Increasingly, businesses are using social networking technologies to foster knowledge management and transform their approach to marketing, advertising, research, and stakeholder engagement. As individuals and businesses discover the potential and value of IT-enabled social networks, there’s a need to articulate and quantify the antecedents of their adoption, diffusion, business value, and societal impacts.

Advances in social computing can help firms enhance and leverage internal capabilities, such as knowledge work and collaboration, and seamlessly integrate the vast information resources available on the Internet. Many firms, however, are still developing the practices that will enable them to leverage social networking in the enterprise. The articles in this special issue speak to this need.

**Collaboration and Knowledge Management**

Social computing offers tremendous potential for collaboration. However, social networking systems are only as valuable as the extent to which they’re used. Although Facebook and Twitter have been remarkably successful in designing systems that draw wide participation, many social networking systems within firm intranets languish with spotty user participation. Many firms are interested in adopting social networking technologies among employees to enhance knowledge sharing and collaboration in the enterprise, but they struggle in motivating employees to engage in social computing practices.

In “Motivations for Social Computing,” Vishal Sachdev argues that certain design features can help motivate users to participate in social computing. He argues that the desire to use social networking systems is driven by three basic psychological needs—for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. His research results provide a framework for designing applications that leverage the power of social computing.

A second challenge for firms is governing knowledge management systems. “Social Networking in Knowledge Management,” by Stephen Anderson and Kannan Mohan, describes how social computing initiatives have affected organizations. Based on the experience of four firms, it provides recommendations for firms planning to implement social networking systems for knowledge management. The authors argue...
that firms need to balance privacy concerns with flexibility in managing knowledge, structure socially driven knowledge management systems, and enable continued leadership within the organization to ensure that social networking systems reach their full potential for managing knowledge.

**Seamless Information Access**

Enterprise 2.0 refers broadly to Web 2.0 technologies that help firms leverage external, publicly available data on the Internet and seamlessly integrate it with internal systems. Technologies such as machine learning and real-time data mining let firms further exploit the possibilities of Enterprise 2.0.

“Supercharging Enterprise 2.0,” by Konstantinos Christidis, Gregoris Mentzas, and Dimitris Apostolou, describes how semantic technologies and the Web of linked and social network data can enhance Enterprise 2.0. For example, the authors describe how human-resource-management systems can be linked to external data on networking sites such as LinkedIn Recruiter or sites such as Twitjobsearch that index jobs posted on Twitter. Using machine learning and statistical approaches, firms can extract meaning from and analyze unstructured data on external sites. Linking enterprise data with publicly available data will help firms leverage the potential of Enterprise 2.0.

As Beverly Prohaska points out in this issue’s CIO Corner department, “Social Media for the Collaborative Enterprise,” the challenge for organizations and CIOs will be to integrate social computing with cloud computing, pattern-based computing, and context-based computing to come up with an integrated social media strategic plan. This confluence of technologies presents a great opportunity for CIOs to integrate their social media initiatives with other business initiatives to emphasize IT’s role in generating revenues, which appears to be a more promising pathway to sustainable profitability than a conventional focus on cost reduction alone.¹

**Reference**


**Firms must cultivate a new set of capabilities to fully leverage the potential of social computing in the enterprise.**

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