

# Chapter 22

## Managing Project Communication: Using Social Media for Communication in Projects

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### ABSTRACT

*While social media use has rapidly grown all over the world the use in business context is growing at a steadier pace. Mostly social media is used by businesses as a communication channel aimed at customers either to promote products and services or as part of their web care activities. The use of social media as a means for internal communication is limited; this is especially true for projects. However social media can improve organizational communications and where communication within organizations is important in general, in the context of project management it is a critical success factor. Therefore research was conducted on how social media can be used to enhance communication within projects. In this chapter a framework that can be used to apply social media in project communication is described. The framework shows how social media tools are used by different roles and for different events during a project.*

### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays social media and Internet have become integrated in our lives. Before social media became ‘the next best thing’ it started with the introduction of WIT (WWW Interactive talk) where people could connect with other friends (Vlietstra, 2001). Years later in 2002 Friendster and in 2003 Myspace gained popularity (Hayden & Tomal, 2012). Friendster enabled users to create profiles and connect virtually with friends and Myspace, which was also a social network, gained popularity among teenagers and young adults. These were the first social platforms that were popular with a great majority. In 2004 Facebook

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started as a site for college students from Harvard. Nowadays, Facebook has grown to become one of the biggest players in social media platforms. So far social networks were text based, a platform for the sharing of videos was missing. This changed when in 2005 YouTube offered this possibility through a platform that allowed users to freely upload and share videos on the Internet. In 2006 Twitter made an entrance in the social media world and allowed people to communicate through short, 140 character posts, called tweets. It wasn't until 2011 that Google introduced their own social networking platform: Google+. In this short overview of social media networks Pinterest should not be excluded. Pinterest started in 2012 as a social scrapbooking site and has rapidly grown to over 10 million users in its first year (Hayden & Tomal, 2012).

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) social media has become a bigger part of our lives during the past several years. During this time there has been a shift in how social media is used. First social media applications were mostly used for communication between people while today social media is also used by businesses to reach consumers (Augar & Zeleznikow, 2013). Social media has become serious business not only for communication between Business and Consumers but also for Business-to-Business communication (Augar & Zeleznikow, 2013). Different social media platforms each have their own advantages and disadvantages and it is important for a business to choose the right social media platform to reach the desired target group. Social media has also found its way into the workplace. This opens up possibilities for new ways of communication within organizations. It helps to improve organizational communications, which results in a lower frequency of emailing, phone calls as well as meetings (Gunter, Riehle, Krasnova & Schondienst, 2009). Social media provides (knowledge) workers an efficient alternative for internal communication (Bohringer & Richter, 2009).

As described above social media can help in communicating efficiently. Communication within organizations is important in general but in the context of project management it is a critical success factor (Martin, 1976; Locke, 1984; Pinto & Slevin, 1989; Belassi & Tukel, 1996; Bohm, 1999; Isaacs, 1999; Schwalbe, 1999; Kerzner, 1998). Therefore we conducted research on how social media can be used to enhance communication within projects. This is done via the development of a framework that can be implemented to prescribe how social media tools can be used for different events during a project. In this study we build on prior research in which we determined the possibility of developing templates to help organizations in their social media communication strategy (Martina et al., 2014). Templates have been developed for different scenarios. These have subsequently been tested in a pilot study for an organization, which used the templates in the organization of a conference. While the templates that are developed were not specifically developed with projects in mind it did trigger this research as we think that templates could be well suited for use for communication in projects. However before templates can be developed and put to effective use a framework for the use of social media should be developed. For this we will also discuss several norms that are related to the use of social media within a project, by project members, the project manager and other stakeholders.

Thus, the goal of this chapter is to develop a framework that project managers can use in order to apply in social media to projects. This chapter is structured as follows: In the second part a literature review is provided. The third part discusses the research approach. Subsequently the fourth part presents the findings of the research, while the fifth part describes future research possibilities. The chapter ends with the conclusion in last part.

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