

WHITE PAPER

By Vicki Tambellini, Julian Andronic and Lauren Hart Piper

Social Business Software: Addressing Three Top Business Needs

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Today's most successful companies are using social business software to connect, to collaborate with and reward their customers. Forward thinking organizations are addressing the most critical business challenges of customer service, marketing and sales, and product lifecycle management using online community software and game mechanics.

This White Paper addresses the impact that social business software is having on various areas within enterprise. The focus of this paper is on community building software for marketing and sales, customer support and product lifecycle management.

Executives and managers responsible for customer acquisition, customer success and product development will benefit from this White Paper.

Social Business Software. Building communities.

Technology enables customers to interact with each other, with the brands they buy and with the people representing products anytime and anywhere. The most successful companies are using new technologies and tools to interact, engage, reward and support customers, employees and partners. As customers become more interested in personalized interactions, social business software is rising in popularity as the platform solution to consider.

In order to consider social business software for your business, it may be useful to think about how much time people spend looking for the information they need. Knowledge workers spend increasing hours searching for information to do their jobs. The McKinsey Global Institute reports a 20%-25% potential improvement in knowledge worker productivity due to social technologies today¹. This statistic is prompting companies to take a closer look at how business is becoming progressively social. With a compound annual growth rate of 61%, social business software is projected to become a \$6.4 billion market by 2016². Is your company taking advantage of this opportunity to increase worker productivity?

Businesses that do take advantage of opportunities to include social business software in their workflows demonstrate significant improvements and produce great business value. Results may be derived in areas including: higher engagement, increased productivity, improved innovation, and more satisfied employees and customers. In order to experience immediate business benefits, organizations may implement social business software in one or more functional areas including: product development, marketing and sales, customer service and business support.

Social business software solutions are commonly utilized to support a multitude of business goals. Often these goals are achieved by organizing company stakeholders such as customers, employees and business partners in private and/or public online communities (also commonly called groups or collaboratives). Enterprise Hive focuses on three of the most important business needs by providing different types of online community functions which may be referred to differently depending on the specific use-case. Often, communities address more than one functional requirement and enhance collaboration and communication across multiple departments, internally and externally.

The following table outlines the three most important business needs addressed by social business software at different departmental levels:

Enterprise Hive builds online communities that focus on three of the most important business needs to include knowledge sharing, customer engagement and expert discovery.

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Business Needs by Department:

Business Needs	Department	Benefits
Knowledge Sharing	Marketing and Sales Product Development Customer Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become a more connected organization. • Save time searching for information and experts. • Employee, customer and partner knowledge sourcing. • Better understanding of customer and partner needs. • Encourage collaboration and sharing of best practices.
Customer Engagement	Marketing and Sales Product Development Customer Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify successful customers willing to engage on behalf of your brand. • Drive innovation and product co-creation. • Derive business value by monitoring needs. • Create a feedback loop on existing products and services. Improve satisfaction. • Quickly determine key customer influencers and potential reference customers. • Enable peer-to-peer support and best practices sharing. • Identify limitations and funnel them to the appropriate department.
Expert Discovery	Marketing and Sales Product Development Customer Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find the right people at the right time. • Find the person with the expertise and experience required. • Quickly find the resources required to solve a problem whether it's in a Wiki, document, blog, profile or other resource. • Document and share solutions to common problems.

Business Need #1: Knowledge Sharing

Connecting people to people, people to information, and information to systems in order to produce better results makes sense. Often, organizations try to tackle the issue of connectedness through enterprise social networks, intranets, extranets, communities of practice or customer communities. When people report spending large amounts of time searching for the right information to do their work, productivity gains can add up to big rewards for companies and organizations. A knowledge sharing community can ensure that important and timely information is captured and shared among key individuals, often referred to as a Community of Practice for internal sharing or a Customer Commons when sharing includes customers. In addition, critical information can be captured once and shared among and between large groups of people with shared access.

Addressed Business Issues:

- Duplication of efforts to solve customer problems and needs.
- Lack of broad communication across the entire customer or partner network.
- Poor customer and partner engagement strategy.
- Lack of product and services innovation.
- Inability to post important resources online and limit/allow access to them based on user type.
- Minimum CXO oversight into customer demands and needs.
- Collaborating with customers that are not committed to the company success.

Opportunities:

- Extend an expert community using social business software to encourage expertise and knowledge sharing.
- Innovate with more certainty than ever because of consistent customer/partner feedback.
- Productivity increases due to better access to information.
- Increased employee satisfaction and potential to reduce turnover.
- Increased customer satisfaction.
- Peer support is encouraged and rewarded using game mechanics such as leader boards, badges, and certificates.
- Support employees and customers 24 x 7 x 365 by providing a community that is accessible to them because this is how they work.
- Give your stakeholders access via tools that are familiar and that they will use to collaborate with each other and with you.

Business Need #2: Customer Engagement

While companies continue to provide traditional help desk and email support for customers, customers are online 24 x 7 x 365 searching for the help they need to get their work done. Some companies have gone as far as implementing cloud-based help desk solutions – giving customers improved access to support. Customers want access to information, people, and systems from any device, anywhere, any time. Businesses that provide easily accessible and searchable customer access to: peers, customer support, and information and systems are achieving higher levels of customer satisfaction and customer retention. In addition, by providing customers with this access through communities, companies receive reciprocal access to their customer ideas and support.

Addressed Business Issues:

- Mounting costs associated with supporting customer needs.
- Lack of product prioritization from lack of customer knowledge.
- Uncertainty around innovation and product ideation.
- Inability to reach a broader market through lack of customer advocacy.
- Broad recognition of customer loyalty.

Opportunities:

- Add a customer community to the existing help desk system.
- Provide a single sign on for customers to access the customer community and the help desk system.
- Use social communication tools to update customers on key product initiatives.
- Use game mechanics within the community to reward customers for providing peer-to-peer support.
- Reward customers for participating in new product discussions and voting on new product features.
- Use the customer community to identify and reward employees providing the best customer support.

Business Need #3: Expert Discovery

When people need help, it can take a lot of time to find the right person or the best source of information. Often, information exists in places or in formats which are difficult to access. In many instances, individuals retain information in their “head” that would be helpful for others. Within formal and informal professional communities, individuals report repeated loss of productivity and frustration searching for the expertise and information they need. Organizations are realizing that leveraging their internal and external communities can lead to better and faster expertise discovery.

Addressed Business Issues:

- No knowledge of who your experts in a particular area are.
- Inability to safeguard key product documentation, wikis and other types of content important for customer success.
- Customer focus groups lack the expertise and knowledge required to achieve great product improvements.
- Inability to recommend quality solutions from knowledgeable experts.

Opportunities:

- Shorten sales cycle with better/faster references.
- Include expert community access within existing corporate resources.
- Provide single sign on for employees, customer and partners to log in to existing company sites and access useful resources.
- Utilize findings to generate good will with customers and employees by sharing information with them proactively.
- Encourage employees and customers to participate by using game mechanics and reward system and provide additional incentives such as gift cards for top experts.
- Employees and customers immediately identify experts with knowledge of a particular subject.
- Customer references are easily identified.
- Employees with specific skills are easily found.
- Employees with expertise may be rewarded.
- Customer reference stories may be consolidated.
- Organization documentation, Wiki, content and document repository is safeguarded.

Enterprise Hive and Social Business

Enterprise Hive has been innovating in social business software, communities and gamification, since 2008 with a list of clients that range from large multinational organizations to small companies. Working in partnership with our customers, we are able to achieve significant results around three core business needs to include: knowledge sharing, customer engagement, and expertise discovery. Exploiting familiar social technologies, the company is successful at creating products that work, are easy to use and experience a faster adoption rate. We are the only vendor in the market to have developed integrated game mechanics into our platform to accommodate for customer needs around engagement, product adoption and certification. The following is a list of items that distinguish HiveSocial™ from Enterprise Hive as the Social Business Software platform of choice:

- Flexibility and configuration of the platform.
- Single sign on capabilities with third party systems.
- Embedded gamification mechanics within the community platform.
- Consultative approach to a successful community implementation.
- Ability to develop or integrate additional modules, apps and engines.