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OPTING



**LESSONS IN SOCIAL BUSINESS FROM
A FORTUNE® 500 PRODUCT MANAGER**

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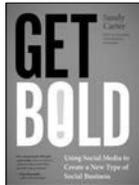
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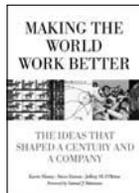
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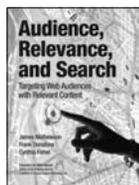
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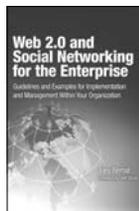
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Praise for *Opting In*

“A must-read for anyone in business today. Ed does an incredible job at articulating the cultural shift driving social business today and the need for companies to embrace social business practices in order to thrive in today’s changing digital world.”

—Jonathan Levitt

Chief Marketing Officer, OpinionLab

“Ed gives us a highly actionable, from-the-trenches view of social business, how it works, and why it will reshape how we do business.”

—Dion Hinchcliffe

Chief Strategy Officer, Dachis Group

Columnist for ZDNet and InformationWeek

“I have been teaching Internet Marketing classes at DePaul University since 2006, and the IBM Social Computing Guidelines have been indispensable in providing direction to students looking to meaningfully engage in business social media. To this excellent resource I now add another, Ed Brill’s *Opting In*. The book is an honest and open combination of history and insight, in which Ed shares how he and IBM have used social media to make a technology giant more approachable and relevant to the lives of its customers and prospects. No small feat. The publishing industry abounds with social media guides at present. *Opting In* distinguishes itself from the completion by sharing real-world examples of what has worked (and what has not), with a clear explanation of the critical factors and lessons learned. Perhaps the new IBM meme will be ‘Nobody ever got fired for ‘Opting In.’”

—James Moore

Director of Online Learning, DePaul University, Driehaus College of Business

“Many organizations are struggling to find ways to connect more effectively with their customers, partners, and their own employees. As an early adopter of social business solutions, IBM’s Ed Brill has been excelling at this for more than a decade. In *Opting In*, he shares his experiences and insights on how to engage with communities and use their feedback to help guide critical business decisions. Anyone looking to learn how to leverage community feedback should put this on their reading list.”

—Alan Lepofsky

Vice President and Principal Analyst, Constellation Research

“Social business is an organizational imperative. In *Opting In*, Ed Brill demonstrates how IBM transformed our culture and tools to connect people with people and insert social into business process. This book represents the best practices and lessons learned in an extremely effective, personal narrative. Must reading for any product or brand manager.”

—Jeff Schick

Vice President, Social Software, IBM

“Ed has been involved with social software since its very early days, driving his personal, product, and corporate brand forward as the social landscape began to take shape. This book gives an insider’s view of the evolution of the social business from a personal perspective and how brands needed to adapt to the changing way of communicating. He shows how the use of social media has enabled the growth of transparency in business and gives practical advice for aspiring social product managers. It is an excellent resource for any business wishing to activate its advocates and grow its agile social business.”

—**Eileen Brown**

Contributor, Social Business column at ZDNet and author of *Working the Crowd: Social Media Marketing for Business*

“Clearheaded, actionable, and hype-free. As an IBM product manager who has successfully navigated the social business waters for himself, Ed demonstrates a remarkable ability to marry data and experience into a framework others can use to build, lead, and actualize social product strategies. This book is a must-read for any product manager with questions about navigating social business!”

—**Jason Seiden**

CEO, Ajax Workforce Marketing

“‘Opting in’ to become a more social business is imperative whether your business is large or small. This book gives you the roadmap you need to get there.”

—**Laurie McCabe**

Partner, SMB Group

“Ed Brill’s *Opting In* is an important book that takes social business beyond external marketing to provide practical guidance on how to drive significant business value through enhancing human interactions within the enterprise.”

—**Bill Ives**

Partner, Merced Group

“Product management is a relationship business. It is about resonating with the user. *Opting In* shows you why and how social tools can accelerate relationships so you can sing to your consumer and make an extraordinary difference to the world.”

—**Kantha Shelke**

Ph.D. Principal, Corvus Blue and developer who helped create and launch more than 100 food products that are still on the retail shelf today

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Opting In

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Opting In

Lessons in Social Business from a
Fortune 500 Product Manager

Ed Brill

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*To my wife, Deborah, for inspiration, immeasurable patience,
and all of her support.*

*To my two beautiful daughters, M and C, for keeping me grounded
throughout this book project—and every day.*

To those who believe in taking risks with me, professionally and personally.

*Five career moves and many of my best memories have resulted
from someone taking a chance.*

“Nothing ventured, nothing gained.” Carpe diem.

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Foreword

Business has always been social. My grandmother learned practical strategies from workers she sold pencils to on the square of her Ukrainian hometown. My grandfather traded stock tips as he bought piece goods for the store he ran with his cousins in St. Louis decades later. Several thousand years of human culture, and my grandparents' personal stories, tell us people have always worked together, learned together, and helped one another succeed.

Yet recent popularity of the phrase "voice of the customer" implies that, for a long time, businesses stopped listening. As companies focused on efficiency and scale, big boom advertising drowned out other sounds. Human connection seemed soft. "It's all business" suggested calculating and cold.

Social media, now in the hands of millions, reintroduces a humanizing energy. Social tools amplify so many individual voices we can sound like the Hallelujah Chorus. Power generated by people, on our own and in self-organized groups, influences opinions and changes behavior. A Nielsen Global survey showed 90 percent of us make buying decisions based on relationships, over the influence of any other source.

Meanwhile I spend time working with companies to ensure that "voice of the employee" translates into "growing smarter from your world-class assets." Many business leaders act as if work would be easier if everyone would just quit talking so much. Some leaders apparently imagine soaring workplace productivity if people stopped attempting to learn from one another and make decisions based on trust. Why do people, individually, prove invaluable, yet people together signal trouble?

Social media tools designed specifically for use inside companies (also referred to as social business tools) are gaining momentum fast. They're still largely used, though, for communication and sharing, not yet replacing the outmoded business processes seen as the "real work." Perhaps they're not dreaded enough or seem too easy.

The tools themselves don't cause missed opportunity; rather, they're limited by old-style business culture. Even as groups form online and organize for action, leaders often see people within the work force as "parts" rather than pieces of an interlocking whole. Words and sentiment are analyzed rather than synthesized, tinkered with instead of valued as they illuminate collective brilliance in their midst.

Ed Brill lives at the seam of this dichotomy. He has transformed one of those big blocks of real work into a modern practice, where the voices of customers and employees mix. Managing products designed for collaborative work, he has developed a vast intra-enterprise network of people interested in the issues he toils over each day.

Beyond the independent blog he writes and idea jams he contributes to, other people's blog comments and status updates expand his optics into organizations he wouldn't otherwise see. There he recognizes product management works in similar ways as it did years ago. While knowing people expect to connect, product managers still struggle to make connections.

Ed's experience inside IBM, an organization transforming into a vibrant community of sharing, helped him realize he could serve as a lighthouse and a bridge.

In today's fast-paced marketplace, new technology must leap over years of incremental change. Inviting a network of stakeholders into the development cycle provides greater assurance products meet people's needs. As product managers contribute and listen, their marketplace leans in to hear perspectives and trade offs. Along the way they cultivate trust. As customers and prospects engage, they build momentum long before advertising engines rev up.

I've followed Ed's blog for years, and I'm consistently impressed with the variety, veracity, and value he assembles. He exemplifies the social business leader, connecting people, information, and insights, innovating every day.

If we look at Ed's approach as a blueprint for our own, even if our role isn't product management, we learn how to widen our reach. We see how to embrace everyone who may touch the products we work on. In doing so, we can finely tune our offerings to the needs and desires of the people who we serve.

Ed offers a window into a more inclusive world of mutual respect and understanding, in the face of a cynical merry-go-round of enticement and unmet expectations. He shows us the voice of the customer is also the voice of an employee, the voice of trusted allies, the voice of caring friends, and the voice we ought to listen for everywhere we go.

Opting In turns product management and marketing on its head, averting the need to sift through tea leaves as we attempt to discern what people want. When you read this book, you'll see actionable insights everywhere, gems to laugh with, savor, and share.

Opting In implores us to lean in to the conversation. By hearing what Ed's composing, we strengthen both our listening skills and our voices, speaking up for the opportunity to do exceptional work.

—Marcia Conner
Principal, SensifyWork
Staunton, Virginia
November 2012

Preface

Is social networking just the latest trendy management tool? Is social business the wave of the future or just an overused buzzword?

Most books on social business have focused on sales and marketing or on overall organizational change. The catalyst for writing *Opting In* was my belief, proven through a decade of real-world experience, that product management as a discipline significantly contributes to the fabric of a social business.

Of course, being social is not an automatic recipe for a successful product or service, nor is it even a necessary ingredient. However, as one of my IBM colleagues, Uffe Sørensen, often says, “The social conversation about your products/services is already taking place. Your only decision is whether as a vendor you want to be part of it.”

There is an individual aspect to the decision as well. Clearly, a generational shift has taken place, as “digital natives” have entered the work force. Today, technology as a decision support tool has evolved beyond dashboards and spreadsheets. The expectation exists that tools for social and mobile collaboration will exist in the workplace. If the IT organization chooses to opt out, the lines of business will find ways to adopt social tools anyway.

Marcia Conner, author of *The New Social Learning* and the foreword for *Opting In*, once described the cultural change she witnessed at a particular organization. This company, extremely concerned about security, decided not only to prohibit access to public social networks from the company’s computers but also to take possession of employee smartphones while the staff were inside the workplace.

After a few weeks of this policy, employees started taking longer lunch breaks. Observers noticed many of the staff simply sitting in their cars in the

parking lot during their lunch breaks. Instead of running errands or grabbing a bite, the staff were using their smartphones for all the things that they were restricted from doing while “working.”

CEOs and other senior organizational leaders have recognized the change in employee expectations. Where they are championing the cultural change to a social business, the profile of a successful employee is also changing.

Why do you want to be a social product manager? Because the attributes that make a successful product manager now turn out to be the most-desired talents *across the entire organization*. The agility, influence, leadership, and communication that personify a great product manager are now the characteristics that will excel in any role in any company.

The IBM CEO Study 2012 identified this trend:

Across industries and geographies, CEOs consistently highlight four personal characteristics most critical for employees' future success: being collaborative, communicative, creative and flexible. Given their intent to create greater openness, CEOs are looking for employees who will thrive in this kind of atmosphere.

However, we believe there's another driver behind the high ranking of this particular group of traits. For years, organizations have been embroiled in the so-called war for talent. The challenge has historically been a shortage of particular skills. But today, it's virtually impossible for CEOs to find the future skills they will need—because they don't yet exist. Bombarded by change, most organizations simply cannot envision the functional capabilities needed two or three years from now. Conventional training faces some of the same challenges. By the time courses are designed and delivered, the subject skills are already becoming outdated.

Instead, CEOs are increasingly focused on finding employees with the ability to constantly reinvent themselves. These employees are comfortable with change; they learn as they go, often from others' experiences. As a healthcare CEO from Australia explained, “Today's connected economy is full of ambiguity, and the characteristics required to navigate that ambiguity are collaboration, creativity and communication.”¹

In other words, the lessons of *Opting In* will help you differentiate yourself as an employee.

As a product or brand manager, you already possess the talents needed to succeed under any conditions. Product managers embody the principles of a social business: engaged, transparent, and agile.

Social product managers exemplify the skills of communication, collaboration, and coordination—the three C’s—and can flourish in any situation. Social business provides the tools to move beyond gut instinct or lost cycle time waiting for traditional market research, incorporating more voices and providing insights across the entire organization. Social product managers are credible influencers on their organization and the market. They are more efficient at their jobs, and more successful at accomplishing their objectives.

My own career has been significantly impacted by the decision to engage with the market I made over a decade ago. New opportunities opened up at IBM because of my digital reputation and influence. The marketplace listened and participated, leading to opportunities to work with customers and prospects all over the world, and more success for the products I manage.

You can increase your individual potential and organizational success by incorporating the methods and tools discussed in *Opting In* on your product/brand management journey. You will influence more authoritatively and lead more effectively. You will increase awareness of your product or service and make it more successful. You will have more fun and make new contacts and friends. And you will remind yourself why you got into product management in the first place: to delight your customers and make a difference.

¹ IBM Institute for Global Business Value, IBM CEO Study 2012, “Leading Through Connections,” May 2012, pages 20–21.

Acknowledgments

Writing a book is much more than putting words into sentences. *Opting In* has been an incredible learning process. Many people contributed to this effort, or to the journey that led here. I have attempted to list them all here, as a small way to express my appreciation and gratitude.

Thank you to my family—Deborah, M, and C—for their support and patience of all the late nights and weekends spent writing, and to the rest of my family for their encouragement and enthusiasm.

Opting In is the result of persistent persuasion by two wonderful IBM colleagues: Steve Stansel and Ellice Uffer. Thank you to both of you for creating this opportunity.

Many IBMers provided direct contributions, served as editors, offered advice, or otherwise helped make this book happen. Thank you to Karen Lilla, for one and a half times the effort through both editing and content guidance, along with peer editors Jennifer Okimoto, Jeanne Murray, and Luis Suarez Rodriguez. You elevated this book in so many ways.

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This book is based on a decade of living life online, and over that time, several people have served as partners, coaches, or supporters. Thank you to John Head and PSC Group LLC for hosting edbrill.com since 2003; Volker Weber for catalyzing and the initial blog hosting; Jacob Nelson and Libby Ingrassia, two editors who helped develop my writing and finally got me to stop double-spacing after a period.

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Last, and most importantly, thank you to the entire "Lotus community." Whatever we call the products, those of you who "bleed yellow" are not just the subject of many of this book's stories, you are my friends and family. You have inspired me every day of the past two decades.

—Ed

About the Author

Ed Brill is Director, Product Management—IBM Social Business solutions.

Brill is responsible for the product and market strategy for IBM's messaging, collaboration, communications, and productivity products, including IBM Notes/Domino, IBM SmartCloud Notes, IBM Sametime, IBM Docs, and other related social business solutions. Brill's focus is on extending and growing the success of these solutions through customer engagement, partner ecosystem development, and harnessing the breadth and depth of the IBM organization.

In 18 years at IBM, Brill has led a variety of sales, marketing, and product-related organizations. As Director for Social Business, Brill has succeeded in elevating IBM's expertise and reputation in brand and product management. He has constantly innovated in both marketplace strategy and product execution.

Previously, during Brill's role as Business Unit Executive—Worldwide Sales, his suite of products posted year-to-year quarterly growth for four years and gained thousands of new customers. Earlier in his IBM career, Brill led competitive strategy and held several product management and strategic marketing roles. Brill's technical background includes development of infrastructure deployments through project management and IT architect roles.

Committed to understanding the global marketplace, Brill has visited IBM customers in more than 40 countries, and is a frequent speaker at IBM and industry events worldwide. Brill has served on the advisory boards for Web 2.0 Expo and IDG Mobile Enterprise Next.

Outside of IBM, Brill is an active Chicago community member. As a 25-year resident of Highland Park, Illinois, Brill authors "Highlands and

Ravines,” a regular opinion column on community news website Patch.com, and previously wrote for the *Chicago Tribune’s* TribLocal.

Brill holds a Bachelor of Science degree in marketing from Indiana University, with a minor in political science.

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I

Why Social Business?

The job of a product manager is to build a business plan for a product or service, then carry out the plan. Product managers assess what markets to serve, how to serve them, how to win, and for how long.

Today, there are new tools—and a new organizational mindset—that can make the product or brand manager more successful. This new approach brings new products to market faster, identifies opportunities for innovation, and anticipates changing market conditions.

The approach is called *social business*, an application of the concepts of social networking to encourage organizational cooperation and streamline challenges.

For most business leaders, the term **social networking** still conjures images of employees spending their valuable work time surfing Facebook and Twitter, chatting over Skype, or watching YouTube videos. It is a lingering loaded management question: What are our employees actually *doing*, should we be restricting or blocking it, and do these tools matter to anyone other than the marketing department?

A social business operates in ways that drive business value through optimized human interaction. Within the organization, people apply relevant

content and expertise to ideas, activities, and output, the result of cultural change and technology adoption that encourages the sharing of knowledge and insights. The result is a transformed business that is highly participatory, makes informed decisions, and cultivates loyalty among employees and customers.

Although success is about more than the tools, most conversations about social business lead to marketing today. Many organizations have set up or hired an online presence on the major social networks, have community managers in their marketing department, and are using social media to drive advertising or marketing campaigns. Internally, many companies use collaboration tools to increase organizational communication and knowledge sharing. However, only a small percentage have envisaged a complete embrace and adoption of social business.

In her book *Get Bold*, IBM Vice President Sandy Carter writes:

Social Business leverages all the social tools and techniques of social media, but expands the usage and efficiencies beyond “media and marketing” to all of a company’s processes, both internal and external.

At IBM, we believe that social business represents the fifth wave of computing. Just as the mainframe, PC, client/server, and Internet eras all represented transformational moments in both business and technology, social business is an inflection point in how organizations leverage their relationships—internally and externally—to be more successful.

To truly realize the full potential of a social business, leaders also need to empower a company’s most vital asset: its people.

Consider some attention-grabbing data points:

- IBM’s 2012 CEO Study of more than 1,700 chief executive officers from 64 countries and 18 industries worldwide reveals that only 16 percent of CEOs are using social business platforms to connect with customers, but that number is poised to spike to 57 percent within the next three to five years.
- IBM’s 2011 CIO Survey of 3,000 global leaders indicated that more than 55 percent of companies identified social networking as having a strategic significance to their company’s growth.

- According to Pew Research, 66 percent of online adults use social networking sites. Generationally, Pew has identified that **millennials**—people born between 1981 and 2000—“will make online sharing in networks a lifelong habit.”¹ As millennials have entered the workforce, they have brought this trait with them, and expect the same of colleagues and clients.

In other words, social business isn't some hot new fad that will be over in an Internet minute. In the consumer space, examples abound of how social media isn't something companies can opt out of. Traditional ways of managing the message no longer apply. Bloggers, chat boards, e-shopping and ratings sites, and specialized forums all offer any buyer information about their intended purchase at the click of a Google search.

But social business is bigger than that. The transformational opportunity is more than watching online product demonstrations, comparing commodity prices, or checking hotel ratings. Social business utilizes the same methods of crowdsourcing, interactivity, immediacy, and relational linking, applied to a broader set of content and networks. Social business is a way of thinking, a discipline, a cultural change.

Within the discipline of product or brand management, social business provides a significant opportunity. *Opting In* explores ways to apply the concepts of social business specifically to building products and services. In these eleven chapters, you will learn both the why and how of becoming a social product manager—a thought leader, an insightful decision maker, and an open communicator.

The concepts and examples throughout the book illustrate the daily activities of product management through the lens of three core characteristics, attributes embraced throughout the organization:

- **Engagement:** Deeply connecting people, including customers, employees, suppliers, partners, influencers, and even competitors, resulting in productive, efficient communication and sharing.
- **Transparency:** Removing boundaries to information, experts, and assets, resulting in increased alignment, confidence, and comprehension.
- **Agility:** Utilizing information and insight to anticipate and address evolving opportunities, resulting in faster decisions and increased responsiveness.

Throughout *Opting In*, I tie back to these three characteristics often, because they are the core principles of how to leverage social business. They are not as simple as they sound on the surface; to apply these traits to a business, especially a large or public company, requires significant cultural change. The social product manager can lead, influence, or follow such a transformation, but must adapt one or more of these core concepts. Often a product manager's focus on one of these characteristics results in the emergence of all three, laying the foundation for success in social business.

A Social Business Is Engaged

Engaged sounds the most straightforward of the three. Engaged is a baseline choice—will you participate in the market or not? A company cannot be a social business without being engaged, but this does not necessarily imply direct participation.

A well-known example of a company that eschews social media is Apple. Its employees do not blog, post, or tweet in any capacity related to their day jobs. Apparently, they are not utilizing foursquare, a location-based social networking service, either.

On foursquare, the person who has used a smartphone to “check in” at a particular place most frequently over the past 60 days is crowned “mayor.” Much to my surprise, I briefly earned the mayoral title at Apple's corporate campus in Cupertino, California, after only two days of meetings there in May 2010.

Although I was initially surprised at the dubious honor, I realized that Apple's complete corporate silence on social networks was to blame. The Twitter ID @Apple has more than 6,000 followers, but no profile information and has never tweeted. The Apple, Inc., page on Facebook has more than 6.5 million likes, after only a year on the service. Despite the opportunity to reach and engage loyal customers, instead the Apple page only displays postings from your friends.

Yet Apple recognizes the value of social business. On apple.com, Apple support communities are among the site's most-visited web pages, with more than one million discussion threads started in the past four years.

Because support forums rely on active participation of knowledgeable experts to supply answers, Apple has provided several social incentives for contributions. Forum participants have individual profiles and can customize

that profile to provide public information about their background, expertise, and interests. Each time a participant posts in the forum, the post is accompanied by their “level” and “points” on the Apple forum. Score points are earned from other participants; ten points for each “this solved my question” acknowledgment, and five points for each “this helped me” vote. There may or may not be any kind of reward involved in a system like this; for many community participants, the badge of pride associated with a high score or level is recognition enough.

For Apple, providing a self-service community drastically reduces the customer support burden that the company bears directly for its products. Consumers assist each other with product questions, configuration, requests, and even defects. Customer satisfaction is actually increased because answers in the forums address not just the person who originally asked the question but also the next consumer with the same question, forming a knowledge base built up over years. Participants in the forum feel more loyal and connected to Apple because they have been able to share knowledge and earn recognition in an affiliated way, on the pages of Apple’s own property.

How does a self-service forum support the concept of being engaged? I can’t speak for Apple, but I can say that at IBM we also host numerous forums on the pages of ibm.com. We monitor those forums for hot topics and trends, and use those as inputs into the product development and support process. If a question is arising often, it can be converted into an FAQ (frequently asked questions) document, technical support note, or added to our product documentation. Forum contributions often include best practices or tips, which we can incorporate into product improvements or documentation.

Another valuable aspect of forum discussions is that they often go off-topic into overall marketplace discussions. Over the years, I have found myself in online conversations about market share, competitive positioning, and business partner solutions for my products as a result of discussions on ibm.com forums. I discuss the importance, and the balance, of having marketplace discussions in public in Chapter 6, “Activate Your Advocates”.

Although the preceding examples are organizational in nature, engagement applies to individuals as well. Those who engage are people, making individual decisions within the framework of their company culture and orientation toward social business.

Engaged product managers, as discussed in the chapters ahead, have the opportunity to individually lead and influence the market, help connect people to people, and increase their own knowledge and confidence. Social

product managers are constantly engaged, inside and outside their organization.

A Social Business Is Transparent

Transparency as a social business concept is the hardest one for line managers and business executives to embrace. I discuss this concept often throughout *Opting In*; the very premise of opting in to social business discussions is the notion that communicating openly takes work but provides rewards. In product management, transparency is a challenging notion because brand managers and leaders are always building the future. It might be too early to discuss plans openly, lest they fall into competitors' hands or prematurely influence customer (current or prospective) decision making. Inside an organization, transparency flies in the face of traditional corporate instinct to protect one's knowledge as the source of the individual's unique value to the company.

Being transparent is a key behavior in social business transformation. Several years ago, a professional services organization I worked with took its first step toward being a social business when a new CEO came onboard. Previously, organizational strategy and vision had been communicated through traditional methods, including memos, company meetings, and other asynchronous tools. The new CEO decided that he would rather use a blog (web log) to share his new ideas. Associates within the organization quickly learned that it was acceptable, even encouraged, to comment on the ideas shared by the CEO on his blog. The CEO received significant, immediate, and candid feedback on those ideas, and the employees internalized the strategic communications because of their ability to participate in a conversation.

One unintended consequence developed out of this transparency: Employees in the organization realized that the CEO was reading their comments on his blog and used the opportunity to completely flatten their internal communication structure. Topics on the CEO's blog were routinely "hijacked" with new discussion themes in attempts to raise other issues to the CEO. After some time, the CEO provided a new vehicle for internal advocacy, which he called "the speaker's corner" after the venue in London's Hyde Park. The off-topic discussions migrated to the new tool, and the CEO once again had the ability to engage in timely strategic discussions with the entire organization.

Transparency has the advantage of bringing people into conversations they might not otherwise be exposed to. It flattens an organization and leads to better information flow. Being transparent often introduces a new cultural element to many organizations—that of admitting and discussing when something goes wrong. Transparency often encourages a culture of continuous improvement rather than always striving to get things right the first time.

A Social Business Is Agile

The third concept, being nimble, ties in nicely with that thought of continuous improvement. In modern times, with petabytes of information available in real time and innovation often being the only differentiator among competitors, agility is a key attribute to success. Therefore, nimble organizations anticipate opportunities, adjust to market conditions rapidly, and are willing to reconsider approaches and decisions. Agility means putting an end to typically off-limits organizational norms and truisms in favor of fact-based decisions, and is the area where analytical tools are best applied to understand market sentiment and desire.

Agility often accompanies crisis management. In late 2010, retailer The Gap unveiled a new logo. The new wordmark utilized a standard sans serif font, with a small blue box to pay homage to the previous company image. Within minutes, the new logo was labeled a failure. Consumer sentiment on blogs, Twitter, and Facebook ran extremely negative, and the company was forced to retreat. Though at the time they indicated some intent to try to re-imagine the logo, even soliciting consumer participation, two years later the logo remains the same as it was going back to the early 1990s.

At the time, some speculated that the new logo was a publicity stunt and that there was never an intention to truly change the Gap image. However, the company's public statements—which, innovatively, they published in places such as the Huffington Post—made clear this was just genuinely a bad decision. They were transparent and nimble, and the crisis passed.

Agility isn't just about crisis management. One of the very first successful social business examples originated almost two decades ago. In 1990, American car manufacturer Chrysler Corporation implemented a Supplier Cost Reduction Effort (SCORE) program, which encouraged vendors to provide recommendations to the manufacturer on how to save money. The suppliers received a share of the savings from any of their ideas that were

implemented, which created a culture of trust and transparency. In the mid-1990s, Chrysler moved the SCORE program online, utilizing a collaboration software program and open discussions. With greater participation, thousands of proposals were received, and billions of dollars were saved as a result of quickly implementing supplier ideas.

Social Business and Earned Success

This first chapter has utilized broad, well-known companies—rather than IBM or personal stories—as examples to familiarize you with the characteristics of a social business. Each of these cases demonstrates the success of acting in an open, agile, and connected manner. Today, many marketers are talking about paid, owned, and earned media. For working with customers, suppliers, and partners, traditional methods—paid media advertising and communication and owned properties such as corporate websites—are fast being supplanted by earned media, where those external parties are the voice and the channel. This is where most social media tomes spend their time and energy, and clearly earned media is a critical component of the marketing mix today. These same three concepts apply to organizational behavior now, too. Owned media is evolving to encompass new forms of owned communications, such as vendor blogs and infographics. Earned has emerged as increasingly influential, with employees at all organizational levels choosing to participate in thought leadership, horizontal communication, and transparent activity. Now is the time to understand how these new methods of behavior, new models of culture, and new tools of collaboration all combine to make a social business a successful business.

Lessons Learned

- Social business is a broader subject matter than social media; social business is a cultural transformation of an organization and its relationships with customers, suppliers, partners, and the marketplace.
- Social business, while trendy, is not a fad that can be ignored. Organizations must opt in to social business as a key component of innovation, best practice, and understanding the market.

- Social businesses adopt a range of tools and cultural changes to become more engaged, transparent, and agile. Both technology and organizational adaptation are required to be successful, but the process can be gradual and iterative.

Endnotes

- ¹ Pew Internet, “Millennials will make online sharing in networks a life-long habit,” Janna Anderson/Lee Rainie, July 2010 (<http://tinyurl.com/388y5pg>).

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