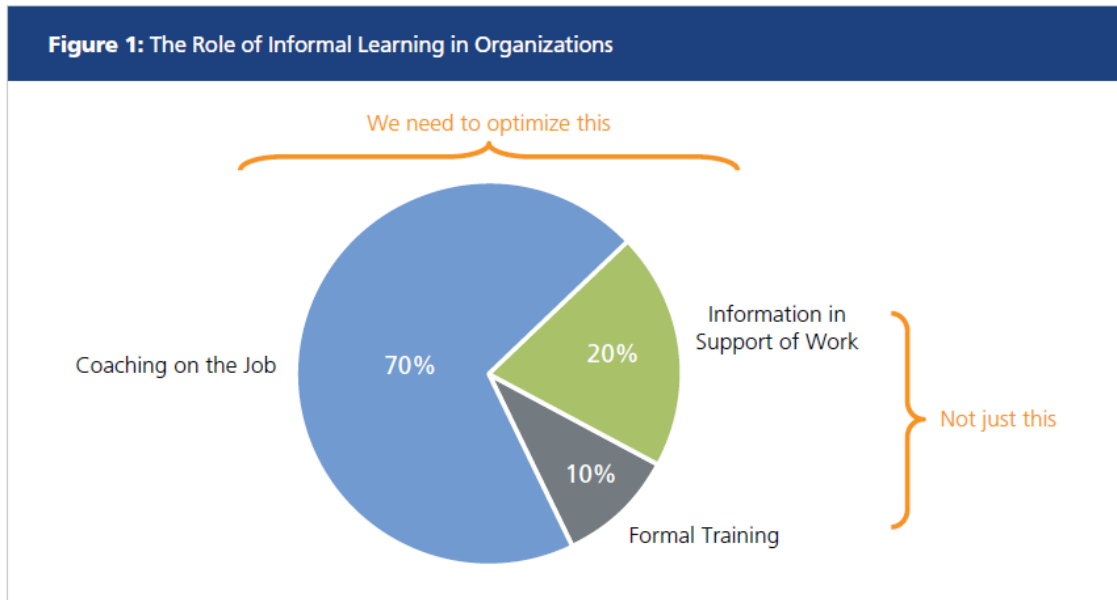


Enterprise Social Software

The Big Picture

Organizations focus the majority of their training efforts and dollars on formal training activities — classes, WBLs, Webcasts and meetings. However for years it has been generally recognized that most learning takes place in an informal setting. Informal learning is unstructured and experiential and in our world is frequently referred to as on-the-job training. This learning takes place through conversations, social interactions, watching others "do-it," and seeking advice from the office expert. Whether informal learning is intentional or accidental the fact that it is situated in the context of the work environment means that is more likely to improve performance than a formal training activity.

With this in mind there had been a great desire among learning and development professions to find a way to impact the informal learning area in a positive manner. From a business perspective we are missing the biggest part of the market.



Source: Bersin & Associates, 2008.

Until now it has been very difficult for any one to have a major impact on informal learning but the development of Web 2.0 tools and the development enterprise social software make it not only possible but fairly easy and fun. Bersin & Associates predicts this market will reach \$420M by the end of 2009.

What is Social Software?

Communication and collaboration tools have become ubiquitous. Email, web forums, instant messaging and web conferencing are familiar to most working people. What is different is the rise of internet tools and technology that allow individual to create, collaborate and share content across cyberspace.

The most common forms of social software are found on the public sphere on sites like MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn YouTube and Flickr. People are no longer passive receivers of information – television ratings are way down — instead they are actively creating and sharing videos, writing blogs and bonding with people all over the world.

Common elements of social software include:

- Personal profiles
- Social Networks (Friends/Contacts)
- Collaborative communication in the form of blogs, wikis, and forums
- Polls and Ratings
- Tagging
- Open APIs and web services

These tools have become so popular among the general population that vendors have begun to apply them to business settings.

Business Drivers

Large enterprises have always sought to ways to break down barriers and connect employees, disseminate information and build cohesive teams. Social software provides the means to do this in by building:

- Connections
- Conversations
- Collaboration
- Content

Connections are built through robust user profiles that detail work experience, client history and special knowledge. Smart search helps users find people of similar interests or need that can be added to personal networks.

Conversations codify the water cooler in the form of personal blogs and comments in response to any posting. Microblogs (Tweets) can align employees to mission of the moment from the department level to the C-suite.

Collaboration in shared workspaces provide a sense of community for geographically dispersed teams. Wikis provide a functional way in which to build knowledge can be shared across workspaces. Using polls to rate ideas helps to identify and spread innovation. Calendars and events help manage projects and processes.



Content is created by each individual. Through the "wisdom of crowds" -- content created by many is shared, shaped, and employed in ways that are unforeseen.

All of this is done using a tool set that is easy to use. In many cases one need never log into the system to participate as communication can be handled through mobile devices and email.

Enterprise social software is also being used as an application to aid in talent management. Just about every step in the talent management life-cycle from sourcing and recruiting through onboarding to succession management and alumni and retirement networks may be supported by social software.

At this point the market for social software is still immature and in most cases is driven by early adopters and innovators at the business unit level. Some of the key uses at this level include:

- Marketing, customer relations, and product development
- Managing relationships with channel partners
- Managing internal projects or initiatives with team workspaces

Underlying both the large and small group uses of social software is the major benefit of knowledge management. Each piece of content produced in the system has a creator. Smart search functionality makes it easy find both and put the company's expertise into action.

Instructional Strategies

Social learning software can informally develop the capabilities of learners in a number of ways. The chief strategy in this area is facilitation of activities rather than direct intervention. It helps to develop a strategy for use of the system and seed content in advance. As with any enterprise software initiative consultative services and change management are keys to success.

Collaborating in blogs and wikis help learners verbally process information making it more remember and easy to retrieve and put into use.

Social networks build peer relationships that can be tapped into for instant expertise, while "ask the expert" functionality can instantly connect need with knowledge and translate that into performance.

The formation of Communities of Practices

Smart search features provide learning-on-demand in the form of information that can be put immediately to use.

The great promise in enterprise social software is the ability to tap into content created by users and make it a part of formal training programs. For example, a new employee training might include a link to the CEO's blog. Learners could post questions or comments in the training that appear in social network.

In a similar fashion a Mashup — the integration of another program like Google maps — could be used to show corporate locations. Content that is subject to frequent change such as prices might be created in a wiki on the social network and then linked to training on product knowledge. This would make it much easier and cheaper to keep course material up-to-date.

Finally, course ratings of training could appear in the social network side along with user recommendations.

The LMS to social software link may not yet be fully proven. However, with companies like OutStart and Mzinga (formerly Knowledge Planet) jumping with both feet into the social software area it should only be a matter of time before this is a common practice.

Questions to Ask (Clients and Providers)

Do you provide/need Blogs, Forums, and Microblogs (similar to Twitter)?

Size of community — How many users are necessary to get the pricing down to the equivalent of \$100 per person per year? Note: Some providers require many thousands while others are affordable for teams of 25.

What are your delivery methods/needs? Options include hosted, SaaS, Installed, Appliance

Do you provide/need User Profiles, Comments, Personal Blog, Activity Usage, Friends/Colleagues, and Ask the expert?

Do you provide/need Wikis, Workspaces, Idea Rating, Calendars and Event/Project/Process Management?

Do you provide/need content sharing tools (Upload to system, Comments, Polls, Rating, Social Bookmarking, Tagging, Survey, and Mashups)?

Do you provide/need content management in the form of version control (lock, check in and out) archive, link to external content, multiple file upload and download, MSOffice compatibility, images and rich text?

Do you provide/need approval of blogs and wikis, collaborative document editing and creation, media library, publish to pdf/doc



Do you provide/need search features such as full text, semantic, based on profile or history, support for external search engines?

Do you provide/need reporting and Analytics: types, output

Do you provide/need enterprise account management in the form of Single Sign-on, integration with Enterprise Portal, LMS, LCMS, ERP, CRM, HRMS, etc?

Do you provide/need streaming media server for podcasting and video?

Do you provide/need security and permissions support for US, EU and other personal information protocols?

Do you provide/need interface customizations?

Usability and Accessibility

Do you provide/need open system configurations that support mashups: Web services, API, widgets, Open Social?

Do you provide/need personalization of content such as internal and external RSS subscriptions?

Do you provide/need consulting services on implementation and change management?

If you have questions about enterprise social software contact Phil Antonelli