided insight into the needs, as well as level of customization that would be required to implement a solution that can be utilized to increase communication throughout an entire university, including students, faculty, and staff, not just IT. The use of software platforms, such as Socialcast, can help to create a more connected environment, while maximizing on the ability to communicate information, as well as share knowledge.

The cost of implementation depends heavily on the level of customization we achieve by making the different software options compatible with the current university systems and operations. Many of the applications are offered for free; therefore, by using the free version of the different applications, as means for testing, we can find the options whose features and functionality are most suitable for the needs

of the university, prior to purchasing and customizing them for the university environment.

By having the ability to implement several software solutions, a university could position itself to be a leader in the education industry in relation to how communication is handled, not only between different departments/divisions, but also to students and getting them more involved with what is happening in the academic community.

Introduction

Our topic originated from the observations that because of the lack of familiarity with certain technology, users of the different universities' systems are often left at a disadvantage. From the user's perspective, there is a clear need for increased information sharing among the growing student population as well as employees of various departments in regards to the workings of the technology and services provided by the Information Technology division. As a result of our investigations, we believe that through the use of social media, the IT team will be able to build a stronger connection with students, alumni, staff, and even within their own department.

Technology is continually advancing, and the latest devices are smaller and more portable. People now take work and school

with them everywhere they go and have unlimited access to the Internet. In a university setting the Information Technology team must do their best to make sure that the information and the means to access it is readily available and users know where to go to access it.

There are several tools the IT department can use to accomplish an increase in information sharing and communication, both within the department and with the rest of the university. This report will explain how a university's IT department can use social media sites and applications like Facebook, Twitter and Skype to share information and increase connectivity throughout the university's campuses. Combined with a strong search-able knowledge base, social media can go a long way to help an IT department run as efficiently as possible. We have done research to show how these different social media platforms that were intended for personal use are becoming increasingly utilized in the educational and business environments.

The Problem with Current Communications

In an article entitled, *The Impact of Organizational Context and Information Technology on Employee Knowledge-Sharing Capabilities*, authors Kim & Lee state:

> Knowledge sharing requires the dissemination of individual employee's work-related experiences and collaboration between and among individuals, subsystems, and organizations; collaboration with other agencies and stakeholders is also required for improved knowledge sharing. (2006)

An important goal of an IT department is to inform and share knowledge with users of the technologies available as well as the problems and resolutions that may be occurring within the system.

Currently at many universities, most general information updates are sent through email or posted on the university's portal. Most of this information is in reference to university activities, policy changes, and safety and security updates. This data is important information that students, faculty and staff should know; however, a great deal of the recipients never seem to receive it. This lapse of communication is typically because users do not check their university email on a regular basis; they neglect to read portal updates. Possible explanations for a user to neglect reading, or simply misunderstanding the information within the email message could be because it is too technical, or too much for the recipient to take in at a glance. Regarding how information is shared between different departments, there also seems to be a lack of

structure and standardization. For example, outside of emails and portal updates, most information shared between departments is through word of mouth. And as with many scenarios, the depth of knowledge in reference to the information that one receives may come down to being about whom one knows. Word of mouth may not always be reliable, and may also not be received by all those who need the information. Relaying such informative messages to all of the users of a system can sometimes be problematic. It could be because users do not tend to check the email accounts given to them or that they do not have access to them because there is a problem with an internal mail server. An example of such a situation would be if the network on campus is down. Students may be on their way to campus to do school work. While commuting they may not frequently check the university webpage or their student email. Furthermore, if the email or web server is down, then that is one less means of communication. By using a third party, such as social media, which students frequently access, the IT department can better ensure that the message is being relayed. This scenario would even allow them to convey the message even if their entire system was crippled. This aspect of implementing a social media platform can be considered as a key element of an organization’s business continuity plan, for such emergencies.

Another way in which a university IT team communicates with the university's users is through the university's portal which every student and employee at the university can access. Almost all universities have similar types of portal systems in place. While these portals are great tools to aid in communication among a school's population, there are additions that could serve to increase functionality. The portal is used as a hub for customized and personalized information. For instance, students can view their personal account information, their student account information, their email, their course information, and general university information. From the portal students, both prospective and current, are able to submit and monitor their application to the university, register for classes, submit their financial aid applications and view their transcripts. They are also able to send and receive e-mail, access a personal calendar, check out game schedules and scores, view the campus events calendar and explore general happenings at the university. Students and faculty also tend to have access to online courses and materials, including exclusive access to the library catalogs, databases, and electronic resources.

Administrative personnel can view academic and administrative news, forms, policies, and planning guides. The portal also allows alumni to stay connected by sharing job opportunities currently being offered at the university. It also

allows them to view alumni directories, and provides information on opportunities to stay involved in the university community. YouTube, Facebook and Twitter are typically used by a university's Admissions department to possibly feature professors and classes as well as advertise phases of the student admissions process.

The portal also provides access to one's university email account. Typically students have access to two different email accounts. One is a general email account that all university users are provided. The other account is accessible from Blackboard or some version of Blackboard such as BBVista. Blackboard is an application which allows students to receive class information and submit assignments. For each Blackboard course that they are enrolled in, students are able to communicate with their instructors and fellow students. As an alternative to signing into the portal system, the general email accounts can be accessed by going to particular URLs, which are different for faculty and staff versus students.

The portal system is a great way to provide information to everyone within the university's community; however, one of the main issues seems to be information overload. There are too many different options available on most portal system, and many of them are underutilized because users are not familiar with them, these options are not available to the user, or the desired

options cannot be located. Although the portal does have search capabilities, they are poor and do not always seem to pull up useful information. For example, a professor shared how he attempted to perform a search from the portal and it continued to pull up the same irrelevant information. Because of the way that the portal is designed and structured some aspects of it are newer than others, therefore leading to an environment where newer parts of the website are designed with search engine optimization in mind, while the older parts of the website are not. This may lead to problematic or un-useful search results.

Another problem with the portal is in reference to the information on it. There can be a great deal of duplication. This duplication can cause confusion when trying to complete a task, or simply add to the problem of information overload. There is also an issue with the information on the portal not being updated on a regular basis. For example, when new employees come to, or when existing employees leave from the university their contact information is not always updated in a timely manner. It may take an extended amount of time before a new employee shows up in the phonebook, or has access to their proper network resources.

Definition, History and Background of Social Media and Web 2.0

With the introduction of Web 2.0 around the year 2000, a new form of communication was launched. Web 2.0 is the term given to describe a second generation of the World Wide Web which is focused on the ability for people to collaborate and share information online. Web 2.0 basically refers to the transition from static HTML web pages to a more dynamic Web that is more organized and is based on serving Web applications to users (Krasne, 2005). “Web 2.0 exposes the functionality of applications so that other applications can leverage and integrate the functionality, thus creating a much richer application” (Anderson). These applications allow end-users to become more interactive with the browsing experience. This interactivity makes the end-user an important part of the experience. Web 2.0 is composed of several parts, including RIA (rich internet applications), SOA (service oriented architecture), and social web (Anderson). RIA allows users to bring the experience of the desktop into the browser. RIA is associated with applications such as Ajax and Flash. Ajax is a set of technologies that are used to build Web 2.0 applications. They also work in any browser, whether you are using Internet Explorer, Safari, Firefox, etc. Flash is used to view animation and videos on web pages. SOA is a key piece to Web 2.0. SOA is associated with Feeds, RSS, Web services, and mash-ups. Mash ups

combine data, presentation, or functionality from two or more sources to create new services (Anderson). It allows users to make existing data more useful, aiding in a user's personal and professional usage. Social web includes things like blogs and wiki's, which are used to interact with end-users. An Aberdeen study of Web 2.0 technology found that the most common use of it was "capturing and transferring knowledge" (Martin, 2008). Social media can be a strategic tool in capturing tacit knowledge, especially when it can be intertwined with the daily flow of work (Leatherman, 2011). Tacit knowledge is described as the "unwritten, unspoken, and hidden vast storehouse of knowledge held by practically every human being, based on their emotions, experiences, insights, intuition, observations and internalized information" (businessdictionary.com).

By capturing this knowledge organizations are able to better suit the needs of their employees, while collecting information that can be used to help the organization grow and adjust to change. Employees have always been the heart of any organization. By capturing the tacit knowledge that is associated with an employee's everyday work life, an organization is able to capture the practices of its employees in relation to how they perform and accomplish their work. Collecting and valuing tacit knowledge creates an environment that has the ability to keep track of processes and procedures,

which can then be used to reference in the future or when a problem occurs. This information can also be used to create effective training programs, evaluate an employee's knowledge base, and make adjustments that reflect the needs of employees.

There are several qualities that one should look for in Web 2.0 technology; they include good Ajax support, a language with good web services support, and an iterative language. Having good Ajax support allows for the application to be more easily managed and supported. Web services are what actually allow the user to interact online. They are much like a user interface. If the Internet were your desktop, web services would be the applications listed under "All Programs". Being iterative allows for the application to easily add features, deploy features, as well as easily update the application. This aspect is critical when the application is being utilized by many users.

In an example of the need for increased knowledge transfer, the La Salle IT Department was once given the task to complete a hardware and software upgrade. The upgrade affected how confidential documents were scanned into the University's Banner system. Prior to this particular upgrade there had been no University specific documentation available to assist with the system changes. This lack of documentation made the processes more complicated and drawn out. The IT department was left with the task of using online resources to find a standardized

document that could be referenced to aid in the upgrade, then translate the standardized documentation into something specifically written for the University's needs. If there had been some type of data repository in place, then the information required to upgrade the system would have been stored within its database. To access the needed information, the IT team would merely have to perform a search that would have provided any information related to the topic. IT could have then used that information to assist with the upgrade. This incident is a small example of how social media can be used to improve communication and help create a more advanced system for documentation within the IT department. Although there may be several ways to document procedures, we feel that the use of social media will create a one-stop shop for your information needs. For example, rather than searching through paperwork, or using several resources to find all the answers, a social media site would allow the data to be documented and stored by tags, date and time, therefore making it easier to find the information that you need, while being able to see who the information came from and ask that person questions if needed. Storing this information allows employees to collaborate and build off of each other's thoughts and knowledge. Social media also allows for the information to be seen by everyone, thus tapping into

unknown resources that may have knowledge about the topic, which the user may not have known to even ask.

Another example involves an email project that the Bucks County Community College IT team was working on. The email system was due to be upgraded; however, the person who had worked as the email administrator for several years had recently left the College. For many years prior this employee handled all responsibilities related to the email system, and no one took notice of the fact that there was no trace of documentation to reference when it came to upgrading the system. This complete inability to retrace the former employee's work required current employees to manually recreate the system. This situation exemplifies the importance of creating an accessible place for documentation storage. Social media would give the College the ability to store all needed information. By utilizing the site as a means for information sharing and collaboration, users can create groups, and use those groups to work on specific projects. They can also ask questions, or execute updates and follow-ups.

The way people work with technology is changing rapidly, offering an enormous efficiency gain to those who embrace the new tools available. These tools enable contextual, agile and simplified information exchange. They also provide collaboration to distributed workforces and networks of partners and customers

(Marks and Patel). In recent years, there has been a great deal of discussion about social media in relation to networking and information sharing. Many organizations are seeking ways to acquire information about how social media will allow them to implement efficient and effective communication practices, not only to external customers, but also as a means of internal communication to employees. Social media includes the various online technology tools that enable people to communicate through the Internet to share information and resources. Social media can include text, audio, video, images, podcasts, and other multimedia communications (Doyle). Even with all the documentation available, few organizations are willing to take advantage of social media options and utilize these tools within their work environment.

The ASTD, the American Society for Training and Development, recently conducted a survey and found that only 24% of respondents were in organizations with informal learning activities including a social networking element (Boiros). One of the reasons that organizations may be showing such hesitation is due to the fact that it is difficult to separate the elements of social media that are associated with one's personal life from elements which can be beneficial to an organization. Other organizations are also experiencing a great deal of uncertainty about how to best implement this new approach to ensure

additional value. There are many people who are classified as "addicted" to Facebook. Organizations may feel that utilizing a social media site internally may become more of a distraction to those employees, cutting into their productivity at work and taking focus and concentration away from the organization's objective. It is known that many employees already visit some form of social media site during the workday. Using social media as a form of communication will only keep those users more informed. For those who do not regularly visit social media sites, they can continue to use other ways to stay connected. If an application were to be utilized on a university wide level; an application such as Socialcast, which can be used to keep all faculty, staff, and students connected, then there will be more need to customize the application and set restrictions within it to meet the needs of the university, by helping to eliminate problematic situations. As with misuse of any other university supplied software or application, there must be consequences set in place for wrongful actions. There would need to be training and usage workshops for all faculty and staff so that they can set an example of what the application is being used for, in order to capitalize on its capabilities. Much of the direction of the social media site will build from those initial seeds of information posted. That information can be used to blaze the trail and get people interested in the social media site.

Information posted should all be set in place to reflect the core principles of the university.

When effective social networking environments are utilized they can help to address a number of challenges that the organization may encounter. Some challenges include: lack of communication, lack of information sharing, and information overload. Many working professionals today are managing an extensive amount of information that has been passed down over time from predecessors. This information may have been accumulated through best practices and how-to manuals, developed internally as a way to improve normal functions, or inherited as part of the organization's corporate culture. This data can be hard to manage over time, but it is crucial to the operations of the organization. With changes in communication and how people interact, there have been new developments in ways to communicate and share information. If this information is not properly managed and documented, then the resulting lack of information acquired could cause many issues down the line in terms of system upgrades, employee turn-overs, and training new employees within certain positions. A major concern of many managers and executives is in reference to losing the decades of institutional knowledge solely contained in the minds of key employees. Having this information documented, stored, and accessible to relevant personnel can become a key factor in an

organization's progress towards an environment that has reliable information sharing and training practices.

Another important aspect that must be taken into consideration is the process that employees must go through to find data that is relevant to the issue or process that they are currently handling. Because most information has been accumulated over time, searching through it to find the appropriate data can be a tedious and extensive process, especially if the information is not organized properly. There is a need to categorize and sort the information by use and currency, as it relates to issues one may be experiencing. Social media communities, with their power to amplify the most relevant content, can act as a spotlight on the most useful resources. This "sorting" in turn drives a higher level of productivity (Boiros). Allowing employees to recommend or "like" certain information can be very helpful in directing people to the most relevant content for their needs.

An example of how this aspect of social-media-like interaction can be utilized in an organizational environment comes to us from an Ottawa-based, e-commerce software startup company called Shopify. The CEO of this organization found that he was spending a great deal of his weekends working on projects and prototypes. Every Monday he found himself wanting to tell other people about them. It was during those informal chats that

he discovered two things. Firstly, there were a number of instances where his fellow employees were working on something similar; secondly, they were not sharing their successes with others. This realization led him to the idea of incorporating social media. He decided to create a custom-built, Twitter-inspired platform where employees could share information on the different tasks and projects, which they were working on (Graham).

Initially, they had an issue with eliciting employee involvement. They decided to offer participants the opportunity to gain cash bonuses. When management found something that they thought to be beneficial, they would then give that person a cash bonus. With this new initiative, they saw an increase in the amount of posts by employees. The potential to receive a cash incentive was enough motivation to attract ideas. From that, the system was then able to take on a life of its own (Graham). Collaboration throughout the organization also improved. Employees started using the system to break down internal silos. In one case, one group was creating a recruitment video and needed help editing their content. Within two hours of posting a message on the social networking platform, they were able to identify two people on the staff with the exact experience they were seeking. These skills would not have been obvious given the employees' current roles at the

company. One of the biggest upsides of the system is the idea that accomplishments can be shared with everyone throughout the company, not just with one's direct supervisor. The posting can serve as an effective publication and can safeguard the employees' ideas from being passed off as someone else's (Graham).

Productive discussions and comments can help shed light on issues that would have taken significantly more time to resolve if only based on an individual's knowledge. When one member of the organization recommends a course or development program that helped in his or her professional career, there will likely arise a burst of interest in that program. Such modeling of effective behavior is one of the ways that social platforms can help bring about more self-directed learning within an organization.

With the emergence of social networking there is now a tool that can be used to create more engaging and effective communication outcomes. Some organizations have found that by enhancing the social experience of networking, they are likely to realize better participation from employees, especially when working on self-directed projects and tasks. Having the ability to post a question that can be viewed by employees throughout the organization, the poster is then given the opportunity to find a solution that best suits the circumstances. This

additional information may also help one to expand one's knowledge of the topic by not only looking at the problem from the perspective of others, but also comparing proposed solutions for the most appropriate resolution. This type of learning environment creates a heightened understanding of the topic. This intelligence may lead to a great deal of other ideas that can improve performance and create better practices within the organization.

In today's typical work environment, many job titles do not tell the whole story about a person's range of skills and expertise. Not having the ability to tap into this informal and undocumented source of information can lead to inefficient communication, especially in times of transition. With the increase of globalization, operating remotely, and virtualization, the informal transfer of knowledge makes matters even more difficult (Leatherman, 2011). The reason for this degradation in communication is there is not as much face-to-face time within the work place. While the office is becoming more digitalized, the employees are becoming less connected. Since employees do not get as much chance to socialize, they lose the chance to become acquainted with the individuals within the institution. This situation can create a problem because an individual's skill-set may be overlooked. A social networking platform with the right set of features can help employees

quickly locate internal experts. By creating a platform, which can be used to capture information and allow it to be discovered later when needed, is an effective way to use these internal experts.

The best way to pinpoint who the internal experts may be is to have employees create a user-profile. From this profile employees are able to list interests, skills, and knowledge that may not be evident based on their job title alone. Moreover, in some cases these profiles may contain some level of personal interests, and these personal facts can become the basis for a human connection between employees who are unfamiliar with each other (Boiros). In conjunction with personal profiles, it is further beneficial to have other employees recognize who the experts in various fields might be. Most individuals who are considered experts are individuals that have built this reputation over time – based on participation in different discussions and the different ways they may have helped other individuals within the organization. The ability to define experts allows for a knowledge base of employees that can be labeled knowledge experts in a specific area. This knowledge base allows users to locate the proper specialist to assist them. For example, a search for an issue with Blackboard, by many colleges and universities, may produce a list of documentation, references and the institution’s own internal

experts. Their contributions, such as comments, notes, and discussions, should also be searchable, so that valuable pieces of information can be recalled as needed (Boiros).

In many of the organizations today, there is a great deal of diversity in terms of age and cultural differences. Creating a platform that is appealing to the entire workforce will help to maximize effectiveness. Much of the younger generation is already in the habit of using social networking as a form of communication. They have grown up with these technologies and most have made them a big part of their lives outside of work. Getting these individuals on board with the social learning experience should be quite easy; however, when speaking in terms of the baby boomers it may not be as smooth of a process. In many of the organizations today, there are more individuals that are adjusting to the technology than there are individuals that have grown up with them. This situation can sometimes cause a problem when trying to incorporate more technology into the workplace. If organizations take advantage of Millennials and their inherent skill with technology, then the organizations can use the Millennials to help train other generations. Though Gen Xers and Baby Boomers may have more experience in the workplace, Millennials have more experience with social media.

Social Networking Users

Table 1: % of adults who use social networking sites

	Feb/Mar 2005*	Aug 2006*	Nov/Dec 2008*	Jan 2010*	*05-10 *Change*
All	5%	11%	27%	41%	**+36%**
Millennial	7%	51%	71%	75%	**+68%**
Gen X	7%	10%	38%	50%	**+43%**
Boomer	5%	4%	13%	30%	**+25%**
Silent	2%	*	2%	6%	**+4%**

This table shows the percent of adults that use social networking sites and what age category they fall into. The table also shows the increase of usage over five years (pewresearch.org).

With a new generation stepping into the workforce and an older generation nearing retirement, it is now important for organizations to take into consideration the way that this newer generation learns and communicates. According to PEW Research Organization, the newer generation of young adults entering into the workforce is known as Millennials. They are more ethnically and racially diverse than older adults. They are less religious, less likely to have served in the military, and are on track to become the most educated generation in American history (pewreasearch.org). They seem to have a different way of thinking than does Generation X and its predecessors; therefore, it is important for organizations to evolve some of their practices to meet the habits of the new workforce.

Millennials are history's first "always connected" generation. Immersed in digital technology and social media, they treat their multi-tasking hand-held gadgets almost like a body part. Those who have attended college are more likely to be online, use social networking sites, watch and post video online, and use mobile devices for messaging purposes. Younger Millennials are even more likely than older Millennials to use the Internet and social networking sites (pewresearch.org).

This generation far outpaces other generations of Americans in the use of social networking sites. A study conducted by the PEW research group found that three-fourths (75%) of Millennials have created a social networking profile compared with 50% of Gen Xers. Only 30% of Boomers and 6% of members of the Silent generation have created their own profile on a social networking site (pewreasearch.org). The study further found that growth in online social networking among Millennials is followed closely by increases among Gen Xers. Currently, 50% of Gen Xers use social networking sites, up from 38% in 2008 and 10% in 2006. Use of social networking sites also has grown among Baby Boomers. In 2005 and 2006, only about 5% of Boomers used these sites, but by 2008 it was 13%; that has grown to 30% according to the current survey (pewresearch.org).

Millennials Make Frequent Visits to Social Networking Sites

Table 2. Percent of social networking users who visit the site they use most often.

	several times a day	once a day	every few days	once a week or less
All social media users	21	23	23	34
Millennial	29	26	20	25
Gen X	19	19	24	39
Boomer	11	26	25	38

Note: Based on adults who have their own social networking profile. Silent Generation not shown because of small sample size. "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown (pewresearch.org).

From the opposing perspective, many believe that the Millennial generation lacks professionalism and over estimates their ability to multi-task. By adopting its preferred mode of communication (and socialization), some believe that organizations are allowing the millennial generation to procrastinate and not use work-time effectively. Some may believe that is exactly what an organization will be doing; however, by looking at the situation from the macro-level, the functionality available within social media technologies can allow for effective and efficient communication, if properly utilized. It may be better to look at how an organization can

turn what is already being used into something that it can benefit from. As studies have shown it is not only the Millennial generation that is utilizing social media technologies; a large percentage of the Boomers and Generation X are utilizing it as well. Many organizations have benefitted from social media's ability to stay connected with customers; but it can also be used to help improve communication internally, while being able to monitor and archive the information that is being communicated.

Another negative perception many people have about social media is its lack of privacy, in relation to the information that is being shared within the platform. Many people have an ill feeling toward social media because they fear the information, or pictures posted, could negativity affect them, and how others perceive them. In terms of utilizing social media within the IT department as means of information sharing, this negative perception will not affect the individual when using it to communicate with IT. Because it will be up to the user to "like" the IT page, and therefore have access to the information on it, their usage of social media will not change. The only thing that the user would have to consider is that IT now has access to their personal page and the information on it. If they are uncomfortable with that, then it is their discretion whether they want to be "connected" with the IT page or not. Users also

have the option to view the content of the IT page, without actually “liking” it. By simply following the page user are able to stay connect and informed, without allowing the IT page to view the user’s personal page, information or content. In terms of utilizing a social media platform throughout the university, the lack of privacy can actually be viewed as a strength. For instance, in order for a social media platform to be effectively used on a university-wide level a great deal of training should take place to ensure proper utilization. All faculty and staff should attend workshops in order to make sure that they are using the platform in a way that is promoted and accepted by the university. It will then be up to faculty and staff to set an example, as well as make sure that students are properly utilizing the technology. Faculty and staff have to make sure that students are aware of the negative effects of misinformation, and that there are consequences to all negative actions. It is important to express to all users that the information posted on the site is viewable by everyone at the university. This training will make most people reconsider before making questionable posts. By having standards, and customizing the application to eliminate or minimize problems, a university can create a better-connected environment. From this platform, users will have access to information about other users via profiles. In conjunction with proper training, users

can then have the ability to post information about themselves, that others may not have known, or that is not directly connected to their job duties. Information sharing at this magnitude will help users to build relationships and share information with people whom they may not have known they shared commonalities.

This situation may also be an opportunity to set an example of ways to use social media in one's personal life. By seeing the tool used on more of a professional level, users may then be able to make connections and see the actual effects of the information being shared.

Social Media Categories

The use of social networking sites has grown rapidly over the past five years. In 2005, only 5% of the public used social networking sites; that share grew to 11% in 2006 and to 27% in 2008; and in a current survey, 41% say they have created their own profile on a social networking site, such as Facebook, MySpace or LinkedIn (pewresearch.org). Twenty percent of the world's population – 1.2 billion users – is currently using social networking. "With the emergence of these powerful new collaborative technologies, this transformation will radically reshape the nature of work, the boundaries of the enterprise, and the responsibilities of business leaders" (McAfee).

Social Networking Sites

Social networking sites allow users to create a profile and communicate with others via messages. They can also allow uploading of photos and videos to share and have status updates so users can keep friends up-to-date with their whereabouts and activities.

Facebook

Facebook is undoubtedly the most commonly used social networking site. In 2010 it was home to 750 million active users (250 million of which are mobile users), 250 million monthly interactions through third-party Web sites, support for 70 languages, customers in 190 countries, and more than 700 billion minutes per month spent on the site by its entire user base with an average of approximately 30 minutes a day per user, Facebook controls 65.40% of the US market share in social networking (Gariffo, 2011. Facebook).

Table 3. Social Networking Leaders – May 2010

Social Network	Unique Monthly Visits	Total User Base	Global Site Ranking
Facebook	**1.** 550 million	700 Million	#1
Twitter	**2.** 180 million	<200 Million	#2
LinkedIn	**3.** 100 Million	100 Million	#3
MySpace	**4.** 80.5 million	30 Million	#4

This table shows the number of users that the top four social networking sites see. Here we have unique visitors to the sites monthly, the number of total users they have as of 2010 and where they are placed among other social networking sites globally. (Gariffo, 2011. LinkedIn)

In a study done by Pempek, Yermolayeva, Calvert, and Sandra entitled *College students' social networking experiences on Facebook* in 2009, they state:

> 92 undergraduates completed a diary-like measure each day for a week, reporting daily time use and responding to an activities checklist to assess their use of the popular social networking site, Facebook. At the end of the week, they also completed a follow-up survey. Results indicated that students use Facebook approximately 30 minutes throughout the day as part of their daily routine. (2009)

Another study done in 2011 by authors Tiryakioglu and Erzurum entitled, *Use of Social Networks as an Education Tool* reported the following:

> Fifty of 67 instructors (75%) responding the survey have a Facebook account. Of 50 instructors with an account, 25 are female and 25 are male. It is observed that Facebook users are heavily felt in the age range of 41-45 years. Twenty-eight of participants (56%) stated that they check their Facebook account daily; 14 (28%) stated that they login to Facebook account several times a week; 6 (12%) stated several times a month; and finally 2 participants (4%) said that they check their Facebook accounts several times a year. (2011)

This survey shows that faculty, as well as students, tend to use Facebook rather frequently. Though student use seems the same in the 2009 study as the average use a year later, mobile technology is currently giving more and more users the ability to access this social media site more frequently. If the 2009 study was repeated one might suspect that the average of Millennials using social media would be undoubtedly higher because of the ease of use with new mobile technologies.

It seems logical that Facebook is popular among the academic community. Starting out as a social networking site that allowed students from different colleges and universities to come together and reconnect, creating an interactive digital yearbook of sorts; Facebook is now open to the public and has users from all over the world. This website and mobile application allows users to link up with friends, send messages, chat, post photos among many other things. The Facebook company overview states: “Millions of people use Facebook every day to keep up with friends, upload an unlimited number of photos, share links and videos, and learn more about the people they meet” (Facebook, 2011).

Although users are the most common type of profile on Facebook, users are also able to create groups and fan pages. Groups allow for private communications only between members if the group is established as private. Users must be granted membership to the group from one of the group administrators. Fan pages, however, are open to the public and do not allow for private communication. The IT department can use groups in order to build a sense of connection among the IT department. We would suggest that this interaction be a private group possibly for events within the IT department. This scenario would allow the interdepartmental sharing of photos among other things to increase camaraderie through sharing things with one another.

IT could also establish a fan page and request all of its users to “Like” this page in order to follow. Users would then be able to see when IT posts network outages, account changes, hints on making passwords more secure, update notifications, tips and the like. This mechanism would keep users up-to-date about what IT is doing and create more of a personal connection with its users.

Facebook has many different privacy features in order to protect its users. It allows the ability for users to limit who can see posts, picture tags and many other things. Though this privacy issue may not be a factor for the fan page, we would highly recommend such privacy settings for the group page. This action will help maintain the separation between public and private. For example, if the networking division were scheduling maintenance on a server they may use the IT fan page to notify all of the university’s users but then use the networking division group to discuss the exact details of the maintenance that is taking place and why. Because of the growing number of users, and the way that it is being utilized, Facebook is continuously updating its privacy policy. The way that the application would be used by the university would involve mainly inward communication. Inward communication is a form of information sharing and communication that is kept within an organization; therefore, no outside sources are involved. This

form of information sharing is more secure and reduces the risk of data being compromised, or misused.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is currently the most popular social networking site among business users (Gariffo, 2011. LinkedIn). “As of November 3, 2011, LinkedIn operates the world’s largest professional network on the Internet with more than 135 million members in over 200 countries and territories” (LinkedIn, 2011). This site is dedicated to business professionals who are looking to promote themselves and their business. Users can add information about themselves to what is essentially an online resume. As more connections are made more profiles become available.

These online profiles can help the university’s community discover more details about the IT staff and the kind of training the staff member has had. The profiles will act as a way to discover experts in certain areas and who can assist in certain situations. Having these profiles available for the university’s community will also allow users to have a better understanding of who works within the IT staff.

Blogging and Microblogging

Blogs are forums, which allow users to create posts, which others can follow. Microblogging is another version of this,

which allows smaller posts usually up to 150 characters, similar to a text message on a mobile phone. Blogs can be used as an important tool in helping users coordinate and work off of each other's ideas.

Twitter

Twitter is another popular social networking website and application that is primarily a mobile application, which allows users to make essentially small blog posts, up to 150 characters. In Gariffo's 2011 article entitled Company Brief: Twitter, he states:

> Twitter is also now publicly searchable. In October 2009, Twitter made a deal with Microsoft to index tweets for its Bing search engines. Yahoo later gained access to the entirety of Twitter's information stream as well. As the Twitter phenomenon has unfolded, the site has become a forum for public relations, consumer complaints, marketing, news gathering, emergency response, and a number of other purposes – including the spread of "pointless babble" (40.55 percent of all tweets, according to a study from Pear Analytics in August 2009). (2011)

Users are able to "follow" other users in order to see their posts as well. They can tag other users by using the "at"

symbol (@) character or include it in a group of similar postings with other users by using the “pound” (#) character, which is called a hash tag. This social media application is a lot less complex than Facebook and other social media sites, and is referred to as micro-blogging. Twitter describes itself as “a real-time information network that connects you to the latest information about what you find interesting. Simply find the public streams you find most compelling and follow the conversations” (Twitter, 2011). As for use within IT, Twitter is a great place for IT to post things like network outages, occasional nonofficial password change reminders, and tips of the day.

Tumblr

Tumblr is a blog-type site that allows users to post videos, pictures, links and notes for others to see. The company’s promotional material states:

> Tumblr lets you effortlessly share anything. Post text, photos, quotes, links, music, and videos, from your browser, phone, desktop, email, or wherever you happen to be. You can customize everything, from colors, to your theme's HTML. (2011)

These blogs are visible to anyone if not otherwise specified, and users do not need an account to view them. Users can create posts and then schedule them for later posting. Tumblr would be

a beneficial place to put weekly tips as it can be archived and users can go back and look at past posts. It is also searchable by post month or by word search of either the title or body of the post. IT must be aware that users do not need an account to see their Tumblr page unless IT increases privacy settings.

Video Conferencing and Instant Messaging

Skype

Skype is a social media tool in which users can chat either via text, audio or video. IT can use this social media application to hold audio or videoconferences without having to purchase expensive equipment. While there are other chat clients available, Skype makes the most sense for IT since it is so popular, therefore, many users already have it installed and are familiar with its interface. Skype offers business accounts which allow users to have the option of enabling multiline calls. This application can be used within the IT department to allow members to communicate with one another. Microsoft offers a similar product called Communicator, which has recently become Lync (see the next section). Moreover, Microsoft recently purchased Skype, so we can only assume that the two may be combined soon.

Lync

Microsoft Lync is a chat client, which also has video capability. User accounts are synced with Outlook accounts in an

Active Directory setting, allowing users to access a multitude of ways to communicate to both IT staff as well as other users within the network. While chatting users also have the option to screen share and import Power Point presentations, as well as images. Using audio detection, the user who is speaking will show as the predominate video to anyone in the video presentation. This feature allows for interactive multimedia presentations to be held with many members of the Active Directory community. Similar to other instant messaging, users may place out of office or away messages. This amenity also sync's with the user's Outlook calendar; if they are to show as busy in Outlook they will also appear as so in Lync.

Photo and Video Sharing

YouTube

YouTube is a video sharing site that allows users to post videos and share them with others. Many educational institutions use YouTube to share videos of events from their campuses or interviews with students. The website allows users to create accounts, upload videos, comment on videos posted by other users, follow other users, and create a favorite videos list. Users also have the ability to create a video channel, including videos that the user has created. IT could use this site to help create detailed instructions for users with explanations on

using classroom technologies, or how to use new hardware, or set up new software for their computer.

Enterprise 2.0 Software

Enterprise 2.0 refers to the use of Web 2.0 technologies within an organization to enable and/or streamline business processes, while enhancing collaboration and connecting people through the use of social media tools. Though there are many new immerging software applications in this area, this report will only discuss two, SharePoint and Socialcast.

SharePoint

Microsoft SharePoint is considered an Enterprise 2.0 tool though it has existed long before the phrase was coined. This application permits users to work on Word documents together as well as host Wiki type pages for users to add content. The new 2010 version allows much more interaction among users such as merging Exchange and SharePoint calendars, the ability to share and collaborate on diagrams from Microsoft Visio, and even allows for Facebook integration (Barr, 2011).

Socialcast

Socialcast is an Enterprise 2.0 social networking tool, which works similarly to Facebook, in that it has a lot of the same functionality and layout; however, Socialcast is geared toward enterprise collaboration and communication. Users are

able to share documents, make comments, and connect with other co-workers all in one place. One of the main differences between Socialcast and the other enterprise level social media software solutions is that Socialcast sets their primary focus on data, rather than users and unnecessary functionality. Setting the focus on data allows an organization to ensure that they are sharing information that is necessary and relevant to its community.

Socialcast was founded by True Ventures, located in San Francisco. The software is basically used to bring activity streams as a way for employees within a corporation to communicate (socialcast.com). An activity stream is merely a list of content items that have been posted to the web. If you are a member of different websites that allow you to publish or bookmark content, you might want to create an activity stream to make it easier for people to keep track of what you are doing (learnbythedrop.com). The stream allows you to have all of your recent web activity summarized on one page with links to all of the original items. You can also use activity streams to create an online content network that gathers feeds from a variety of different sources related to the same topic (learnbythedrop.com). Employees who are used to Facebook at home can come to work and use the same features and functionality

within Socialcast to perform tasks and communicate and collaborate in an enterprise environment.

Because of security issues many business are not comfortable running certain applications on the cloud. With Socialcast the university has the ability to run the platform from anywhere including the organization's own server, a personal cloud, or a Statistical Analysis System (SAS). Socialcast defines SAS as:

> An integrated system of software products that enable statistical analysis, data warehousing, business planning, reporting, independent and remote computing, as well as retrieval, management, and mining of data, in a business environment. (sas.com)

Socialcast focuses on exploiting the power of activity streams. The application provides the ability to bring in a central feed without having to create a new user profile. Having this functionality available, while leveraging existing user data, Socialcast can be used to add a great deal of value to applications such as SharePoint, by bringing in a real time communication layer.

One feature of Socialcast includes the use of EASE. EASE (enterprise activity stream engine) can be deployed in one's own private cloud or data center on VMWare. When dealing with an application that pulls data from different enterprise

applications with sensitive data, there must be a way to control what data is digested. With EASE, Socialcast can provide the ability to run within the university's own environment, under specific security rules (socialcast.com).

There is a free version of Socialcast; however, customizing the application in order to meet the university's organizational needs would require a fee. For example, if the university would like to utilize adapters that can be used to integrate Socialcast with different enterprise systems used by a university such as Blackboard, or the portal; or if the university would like to host the application on its own network or private cloud, there are costs associated with that. To use the application's web version, without integrating it into the university's current system would be a free service.

This social networking application connects through Active Directory, or an LDAP compatible system, to pull information associated with a user's profile and syncs it with Socialcast so that profiles are automatically created, therefore eliminating the need for users to manually create them, while allowing them to access it with their existing employee credentials. They also offer single sign on (socialcast.com).

In certain employee positions, such as new student recruiters, having a presence in and monitoring information associated with the organization is part of the job

responsibilities. With Socialcast a university would have the ability to edit the home screen and link the Socialcast account with other programs such as Twitter and Facebook, so that they may be monitored all in one place. With this feature the university can also monitor competitors, allow private among colleagues, then send any feedback back out. Also, similar to Facebook, Socialcast offers the ability to add comments, “like” things, and follow documents.

Socialcast provides the ability to create groups so that people can send messages to specific sets of individuals without bombarding the entire organization with information that is not relevant to them. Anyone can create these groups, and they can be used for projects, for office locations, or for any other group related commonalities. Sending and receiving email messages to individuals both internal and external to an organization from Socialcast is also possible. This feature would come in handy when dealing with outside vendors that are not familiar with and do not have access to the organization’s system(s). For example, if several employees are working on a project that involves an outside vendor, who does not have access to the university’s network resources, they can create a message feed of their internal communication and send that feed as an email message to the outside vendor, therefore keeping that vendor apprised of what is being communicated.

Socialcast currently has applications for iPhone, Blackberry, Android, and Symbian. This multi-platform capability will allow the application to be accessed from almost any mobile device. They also have an Outlook plugin, which allows users to bring the activity stream directly into Outlook (socialcast.com).

Pros and Cons of Social Media in the Workplace

Social Networking can play a big part in keeping everyone up-to-date in the workplace. With controllable newsfeeds on Facebook and Twitter, users can choose which status updates they would like to see more often. This capability can be especially helpful for IT in academic institutions because they can keep not only their staff abreast of situations, but also the entire campus. For example, the University Of Pennsylvania Law School had a network outage and IT needed to inform the entire institution. Typically, the IT department would post this on the portal, and possibly send an email message; however, the outage took out both web and email servers. Social media, which was in place through Facebook and Twitter, provided, in this case, another way to communicate with the campus. This secondary means of communication, since not being hosted on campus, allows for communication when there is a problem with servers locally and

also has the potential to reach a wider audience. Many users are constantly checking their social media via mobile devices or on their computer but are not as likely to check the institution's website or their college email if they are on the go. Though email-forwarding options exist, many users are still not familiar with the process they must go through to setup the functionality through their email accounts. They are, however, likely to be checking their social media applications, providing another way to ensure that the information reaches them.

Since web-capable mobile devices are becoming increasingly popular, more users are expecting to participate in a mobile web interaction with colleges and universities. Social media allows them to interact with IT in this way. By giving end users more access and availability to IT, they will create a better rapport with IT. They will feel more of a connection and as though they are being kept abreast of the situation. Furthermore, users will also have answers to questions almost as soon as they are available.

Doing all of this requires little maintenance for the IT department. Facebook has the ability to sync with Twitter and Tumblr; therefore, all that IT would need to do, for example, would be to put a Tip of the Day on Tumblr, and it would then also show on up Facebook. The same would apply to Twitter, by putting a notification of a network outage or maintenance to a

server on Twitter will show on their Facebook status update. This integration will make it easy for IT to make these updates and have them show up across multiple social media platforms. If the web team wishes, there are also applications that would allow Twitter feeds to show on the webpage for another promotional outlet. This feature not only helps to keep the website current and advertise events, but also promotes the Twitter page to users as well.

Before these social media start to take foothold within the IT department, it would be beneficial for IT to create privacy seminars for their employees. Employees should be warned to be careful about what they post on their personal social media accounts and be wary of who can view it. In the past, many employees have been held accountable by their employers for things the employee posts on these social media accounts. For example, if an employee posts a status update that tells that he was at the beach with a GPS tag when he called out sick, the employer has a right to hold them accountable. By employees having such status updates public, they can inadvertently do harm to themselves. These seminars would have to be a part of the employee orientation held by Human Resources, as new employees must be made aware of these ramifications as well.

Furthermore, employees may give out information they should not or say negative things about their company. “Every e-mail or

memo could be blogged. Every employee, no matter what rank could become a voice for the company, either publicly or cloaked, some gaining more power than the entire public relations department" (Baker & Green, 2008). Although they do have freedom of speech, and it is a free social medium, it may be important to let employees know that the university has a presence online, and they should be mindful of detracting from that image.

While privacy settings exist, it seems as though not many users tend to set them – not because they do not want to use them, but because they do not know how (Light & McGrath, 2010). Because of the lack of awareness of privacy settings it is best that the university protect itself, as well as its employees, by keeping them aware of privacy settings and training them on how to utilize the applications features and functionality, therefore minimizing the risk of compromising data.

Users are now connected in so many ways because of social media and most want that to continue into their schools and their places of work. Because malicious people tend to take advantage of that fact proper security protocols must be in place. As mentioned previously, a well-defined social media user policy and training is very crucial to security. In addition to this however, groups throughout IT should work to help eliminate some of these possible threats on the back end of the system so users are not even given the opportunity to accidentally allow

malicious software to harm the system. These policies may very well be implemented already throughout the system but may need to be refined with social media sites and applications in mind. User support, in addition to continual user training, should ensure that Internet browsers, Adobe Flash Player, and virus software are up-to-date in order to prevent security holes. Networking and Information Security can work together to employ the use of packet filtering and packet inspection in order to increase visibility of where users are going and when (ISIMC, 2009). If certain sites become increasing troublesome they may be blocked. Security zones could also be established to limit the amount of access certain computers or certain users have, which would in turn limit the access a virus or a malicious user would have to the system (ISIMC, 2009). This strategy should be implemented university-wide as most users will most likely be using some form of social media but it should be intensely monitored in groups that are employing social media tactics for the university.

It is important that the information on the social networking site is regularly updated and relevant to what is currently happening within the organization. Without the presence of interesting content people may only visit the new social platform once or twice out of curiosity; but if there is not anything there to engage them, then they more than likely

will not be back. If, however, the institution were to seed the platform with great content, it would be much easier for employees to jump in and offer their first comments. Nuggets of content act like magnets for comments, and these comments attract other comments creating a flourishing community that is engaged in active discussion (Boiros). For instance, from a student's perspective; students may be uncertain as to whether IT will help them diagnose an issue with their personal computers; therefore, they can create a post stating: "Is my laptop compatible with the university's system? If not is there one that university suggests?" From this post other students who have experience with purchasing equipment through the university or an IT staff member can comment, thus allowing them to make a better-informed decision.

Proposed Solutions

With an increase in information sharing, employees can discover more efficient ways to utilize information, while allowing students to become more connected to the community and keeping them better informed on their academic venture. Here we have been highlighting several tools, which can be used to accomplish an increase in information sharing and communication among departments and to the student body.

By using social media to alert users, IT can help direct awareness to a specific problem. In this form, notifications can be expedited at a faster pace and reach a wider audience. This process would effectively increase knowledge through the entire community about information that IT needs to communicate to end-users. Another beneficial use of social media for end-users is that IT can create specific tips for their users to help them work on the network. Several examples of these specialized tips include secure password-changing tips, how to locate certain pages on the website, how to save documents on the network and instructions on the use of specific printers and scanners on campus. Publishing information in this fashion is not solely beneficial to end-users, but may also help to alleviate the volume of helpdesk phone calls and issues reported to IT by helping users become more technically competent. Social media can also be used to increase connectivity and productivity for IT employees as well. These employees would have the ability to quickly share information with one another in a few different ways. A wiki or blog would allow them to post information about jobs they have completed as well as other notable accomplishments. Such postings allow employees to have a searchable record of what things are done and when. A link from the wiki or blog can also be placed into the ticketing system in

case that ticket needs to be called on again. This information will save time and can be invaluable to an IT staff.

In addition, instant messaging or chatting can be another beneficial tool allowing the employee to see if someone is available to talk or take a call without having to call them or walk over to their office. For example, if a vendor called the university's IT office looking for a manager, any staff member could see if the managers were available to take the call and could even send them a quick message to see if one of the managers would like to take the call. By using a chat client the staff can quickly send links or messages to other staff members. In some cases the outcome can be much more favorable than emailing if it is an instance that requires the use of dialog. In addition, information can be documented and searched if needed.

In "The Return of the Hyper-social Organization", François Gossieaux and Ed Moran, state that, "Companies that are successfully harnessing the power of social media fundamentally think differently about their business—and act differently too" (Gossieaux & Moran, 2010). They also state that using social media and Web 2.0 applications not only helps promote the organization but also creates a stronger feeling of connection between the customers or clients and the organization itself. The reason for this improvement lies with the customers who now

feel as though they are in closer contact with an organization. A connection is now present to them, and they will likely feel stronger toward the organization. Strengthening relationships between an organization and their users will create a better sense of awareness, almost as if the messages were written directly to the end-user. This benefit also works from the view of the organization as well, because they are in direct contact with their client. In relation to IT within education, bridging the gap between users and the IT staff could be viewed as adding personality within the IT group and allowing users to feel as though they have the ability to interact with the group. It can also aide in creating a better sense of confidence to users, knowing that they have the ability to post a question anytime, from anywhere, through the use of computers and handheld devices. Having the availability to see other user comments permits one to share information and experience on an issue that one may have. This additional content would help users faster as well as assist IT in finding frequent issues they may need to look into addressing.

To form a successful social media environment three elements are needed: a technology platform, a vibrant community, and great content (Boiros). Without the presence of these key elements, it is difficult to create a truly effective social media platform that is able to bring value to the organization.

Before one can begin developing such an environment one must first create or assign a virtual place to bring together the interactions of the organization. This place should be one which is visited on a normal, daily basis by employees within the organization. When deciding where this place should be, you should ask yourself “Where do employees go to find information relevant to the organization?” Also ask, “What learning environments does the organization have in place that can be successfully integrated with this one?” Finding a common area is an important step in ensuring that the employees actively engage with and utilize the information within the social media environment. However, developing this platform is just the first step in creating a successful social media environment. Once the platform is in place, it is important to have interesting, and relevant content within it. Without the presence of engaging content, the platform will be left underutilized and will not bring any value to the organization. It is important that the content that sits within this platform be useful and holds value for the employees (Boiros). This set-up leads to the ideal usage of social media within IT.

We have envisioned specific uses of social media in order to utilize the benefits previously mentioned. Some of these uses include posting or communicating relevant information, having the ability to ask questions, identifying knowledge experts,

creating groups, etc. In an ideal situation, an organization would take advantage of the various types of social media in different ways.

Facebook is unique in its general widespread popularity. This trait would make it best suited as the general information hub. Within the program IT would have a dedicated page for user correspondence and a group for internal users. All other social media would be linked to the user correspondence page, so when they receive posts from other media, the messages would appear on the Facebook page as well.

Twitter specializes in the fast and easy spreading of a school's or business's specialized daily information. The application would be used for sorting messages such as network outages or lab closings. Because of its easy to follow format of status updates, it makes Twitter the best place to house daily changes.

Tumblr allows for an individualized blog, making it useful to keep track of room upgrades and equipment changes. The Tumblr page would also be a prime place to include videos from the IT departments' YouTube page. These videos would contain video tutorials of different classroom technology tutorials. The tutorials would include detailed instructions of the technology within the classrooms, such as computers, projectors, document cameras, and microphones. Each set of classrooms would need its

own video; however, if rooms had identical setups this duplication would not be necessary. Faculty and staff members would then be able to preview the technology in the room before entering. This ability could prove invaluable for IT in the beginning of the semester as faculty members adjust to new classrooms.

Since everyone within IT has different skill sets, we suggest LinkedIn to help keep track of them. The site allows for presentation of each person's accomplishments in both academia and the workplace. Each member of the IT staff should have a LinkedIn page made with background information on skills and experience. Though there is no way to make this mandatory, we would strongly suggest it. It could also be possible to link information through the university's directory.

In order to communicate within IT, we suggest that the department use Lync, which is included in their Microsoft Office site license. This application would allow communication throughout the department. If this implementation is successful, IT may want to think about further implementing the application throughout the university. Using Lync has more advantages than using Skype for communications within the university because of its extra screen sharing features and presentation features. Moreover, Lync will use Active Directory credentials instead of needing a separate account. Our investigation into Facebook

groups led our team to the conclusion that this feature of the social networking site did not meet the needs of the IT department in relation to data repository and department only communication. Instead, we suggest a wiki page for internal use. This repository would be a page, most likely SharePoint, which would allow the IT team to post different pieces of information and documentation that may be useful to others. Here they can store asset lists, equipment manuals, and any hardware or software documentation they may need. Depending on the type of documentation, IT can decide who should have access to it.

By using social media in these ways, a university's IT department can achieve increased overall communication throughout the university.

Future Possibilities

In the future, it may be beneficial for a university to implement Socialcast or something with a similar makeup. Though it may not seem feasible initially, Socialcast would strengthen the interconnectivity of the entire university, allowing for the university to customize communications with different departments as well as within IT. Students, alumni, faculty, and staff would have a centralized way to stay connected. By considering this new form of technology, the university would

then be looking into the future of communication in the education sector, giving them a serious competitive advantage.

Conclusion

The way in which employees feel about support directly impacts their attitudes about your organization, the culture, where they fit in, and how they are valued as employees. A truly differentiated employee experience, one in which employees are empowered to be intelligent and innovative, results in employees who are not just satisfied but passionate about the organization. This next generation experience embraces technology not as a goal, but as a means to harness the collective and individual intelligence of employees, to simplify the diverse tasks of their workday, and to create meaningful connections and collaborations between colleagues. This virtual community will result in fully engaged employees who drive innovation and competitive performance for the organization (Heiser and Violette, 2011). IT is used to support processes, and help to make operations more efficient and effective. By utilizing social networking the IT department will be able to stay connected with users at all times, not just while they are on campus. This connection will keep users informed and up-to-date about information, which IT feels relevant. This sense of

connection can help to create a friendlier user environment, while providing people with access to useful information that may not have been as easily accessible before.

It is important for all organizations, especially those in education, to realize that the way people communicate is changing. By adapting to the way that this new generation of students communicate and interact, the university will make itself more assessable to incoming students, thus enabling an environment that is better connected, more effective, and has the ability to become more innovative than most.

With these social media technologies in place, a university will be able to keep students, faculty and staff abreast of the goings on within IT in order to create a better learning and work environment for all.

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