Chapter 39
A Multimethod Study of Enterprise Social Media Implementation and Use:
Mitigating the Gap Between Theory and Practice

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ABSTRACT

Enterprise social media (ESM) are web-based platforms dedicated to corporate-based communication and collaboration. Although the practitioner literature and industry reports have suggested the potential value of ESM for organizations, there has been limited research that focuses on employees' reactions to ESM implementation and their post-implementation use behaviors. The authors conducted a mixed methods study of a large-scale ESM implementation in a Fortune 500 manufacturing company and found that widely used IT adoption models and determinants failed to explain employees' ESM use. To help explain this paradoxical finding, the authors leveraged their qualitative data and found several major challenges, both internal and external, that the company faced during ESM implementation. Their findings have a number of generalizable lessons for practice as well as implications for research.

INTRODUCTION

Using a variety of information and communication technologies (ICTs), organizations have long sought to enable effective communication and collaboration and, in turn, enhance employee and organizational productivity. Today, with the rise of social technologies (e.g., smartphones) and social media, employees have an expanding plethora of ICTs available to them. As a consequence, organizations are exploring new avenues for communication and collaboration that may simultaneously motivate employees to stay engaged with their work and the organization (Bersin, 2014; Koch, Gonzalez, & Leidner, 2012; Leonardi, Huysman, & Steinfield, 2013).

Promoting effective communication and collaboration among employees may be addressed via emerging technologies such as Enterprise Social Media (ESM; Arazy & Gallatly, 2012; Fosso Wamba, 2013; Fosso Wamba & Carter, 2014). ESM may be defined as a web-based platform – a collection of tools and features – that allows employees to: "(1) communicate messages with specific coworkers or broadcast messages to everyone in the organization; (2) explicitly indicate or implicitly reveal particular coworkers as communication partners; (3) post, edit, and sort text and files linked to themselves or others; and (4) view the messages, connections, text, and files communicated, posted, edited and sorted by anyone else in the organization at any time of their choosing" (Leonardi et al., 2013, p. 2).

A common belief has been that the use of social technologies in the workplace is a waste of time and a potential distraction for employees. However, recent practitioner and industry research have argued for the importance of ESM. A McKinsey Institute Group report recently suggested that ESM could enhance productivity by improving communication and collaboration among employees (McKinsey, 2012). The report noted that in certain economic sectors (e.g., consumer finance and advanced manufacturing), the value of its use could range from $900 billion to $1.3 trillion annually. Practitioners have also offered anecdotal evidence of benefits such as increased sharing of data and information across the entire organization and the generation of high quality ideas from stakeholders (Burnham, 2012; Upbin, 2012). Academic literature has looked at particular functions of ESM corporate wikis and blogs and their impacts on work processes and collaboration (Farell et al. 2008; Majchrzak et al. 2006).

Despite work by practitioners and academic researchers on the use of ESM, there has been limited research that has examined the predictive determinants of use. This is the main contribution of our effort and the gap we seek to address. Specifically, ESM platforms are different from other technologies previously studied in the technology adoption field. Given this, it is critical to understand whether and how the factors that traditionally predict technology use are able to predict employees' use of ESM. Thus, our first research question is: *what are the predictors of post-implementation ESM use and how might they differ from traditional determinants of technology adoption?* Our second question we seek to answer is: *what challenges do organizations face during and post-ESM implementation?* We posit that the traditional determinants of technology use from widely used Technology Acceptance Model (TAM; Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT; Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis, 2003)–performance expectancy (i.e., perceived usefulness), effort expectancy (i.e., perceived ease of use), social influence, and facilitating conditions – will not be sufficient in explaining much of ESM use.

To address our research questions, we conducted a mixed methods (i.e., quantitative and qualitative) study in a Fortune 500 manufacturing company engaged in an ESM implementation and found that the traditional determinants of technology use were indeed not the significant predictors of ESM use. These determinants were not able to predict post-implementation use of ESM. Our qualitative study helped

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