

Chapter 38

Social Media for Project Management

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ABSTRACT

In the past, project managers could assume that most team members were in a single office location. Project management software was installed on a desktop workstation and status reports were delivered at weekly meetings. Social media use can provide real time information to project stakeholders and meet the demand of the “24 hour workday”. Social media use can reduce traveling expenses and help document best practices & project learning. This chapter explore how project managers can use social media tools and how social media tools fit effectively into each project.

INTRODUCTION

In the past, project managers could assume that most team members were in a single office location. Project management software was installed on a desktop workstation and status reports were delivered at weekly meetings. The projects had monthly executive review. Today, the scenario has totally changed. In modern project management, it is very likely that at least one team member would likely be physically separated at least part of the time. The project executives look to view multiple projects as a portfolio while project sponsors expect real time access to project data. On top of it, we have global project management teams that have a 24-hour workday (Bredillet, 2006a; Symonds, 2013).

Social media provides many benefits. It influences how people communicate and support real time communication among all team members at the same time (Kaewkitipong, Chen, & Ractham, 2012). It helps develop relationships and build trust. Use of social media increases transparency and provides a cultural context for communication. In project management, use of social media can provide multiple benefits (Li, Chen, Zhang, & Fu, 2012). It can be used for knowledge sharing & project visibility as well as to identify, organize, and deploy project teams. It can support collaboration across departments and collaborate with remote resources. Social media use can provide real time information to project stakeholders and meet the demand of the round-the-clock workday. Social media use can reduce travel-

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ing expenses and help document best practices & project learning (Leitch, 2014; Lousberg, Wamelink, Atkin, & Borgbrant, 2009; Microsoft, n.d.). The 2011 Social Media in a Project Environment Survey results showed that 20% more people used blogs for business use than in 2010. Over 90% of respondents used social media tools to stay in touch with colleagues while a quarter of respondents used social media tools for managing project teams. Over 75% of respondents felt that social media tools could improve the way they managed projects. Online Project Management Communities have also given boost to use of social media. Currently there existed around millions of project management professionals on LinkedIn with an estimated 1 million YouTube videos on project management (Girlsguidetopm, 2012).

In today's world, where project leaders are faced with strict deadlines and scarce resources, social media is a fascinating idea. Use of social media in project management offers opportunities to achieve results through instant collaboration and information exchange (Ollus, Jansson, Karvonen, Uoti, & Riikonen, 2009). Social media is not new to project managers. What is new is the use of new social media tools to enable the process of collaboration and working with different groups of people (Ollus, Jansson, Karvonen, Uoti, & Riikonen, 2011). Social media is here to stay. Its use in project management offers great potential benefits that businesses and project managers shouldn't ignore. The objective of this chapter is to explore how project managers can use social media tools. The other important questions to be explored are how social media tool fit effectively into each project, what some guidelines for their use are, and how project managers should leverage the functionality of social media tools.

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR PROJECT MANAGEMENT

A project is a temporary social system where people come together to work towards a common goal – whether it's launching a satellite into space, getting your political party re-elected or launching a groundbreaking new product before the competition does. The key to making projects run smoothly is understanding how you make a temporary social system perform better – the key question for any project manager. Social media has been somewhat hijacked in terms of publicity by brands like Twitter and Facebook with a common misperception being that social media is mainly about private gossip and wasting time (Enterprise Apps Today, 2012). This is missing the point completely. Social media is a revolution in media and communication. The world was once *Mad Men*-like, where communication was a one-way street. You listened to the radio, watched TV, read the newspaper, obeyed the CEO and so on. Social media has now transformed this landscape into a two-way street with many lanes, where any one individual can communicate with whomever they want. Quickly, efficiently and for free. This is why social media promises to be a liberator of projects. As project managers around the world can attest, the main reason projects fail is misinformation and miscommunication (Reusch, Khushnood, Khan, & Aslam, 2010). As Gossart (2013) states “the single biggest problem with communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

Project management today is more challenging than ever. There exist many unique challenges. The project teams are becoming more and more ad hoc in nature (Huemann, 2006). Project requirements constantly shift during project life cycle and many times delivery requirements follow very tight deadlines. Increased use of virtual project teams has made it more difficult to disseminate knowledge across the team. To respond to this new and complex job of project manager, new project management methodologies, collaboration technologies, and communication techniques have been developed to foster team

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