

Managing Social Content - to maximise value and minimize risk



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Process used and survey demographics

The survey results quoted in this report are taken from an AIIM Industry Watch survey carried out during August 2011. Responses are from individual members of the AIIM community surveyed using a Web-based tool. Invitations to take the surveys were sent via email to a selection of AIIM's 70,000 registered individuals. Respondents are predominantly from North America and cover a representative spread of industry and government sectors. Employees of ECM suppliers have generally been excluded from the results as are results from organizations of less than 10 employees. Full demographics can be found in the full report as referenced.

About AIIM

AIIM (www.aiim.org) is the community that provides education, research, and best practices to help organizations find, control and optimize their information. For more than 60 years, AIIM has been the leading non-profit organization focused on helping users to understand the challenges associated with managing documents, content, records and business processes. Today, AIIM is international in scope, independent and implementation-focused, acting as the intermediary between ECM users, vendors, and the channel.

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Introduction

The business application of social technologies, both within the enterprise, and with customers, suppliers and partners, has created a new paradigm of interaction and contribution, and is creating a new competitive edge for early adopters. The biggest organizations have been the first to see the benefits of improved collaboration, knowledge-sharing and team-innovation within a geographically dispersed workforce. Shared knowledge, shared experiences and shared content are the core of social business value. By its nature much of the content is conversational and indeed, transitional. However, if it has value in current time, then it may well have value *over time*. Expert answers, team chats, tagged sources and blog thoughts will have a value for now, but may also have a value for future enquiries or further analysis providing the context to decision-making processes. Some exchanges may also be transactional. They may be the trigger for further actions or business processes, particularly if generated by customers, or on websites, or within case-worker teams. On the downside, they may also have a role to play in staff disputes, compliance audits and litigation.

Like any other content, therefore, social content needs to be managed, from creation, through communication, and over its useful lifetime, to disposition. Some organizations are taking the approach that social content can be created in a best-of-breed mix of software and web services, but is then swept into a records management system or simply archived. Others consider that the battle for coherent management and future exploitation is best won by ensuring that corporate social content is created in a controlled environment, where relevance can be better assessed, and where users can more easily opt to record the exchanges that they consider to be of value. Tagging and context are more likely to be coherent, opening up the future value for search and content analytics, and easing the task of e-discovery and retention. A further advantage is that selective security can be better enforced, both within the firewall, and for multi-disciplinary teams working on joint projects or case-based collaborations.

Of course, many other organizations are moving their social business applications ahead quickly, with no real thought of how to manage the content generated for maximum long term value and for minimum risk. Others are determined that social exchanges amongst the workforce, and with the customer base, constitute too large a risk to be worthwhile, without considering how such risk could be managed if the appropriate governance mechanisms and technologies are put in place. These organizations are already running the risk that ad-hoc and under-the-radar social networking is already taking place within their workforce in an uncontrolled manner.

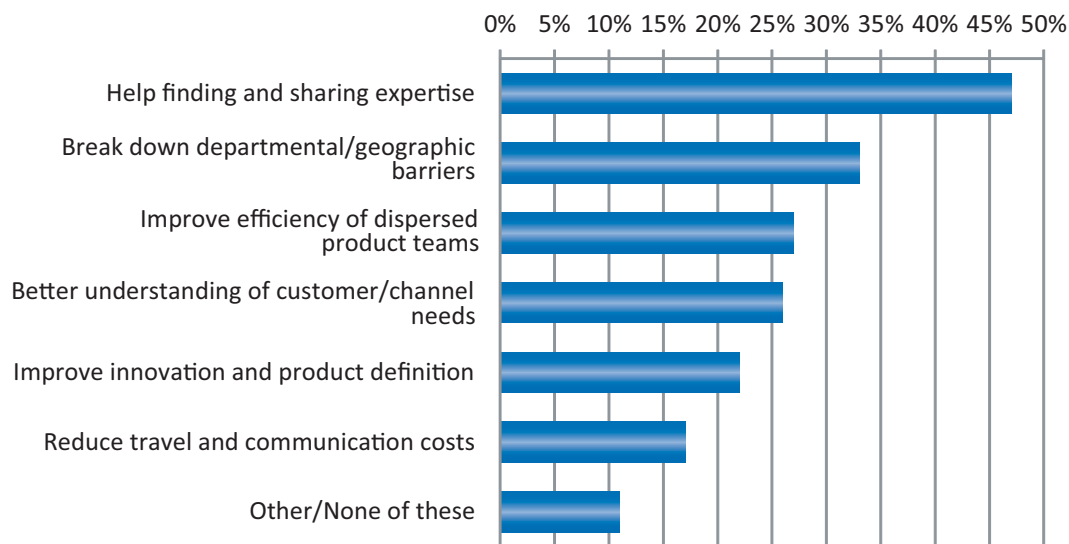
In this paper, we will consider in more detail the potential benefits of social business systems, clarify the roles of content publishing systems and content management systems, and consider how social content can best be governed while also being exploited for maximum long term benefit.

Social Business Benefits

Over the last few years, we have seen the fluid and emergent Enterprise 2.0 technologies mature into more definable Social Business applications. These social-centric applications such as expert Q&A, brain-storming, employee networking, project coordination, open innovation, product design, case-working, etc., focus on engaging employees, sharing knowledge and exploiting expertise in a much faster, and less geographically or organizationally restrained way than has ever been possible before.

The business drivers for these applications are wide ranging. As a result, it can be very difficult to put a figure on the productivity, efficiency or competitively benefits that might be achieved by the use of social business applications. However, as we can see in Figure 1, these drivers are all fundamental to business effectiveness and staff contribution.

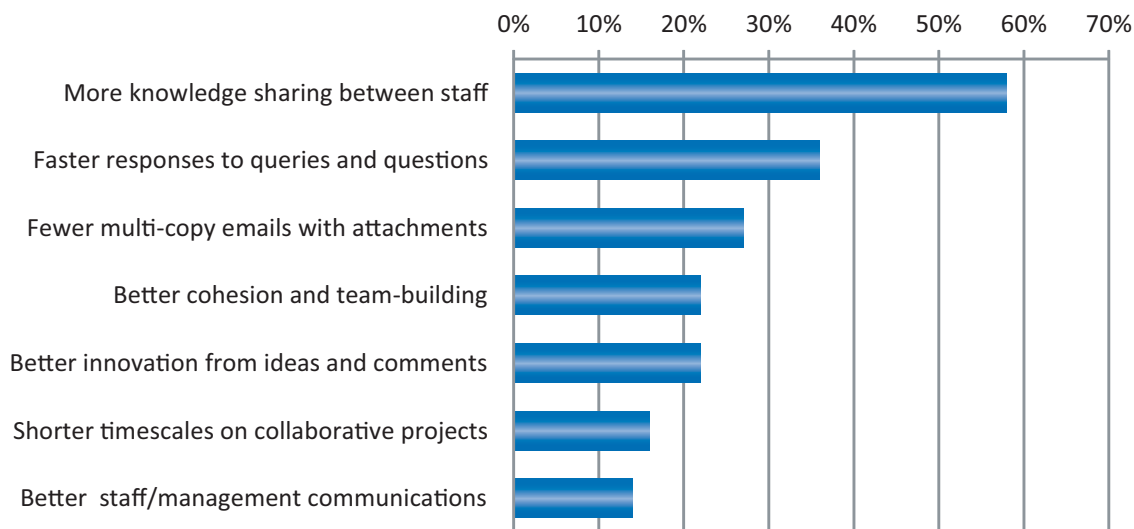
Figure 1: Which TWO of the following would you say are the key drivers for social business/Enterprise 2.0 in your organisation? (N=403, AIIM Social Business Survey¹, Aug 2011)



In the AIIM survey cited¹, 51% of the respondents consider social business applications to be “significant” or “imperative” to their business goals and success. In organizations with over 5,000 employees, this number rises to 64%, confirming that these drivers are particularly important for larger and more dispersed businesses.

When it comes to user reports of the actual benefits achieved, knowledge-sharing is clearly the most significant. Given that the corporate knowledge base is generally the key asset of any business, this perhaps explains why only 12% of respondents were required to make a financial business case for investment in social systems. Of the remainder, 47% made their case based on general business benefits, and in 27% of organizations, social business platforms are now considered to be part of the infrastructure.

Figure 2: What are the THREE biggest benefits you have found from using social business/Enterprise 2.0 in your organization? (N=398)



One of the main changes that we have seen in the deployment of social business applications is that they are no longer considered as an isolated interaction capability, used by the enthusiasts but ignored by the rest. Whilst some applications such as Open Innovation and Enterprise Q&A are by nature stand-alone, the wrapping of social functions into other line-of-business functions such as CRM, ERP, project management and case management has pulled the benefits into sharper focus, particularly where they have become part of a process communications channel, or a comment and collaboration process.

In many situations, social applications have been adopted as a more flexible or agile expedient, by-passing slower development cycles within the enterprise applications, and achieving a more rapid response to changed requirements.

Despite these positive early-adopter experiences, those organizations with a cautious company culture, or those with a genuine need for robust security, are endeavouring to keep social applications out of their businesses. In the AIIM survey, 6% discourage its use, and 15% have taken no initiatives to look into it. A further 24% of respondents report ad hoc usage in some areas of the business. The risk in these organizations is that unofficial or localized usage by employees seeking better tools to do their jobs will actually undermine security and governance. In these situations, management might do well to take the initiative by providing social business applications in a planned manner, with due care being given to security and usage policies.

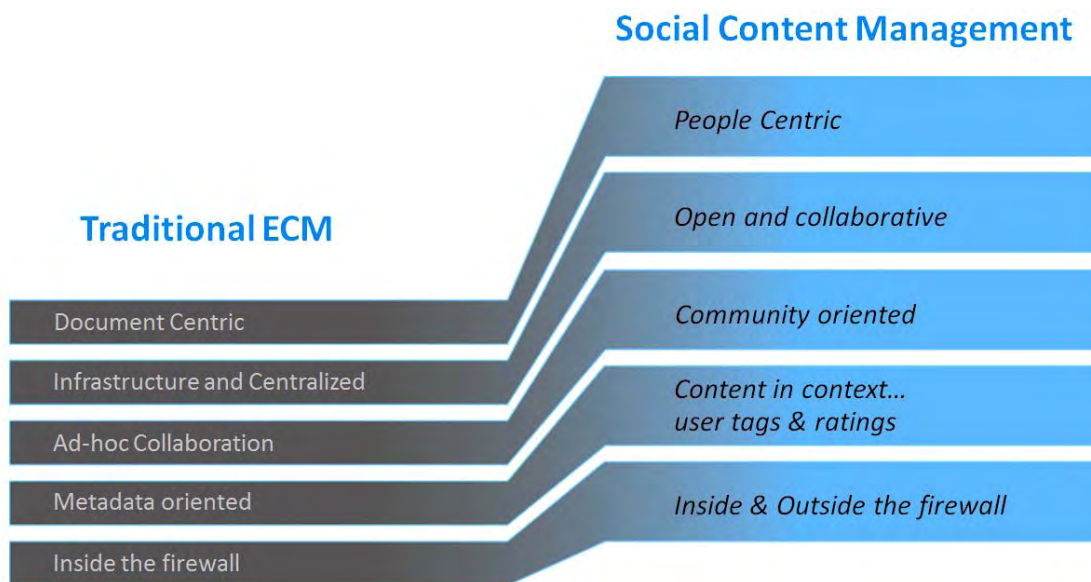
Systems-of-Record Underlying Systems-of-Engagement

The term “Systems-of-Engagement”² has been coined to describe these new conversational, social-centric applications, in contrast to the more traditional enterprise database applications, which are “Systems-of-Transaction”. Although initially developed to manage non-structured, non-transactional data, Enterprise Content Management (ECM) systems are increasingly being seen as an underpinning to both structured data and unstructured data systems, providing a “System-of-Record”.

If we are seeing a value in the exchange of knowledge and experience through social business applications, then there is also likely to be a value in recording the data generated by them – or at least, a proportion of the data that is deemed of potential future value. Hence we see the necessity to extend systems-of-record to underpin systems-of-engagement.

The volume of unstructured data in the form of documents, emails, videos, etc., is known to be several factors larger than that managed in conventional database systems, and the challenge that most organizations have faced is how to store relevant content, and discard what has no value - but in such a way as to maintain both compliance and corporate knowledge. Experience so far suggests that the volume of data generated by systems-of-engagement will be several factors larger again.

Figure 3: Evolution of traditional content management (ECM) to social content management (SCM)

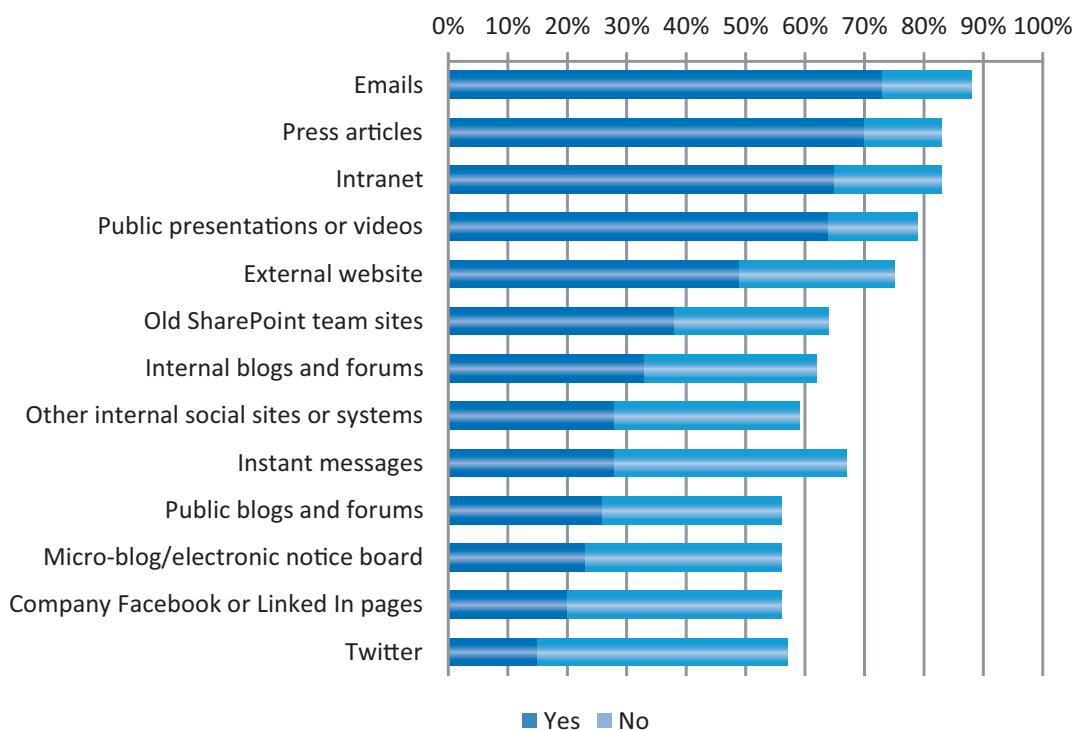


Source: IBM

Content Types

As we can see from Figure 4, there is a wide spectrum between and within organizations regarding the degree to which both conventional content and social content is archived, with generally less than half of those using social channels holding a searchable record of conversations and posted messages. Even amongst those who are keeping suitable records, the likelihood is that these are being held within the application itself, creating potential long term issues with discovery and retention management. In addition, enforcement of security and acceptable use at the creation stage of these posts and conversations frequently lies outside of a common controlling mechanism. A reliable way to provide a uniformly searchable and managed system of record is to create a social content management system that underpins each individual social business application.

Figure 4: Does your organization keep its own history record or searchable archive of what has been published or communicated on the following sites or communications channels?
(N=335, "Not Applicable/Don't know" option makes up 100%)



Social Content Management Systems

The challenges for a Social Content Management (SCM) system are:

- To ensure the searchability/retrievability of socially-generated, useful-for-others material.
- To ensure the searchability/legal hold of socially-generated, non-compliant or discoverable material.
- To maintain security and governance over the defined lifecycle.

Given the rapid take up of systems of engagement, users and vendors are still evolving or adapting solutions in order to ensure that a suitable system of record is in place. At present there are two alternative models for providing a social content management function.

Social Content Repository

The first can be considered more as a social content repository. Social business applications are selected on a best-of-breed basis, with each generating its own repository of data. This data is then filtered and migrated to an underlying system-of-record through suitable integration connectors, often using CMIS (Content Management Interoperability Services). This integration may be immediate, or on a regular sweep basis. The repository may

be dedicated to social content, may be integrated with an existing ECM or records management (RM) system, or may be the main ECM or RM system itself. In this model, the filtering of content to ascertain if it should be archived as a record is likely to rely on automatic mechanisms. In some cases, a save-everything philosophy may be adopted.

One drawback of this method is that the connection is generally one-way, so there is little opportunity to re-use content across multiple social engagement channels. This can considerably limit the ability to re-purpose social content back into the applications that generated it. A more serious concern is that the social content repository has no way to impose governance and security of social content at the point of creation. Nor can it rationalise any tagging structures or classification that will assist with subsequent searchability and due relevance once in the system-of-record. A further drawback is that it is much more difficult to trigger social-centric workflows that may require interconnects with existing document-centric workflows, or other enterprise systems.

Combined Social Publishing/Social Content Management System

The alternative model is to use social applications that are extensions or modules of the ECM or records management system, and which are pre-integrated with the ECM governance, security, classification and workflows. Of course the main drawback of this approach is that the ECM supplier may not be able to offer the range or richness of functionality that best-of-breed social application vendors can provide. Here again the model splits.

Some ECM suppliers have built out their core offerings to provide a range of social business functionality. They may have done this by closely integrating existing or acquired products into the ECM suite, or they may have built it out organically. In either case, it is a single-source situation, and one might expect that logins, security levels, integration with workflows, and records policy alignment are consistent across the whole infrastructure. A further benefit is that a uniform governance policy can be initiated at the creation point of the social content, assisting compliance and allowing more specific control of what may or may not need to be archived.

The alternative is to supplement the ECM suite functionality with add-ons or integrations from independent third-parties or best-of-breed suppliers. Depending on the level of integration and the strength of the partnership, this can suffer the same disadvantages as the best-of-breed solution described above. Integrations need to be comprehensive, two-way, and well supported into the future by both parties.

It is also highly likely, of course, that as companies experiment with social applications, consolidate around the more successful ones, and then look to bring them into the social content governance framework, that a hybrid approach becomes inevitable.

Functional Requirements of a Social Content Management System

As we discussed earlier, many social business applications are adopted without the need to build strong business cases, and this in itself can lead to poor planning and a lack of functional scoping. It is important, therefore, to think through the likely evolution of these applications to ensure that the maximum benefits can be achieved within the broader context of business operations. It is no coincidence that many of these concepts are basic to any form of content management system.

Security Management Inside and Outside the Enterprise

In a data-sensitive environment, social business content can present even more of a security risk than conventional documents and emails. Users can be lulled by the more informal, sharing environment, resulting in disclosures or casual conversations that could be damaging if they were leaked or inadvertently passed on – something that social applications generally make particularly easy. This risk is heightened if social applications are extended to business partners, collaborating professionals, and in particular, customers. Whilst most social applications will provide their own security arrangements, these may be somewhat inadequate, particularly for some web-hosted SaaS applications. Even if suitable granular or role-based security models are available, managing a set of non-integrated social business applications, compared to a single-supplier suite, is likely to create quite an overhead, with greater possibilities of error.

Social Content-Aware Workflows & Business Processes

With the proliferation of communications channels and commenting mechanisms for customers, project teams and employees, the opportunity for a disconnect with established workflows and follow-up procedures increases considerably. We have all most likely experienced the way that an agreement for action on instant messaging (IM) or a management instruction on a social bulletin board can easily escape the most rigorous to-do list regime for an individual employee. In a similar way, customer exchanges over multiple social channels or a one-to-one case-team conversation can easily go un-recorded or un-tagged for follow up.

It is important, therefore, that existing workflow mechanisms are connected into the social application, removing the need for users to re-create task transactions in order to follow-up and process social interactions. It is also important that new possibilities are also considered whereby collaborative filtering, collective brainstorming, or crowd-sourcing are included into established workflows. A typical example here might apply to a technical helpdesk, whereby difficult problems or minority requirements are escalated to an open social forum where other users can offer their expertise. Such social excursions must also, of course, trigger forwarding of a suitable response back to the original enquirer, acknowledgement or mediation in the social medium, and eventual migration of the result back to the company knowledge store.

Social Content Publishing

Large organizations have always had a variety of communications channels with their own staff, with customers, and with the public at large, both paper-based and electronic. To the usual departmental email distributions and memos we can now add project-sites and SMS messages. To the intranets and staff newspapers, we can add CEO blogs and interactive notice-boards. To press releases and customer newsletters we can add public blogs and customer forums. To the corporate website and brochure-ware we can add company Facebook pages and Twitter posts. Hence there is a growing need to reuse and re-purpose content to ensure consistency of message, completeness of notification, and compliance with regulation and approvals. In this respect, the social content management system resembles a web-content management system, but the speed, volume and variety of content to be managed is likely to be much higher, and the range of users involved will be much wider. Re-use, sub-editing, approval and publishing workflows are all relevant, both to internal and external communications channels.

An example here might be the recruitment for a new job role. Procedure dictates that this must be notified to internal staff before being advertised externally. Almost all of the channels above, traditional and social could be used for internal notification and external advertising, and they would use very similar text, but procedure must be followed, and suitable records kept of both content and timing in case of future dispute.

Content Search and Analytics

One of the biggest benefits of social applications is the dramatic speed with which corporate expertise can be brought to bear on a particular question or problem. The term “Enterprise Q&A” is being coined to describe formal encapsulations of this function, but it is a generic capability within many applications of Enterprise 2.0 technology. However, this is one area where transience is a disadvantage. Answering a colleague’s question at short notice is rewarding, but answering the same question many times over is tedious. Hence the need for a comprehensive search capability across historical exchanges, preferably not limited to a single social application, but across all social applications. Better still if the social content repository is contiguous with the ECM repositories, and can also be accessed through a search portal that includes both structured and unstructured data repositories.

Again, the social-specific benefits include the ability to use social content analytics to monitor sentiment, track trends and opinions, reward employee engagement, forestall incidents, and test decisions. For example, cross-tracking brand sentiment with call-desk fault reports can provide early warning of product issues, which might be confirmed by a poll within the sales or distribution channel in order to prioritize corrective action. This can be followed up by an immediate employee alert, and a social communications campaign to manage customer confidence.

Maintaining Corporate Taxonomy

An essential aspect of findability for any content, whether social or not, is that keywords are used within the corporate context. Tagging is a key aspect of many social applications, and whereas many would argue that “folksonomies” will and should prevail, in many industries and applications, a degree of precision is required in order to avoid miss-filing or misunderstandings – think of healthcare and pharmaceuticals, for example. If social content is originated within an integrated suite of applications, then it should be much easier to provide a look-up of company-preferred terms. Similarly, templating or inheritance of metadata and agreed classification schemes into collaborative workgroup or project sites can greatly ease the subsequent lifecycle management.

Managing Corporate Compliance

Acceptable use policies, data compliance rules, privacy, and company confidentiality apply just as much to social content as they do to any other documents or emails. Ensuring that all these policies can be monitored and enforced across multiple social applications can be difficult. Within any given application, it may be difficult to enforce acceptable use and traceability requirements, for example barring anonymous posts or forcing an archive trail to be stored. The inability of authorized compliance staff to access and monitor content stored in unofficial applications or ad hoc SaaS services can present a compliance and litigation risk. Instant message conversations, for example, that propagate gossip or prejudice between employees cannot be policed if they cannot be scrutinized – albeit that this may raise its own privacy issues in some jurisdictions.

Lifecycle and Records Management

As we saw in Figure 4, most organizations have yet to take on board the implications of social content as a record, both from the positive exploitation benefit, and from the compliance and litigation risk. As with all records management, there will be some who accept the risk in favour of moving ahead quickly and flexibly, and without the associated cost overhead, whilst others are all too aware of the risks of public exposure or court action that can result from the inability to quickly surface historical exchanges, and equally, the ability to limit potential exposure by deleting discoverable records at the end of a planned and declared retention period.

In choosing a social content application or publishing system, therefore, it is important to investigate how easily it can be integrated with existing records management capabilities. This may also include the alignment of tags or metadata with existing records management classification schemes. Added to that is a need to consider if and how social content will be filtered in order to avoid clutter, whilst ensuring that relevant and important content is retained – and this may include manual records declaration, automatic filtering, or a mixture of both.

Conclusion and Recommendations

As social business applications enter the mainstream, the ad hoc benefits of knowledge sharing, team-building and collaboration are being formalized into business processes and workflows, where they are more reliable and more effective. The existing corporate knowledge library of documents and reports is being extended to capture conversations, comments and tags. Publication of business content on public social networks is being more carefully planned and monitored.

However, to fully exploit its potential, this burgeoning content source must be managed, both within the parameters of business workflows, and as a knowledge repository for future reference. And in order to feel comfortable with this newly generated social content in the corporate context, we need to wrap a security and compliance blanket around it, much as we do with any other valuable and sensitive content generated within the business. Therefore, we need to deploy social content management systems to maximize the benefits and minimize the risk.

Social content management can be implemented in a number of ways, and it is important to agree to a strategy at an early stage in order to inform later decisions as to which social business applications to choose, on which infrastructure platforms, and integrated to which existing business systems. Over time, the social

business infrastructure will become as intrinsic to the business as ERP, BPM, CRM or Project Management are today, and many of the same decisions need to be made: best-of-breed or suite, on-premise or cloud, security management within the application or within the network, search within the application or from the enterprise portal, records management as separate repositories or within the enterprise RM framework.

As we have seen when applying content and records management principles to other enterprise systems, there is a considerable benefit to be gained if the content management system can be invoked at the earliest creation stage. This will provide comprehensive security, consistent tagging, immersion within the BPM workflows, filtering of importance, inclusion in the search regime, and compliance with retention and discovery rules. The best way to achieve this is with a high level of integration between the social business applications, or social publishing systems, and the underlying content management system. Integration functionality and on-going support is likely to be better if we choose an extension of the existing ECM suite as long as the breadth of social applications can match those of best-of-breed suppliers.

The challenge with social business content management is to achieve all of these aspects of control and governance without inhibiting the free and easy exchange of social interaction.

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IBM Enterprise Content Management is all about providing flexibility you need to access, author and extend your corporate content. We care about protecting your corporate assets, as well as your ability to locate and connect the right people (SMEs) with your organizations content consumer and producers.

Social consumer-based sites like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are influencing how people in the corporate world communicate with each other, and businesses are now realizing they too must adapt to stay competitive. Solutions such as IBM Connections, intuitively integrated with IBM's Enterprise Content Management platform through social and collaborative content applications, are helping organizations achieve their goals by providing businesses with smarter solutions. In essence, IBM is giving organizations the ability to seamlessly author, manage and repurpose all types of content. The ability to dynamically participate in business processes, automatically declare a record and/or publish content out to the web for consumption, or access it from a mobile device for the purpose of reviewing, approving and ultimately archiving content is providing organization's with increased flexibility to:

- React quickly to threats and opportunities
- Minimize costs by leveraging infrastructure investments
- Reduce risk and costs, as well as respond rapidly to changing regulatory and legal requirements

There are three important tenants to IBM social content management: Office document management; social content and collaboration; and social business content applications. For more information on IBM's social content management offerings and how they can help your business, please go to the following: <http://www-01.ibm.com/software/ecm/social-content-management/>

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AIIM (www.aiim.org) is the community that provides education, research, and best practices to help organizations find, control, and optimize their information.

For over 60 years, AIIM has been the leading non-profit organization focused on helping users to understand the challenges associated with managing documents, content, records, and business processes. Today, AIIM is international in scope, independent, implementation-focused, and, as the representative of the entire ECM industry - including users, suppliers, and the channel - acts as the industry's intermediary.

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