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## The ever-growing social intranet is ready to transform employee networking

# THE SOCIAL INTRANET EXPANDS ITS REACH

Facebook and its fantastically viral social networking has tickled the fancy of many an intranet manager since it exploded in popularity; so too has the prospect of turning the corporate intranet into a social network akin to the popular networking site.

While social media tools have gradually been migrating across the firewall with viral osmosis, the true social intranet still eludes most organizations. It's true that most organizations are now using social media on the intranet (intranet 2.0), but a social intranet requires more than just a few blogs and wikis spread across the enterprise network.

In a white paper, *The Social Intranet*, published last year, I offered the first formal definition of the social intranet:

*"An intranet that features multiple social media tools for most or all employees to use as collaboration vehicles for sharing knowledge with other employees. A social intranet may feature blogs, wikis, discussion forums, social networking, or a combination of these or any other Web 2.0 (intranet 2.0) tool with at least some or limited exposure (optional) from the main intranet or portal home page."*

Integrated, widely available social media tools for all employees – it's a far cry from a blog and a couple of wikis. The social intranet is more than a collection of intranet 2.0 tools, it's an integrated package; one that builds on the promise and sizzle of Facebook, and delivers employee networking with business value.

### Intranet 2.0 becomes mainstream

The vast majority of organizations are not yet there, but they are trying, if only half-heartedly. As is always the case with

the poorer intranet sibling, the external public facing website and investment surpasses its internal kin. However, intranet 2.0 is expanding rapidly: social media tools such as blogs, wikis and other vehicles, have become mainstream and are present on 87 percent of organization intranets (organizations of all sizes that have at least one intranet 2.0 tool). In fact, fewer than 10 percent of organizations have no interest and no plans for implementing at least one social media tool on their intranet, according to the findings of Prescient Digital's *Intranet 2.0 Global Study* of 525 participants, representing companies of all sizes from across the globe.

Intranet blogs, discussion forums and instant messaging are quite pervasive, while podcasts, "mashups" (pages that combine data or content and tools from multiple sources) and social bookmarking remain an after-thought at most organizations. The most common intranet 2.0 tools found in organizations include:

- 53% have intranet blogs (up 18% from the previous survey); 18% have deployed blogs enterprise wide; only 8% have no plans or interest in deploying blogs.

- 52% have intranet discussion forums (a 13% increase); 23% enterprise use; 9% have no plans or interest.
- 49% have intranet wikis (a 4% increase); 17% enterprise deployment; 11% have no plans or interest.

As the study reveals, most organizations that have social media tools, have not yet deployed them enterprise wide, making intranet 2.0 available to all employees, a key ingredient for a social intranet. Most organizations are employing some caution by testing and piloting these tools before adopting them as enterprise solutions. In reality only between five and 10 percent of organizations have a true social intranet.

### Plan to succeed

The secret to social intranet success is the same as the traditional intranet: executive support, supported by solid governance, and motivated, educated users. In other words, the buck stops at the C-suite; convince senior management of the need, with the requisite plan, and they are willing to invest.

Additionally, many organizations have HR and communications professionals that run the intranet, but have little or no say as to the technology platform. In fact, usually IT runs out and buys SharePoint, WebSphere or a CMS solution with minimal stakeholder consultation (which is their right if they're paying for it).

While this is not an ideal scenario it is common. When faced with such a challenge, ensure that the owner – regardless of whether they are in IT or HR or communications – is involved in the plan and the implementation roadmap (most particularly, the information architecture and design). IT should own the technology, but they should almost never own the user experience.

The social intranet is still in its infancy, but is ready to grow exponentially quicker than its 1.0 predecessor for those organizations willing to invest in technology that will transform enterprise communications and collaboration.



Toby Ward, a former journalist and a regular e-business columnist and speaker, is the CEO and founder of Prescient Digital Media. His white paper *The Social Intranet* is available as a free download at [www.prescientdigital.com](http://www.prescientdigital.com)