Chapter 9
How Generation Y Perceives Social Networking Applications in Corporate Environments

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ABSTRACT
Organizations increasingly rely on corporate social networks and online communities to enhance socialization and knowledge sharing, collaboration, and value creation among coworkers. This chapter presents and analyzes results from a qualitative exploratory study conducted recently with a group of 24 graduate management students from a French business school. It contributes to a better understanding of how generation Y perceives the use of Social Networking (SN) applications inside businesses by drawing up a list of dos and don’ts. This study provides an ordered list of important adoption issues to consider when implementing and using CSN applications in businesses. It provides expectations and precautions for stakeholders to take into account for best use, compared to users (coworkers), managers, and the enterprise as a whole. A first list of guidelines, to favor the best adoption of these applications and to make their usage effective, is formulated.

INTRODUCTION
In 2005, the social aspect of the Web was emphasized by Tim O’Reilly (2005) to highlight the value of socialization related to people connections, content sharing and co-creation through social networks. Internet user is no longer considered as an information consumer but more as a content producer. To the point that in 2006 Time magazine titled its coverage “You.” (Yes, you. You control the Information Age. Welcome to your world). Indeed, this magazine used to devote coverage to the person of the year since the late 1920s.

The idea was to highlight that internet users from that year (2006) will have the control over the information thanks to the Social Web (2.0), by expressing freely themselves on the web and interacting directly with others. This marks in somewhat a break with the traditional web.

Today, integrating Web 2.0 applications (i.e. social media) in businesses provides many opportunities to improve interaction, knowledge
sharing and collaboration among employees, also with customers and partners. These applications are becoming a popular medium for people interaction, content sharing (Constant et al., 1994; Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Cramton, 2001) and open collaboration (Coleman & Levine, 2008). Currently, to take profit from their potential, companies increasingly rely on corporate social networking (CSN) applications (in the continuum of Intranet efforts) to enhance the communication and increase the density of connections and sharing among coworkers to drive business value and innovation (Chesbrough & Appleyard, 2007; Sena & Sena, 2008).

According to many authors (Dudezert et al., 2009; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Boughzala, 2007-2012a; Deal et al., 2010; Gorman et al., 2004), the new generation of hypermodern employees (i.e. Generation Y) has developed new habits and behaviors at work. They use, on a daily basis, Web 2.0 applications (blogs, wikis, Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds, SN applications/services, folksonomy, podcasting, tagging, mashups, etc) in the private arena and, therefore, consider that such applications for self-organizing, sharing and collaboration are the best tools to work. Social networks and online communities are for them the best resources to solve problems collectively, to get connections and partnerships and thus to take advantage of the collective intelligence (Smith & Duin, 1994; Malone et al., 2009). This generation wants to choose by it-self the tools and devices it deems fit to use (notion of self-care, Bittner et al., 2002). This is part of larger organizational issues, called BYOD (Bring Your Own Device), BYOA (Bring Your Own Application, Ballagas et al., 2004) or more BYOB (Bring Your Own Behavior, Gunnarsson, 2012).

Researchers and practitioners to date have mostly assumed that people from this generation Y (Dudezert et al., 2009; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010), because of their massive use of social media in the private arena, would be willing to accept and use them more easily and quickly in corporate environment under what we call Enterprise 2.0 (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007; Deal et al., 2010). However, to the best of our knowledge, there is no empirical work which has been reported on this issue confirming this assumption on the ground. Nobody can affirm today that generation Y would be the driver of this technology adoption in corporate environment considering their technology readiness (Parasuraman, 2000).

This chapter tries to address this gap by answering the following research questions: how the use of CSN applications is perceived by the generation Y? To what extent people from this generation are willing to adopt and use them within a corporate environment? And, what should be the best and worst use according to them?

The method adopted for this study is based on a qualitative exploratory study through an enriched Delphi method (Briggs et al., 2003). Twenty four graduate management students from a French business school were invited to participate voluntarily to a directed brainstorming session, using a Group Support System (GSS), in order to gather their statements and opinions. This study provided an ordered list of important adoption issues to consider when implementing and using CSN applications in businesses.

The purpose of this chapter is to contribute to a better understanding of the perception of generation Y with regard to CSN applications by drawing up a list of dos and don’ts. It provides important expectations and precautions to take into account by stakeholders for a best use, compared to users (coworkers), managers and the enterprise at whole.

The rest of this chapter is structured as follows: Section 2 briefly describes research background in terms of concepts (Web 2.0, generation Y and SN applications) and some related works and theories. Section 3 describes the research method that has been used in this exploratory study. Results are presented in section 4. Based on our findings, we discuss in section 5 their accordance with the