

# Social Collaboration

## Enabling a Breakthrough in Productivity for Knowledge Workers

Debra Lavoy, Director of Product Marketing  
Digital and Social Media, Open Text  
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### Abstract

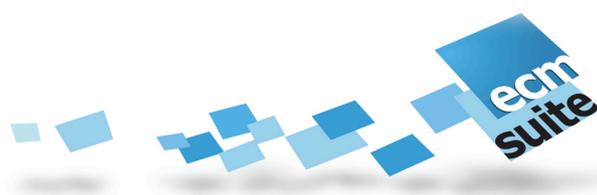
Over the past couple of decades, organizations have made steady improvement in productivity for knowledge workers. The 1990s brought knowledge management applications and email that certainly helped. But organizations thus far have not achieved the fifty-fold breakthrough in productivity that Peter Drucker predicted. At Open Text, we believe that breakthrough is possible, and we feel that social collaboration is the key.

In this whitepaper, we'll look at how social collaboration provides a technology for knowledge worker productivity analogous to what the assembly line did for manual worker productivity.

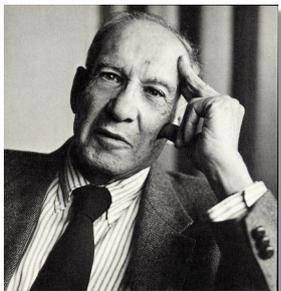


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## Introduction: The Dawning of a New Era in Knowledge Worker Productivity



Peter Drucker

In 1999, just before the turn of the century, management guru Peter Drucker noted that the 20th century witnessed a 50-fold increase in the productivity of manual workers in manufacturing. That achievement was the result of automation through the use of technology, such as the invention of the assembly line. The task of management in the 21st century, Drucker claimed, would be to achieve a similar increase in the productivity of knowledge workers.<sup>1</sup>

Reaching the fifty-fold productivity goal that Drucker predicted will not been easy, as anyone who's worked in a large group knows. For one thing, getting things done in big organizations is more difficult today than it should be. Organizations are often not aligned around common goals. As a result, they waste what should be a competitive advantage: their collective expertise, skills, and capabilities. Communication can also be difficult and slow between people in different departments, locations, and time zones—and it's becoming *more* difficult as organizations themselves become larger and more complex.

At Open Text we believe that the productivity gains Drucker talked about are possible, and we believe that social collaboration holds the key to achieving those goals for large organizations. As the assembly line was to manufacturing, social collaboration will be to knowledge work, representing a transformation in the way people get work done. Exactly how is the subject of this whitepaper.

We'll look at how social media tools in the consumer world have laid the groundwork and given us a model for collaboration that:

- Enables teams to form rapidly and produce work quickly;

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<sup>1</sup> "The most important, and indeed the truly unique, contribution of management in the 20th century was the 50-fold increase in the productivity of the manual worker in manufacturing. The most important contribution management needs to make in the 21st century is similarly to increase the productivity of knowledge work and knowledge workers." – Peter F. Drucker, "Knowledge-worker productivity: the biggest challenge." *California Management Review*, 1999.



- Helps people find information and expertise fast; and,
- Allows employees to leverage the collective intelligence of the organization.

## Social Collaboration: Enabling A Breakthrough in Productivity

Large organizations can certainly take advantage of efficiencies of scale—that's why they form in the first place—but size also has disadvantages. As noted above, communication is one challenge: too often the right hand is simply unaware of what the left hand is doing. Lew Platt of Hewlett-Packard perhaps summed up best when he said, some 15 years ago, "If only HP knew what HP knows, we would be three times more productive."

To achieve the knowledge worker productivity that Drucker predicted, large organizations must focus on three goals:

1. They must find a better, easier way for project-oriented teams to form and work within large and distributed organizations.
2. As Lew Platt suggests, organizations must get smarter about knowing what they know and knowing who knows what—so people can locate experts and make connections between unconnected bits of information.
3. Organizations need to get better at capturing knowledge so it can be shared reused—and stop the continuous reinvention of the proverbial wheel.

We call these three ideas 1) team enablement, 2) connecting the dots, and 3) compounding capabilities. And here's the good news: social collaboration seems perfectly designed to help organizations with all three goals.

### Team enablement: Helping teams form rapidly and produce work quickly

To be successful, project teams need to be able to form quickly, get organized, aggregate information, iterate on it, deliberate, make decisions, and produce results. These goals were much easier to achieve when people worked closely together in the same office. But when a team is distributed—with one person in India, another in the UK, several in the US and Canada—technology needs to replace the conference room where teams previously assembled.



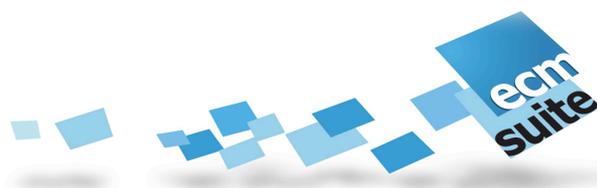
Social collaboration fills that gap by providing a shared workspace, a place where documents can be “laid out” for review, discussions can be held, and decisions can be made (and captured, along with the rationale behind them).

Social collaboration also enables people who work remotely from each other to get to know one another. Profiles that each person fills out allow team members to introduce themselves online. With Open Text Social Media, for example, each person can see a photo of the other people they’re working with, learn something about who they are, get a better sense of their skills and experience. When people feel like they “know” one another, they form teams more quickly, and the teams are more effective. They identify and clarify goals and tasks more easily, distribute work more appropriately, and develop a stronger sense of shared responsibility for the work at hand.

*Cohn and Wolfe, a highly successful public relations company with clients such as Nike, American Express and Hilton, used Open Text technology to create a social media-based employee intranet with employee profiles, communities, and content sharing across teams.*

The screenshot displays a user profile for John Ramsburg on a platform called 'The Den'. The profile includes a photo, a bio stating 'John is happy to answer your Den questions!', and contact details such as email address (john@cohnwolfe.com), job title (Vice President, Business Systems and Applications), and business phone number (+1 800 800 8000). The profile is divided into several sections: 'My Network' showing connections like Anthony Tartaglia, Tom Monica, and DUANE FREEMAN; 'My Comment Wall' with a recent comment from Robert Walsh; 'My Recent Activity' showing wiki page modifications; and 'Expertise' and 'Personal Information' sections detailing industry (Information Technology), experience (15 years), and interests like Theater, Music, and Video Games.

By enabling teams to assemble virtually in a shared workspace, social collaboration also ensures that everyone is working with the same set of information and that they all have an identical view of project status, issues, deliverables, goals, and gaps. This approach corrects a key problem with managing projects by email: the lack of



a common operating picture among team members, which can drain productivity as work is duplicated and deadlines are missed.

Lastly, teams need a way to reduce the friction and noise that prevent them from being more efficient—the difficulty sharing work, the endless email trails that make it difficult to track and resolve issues, the numerous versions and conflicting feedback that make even the simplest tasks so much more difficult. By contrast to “email collaboration,” an online community workspace provides “a single source of truth” where everyone on the team can go to get the latest information. A shared workspace can include discussions, wikis, and social communication tools that make it easy to track goals and tasks, assemble and iterate on work, and capture the best efforts and input of every team member. Thus the shared workspace makes team members more efficient and productive by reducing the management effort and communication overhead that is a part of every project.

*Enterprise application developer QAD is creating “the smart enterprise” with social collaboration tools from Open Text. According to Scott Lawson, Business Systems Architect at QAD, the Open Text solution is “an ecosystem for content. A place where content just doesn’t get created and then lost—it lives on as a valuable corporate resource, usable for many purposes and in multiple formats. We have achieved the elusive goal of a single version of the truth.”*

## Connecting the dots: How people find information and expertise fast

Giving employees a community workspace in which to form more efficient and effective teams will improve productivity. But they also need access to the right information. That information may—and often *will*—live outside the domain expertise of the team members themselves. Making the job of knowledge workers more difficult is the fact the amount of available information is exploding. Good information, important information, *useful* information is too often hidden under a ton of meaningless clutter. It’s the proverbial needle in a haystack problem.

There are two important ways that individuals get the information they need: they actively seek it out by asking questions, or they discover it through a kind of “ambient awareness.” Ambient awareness is a passive approach to gaining knowledge and refers



to the ability to be almost unconsciously aware of information related to what you're working on.

Ambient awareness is also one of capabilities that people have discovered in social media applications, which allow you to “follow” (or subscribe to) information sources you might be interested in. With Twitter, for example, you follow other people who are knowledgeable in a given area or who have a finger on the pulse of a given topic. Some news agencies like CNN provide a service in the form of a desktop application that does much the same thing, allowing you to stay informed on news topics or stock prices without requiring your continuous attention.

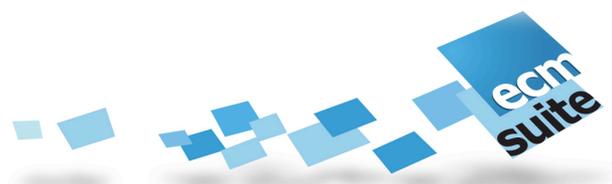
*Ambient awareness is the ability to be aware of (and sensitive to) a limited amount of information within a stream of data competing for your attention.*



Image © NY Times, September 2008

The same capability exists with social collaboration in the workplace. By following the blog of a colleague or “subscribing” to a project or workspace, you make it possible to have ambient awareness of relevant work, without being distracted by meaningless or irrelevant information.

Not only can you become more aware of information that interests you, but you can also use ambient awareness to help others. For example, a colleague poses a question for which you may know the answer. Your colleague does not know that this is topic is an area of expertise for you and so doesn't ask you directly. Instead the colleague poses the question to the broad organization through the social collaboration tool, and the only employees made aware of the question are those for whom it's relevant (as indicated by profile and keyword matches).



In addition to enabling more efficient ways to discover information and answers passively through ambient awareness, social collaboration in the workplace allows you to actively locate information and expertise. When doing a search with Open Text Social Media, for example, you're presented not just with content that may meet the criteria of your search, but also *communities* where that kind of content is found as well as *people* who have contributed similar content, based on blog posts, wiki contributions, comments on other posts, and so on. We call this "social search" or "socially aware search." It's based on the idea that information is far more valuable when it's linked to people.

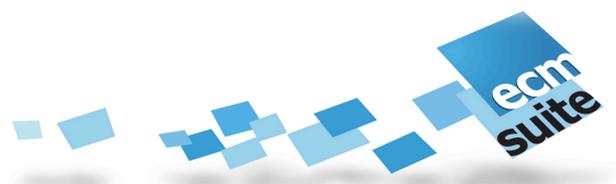
Imagine a search application that can help you find not only the information you're looking for but people in your organization who have expertise in that area and project teams who created that information or used it as input. Now the information you were looking for becomes a gateway to yet deeper and more nuanced information.

*For Multiquip, a manufacturer and supplier of industrial products, greater collaboration was an initiative driven by top management as a way to improve business practices and meet business goals. Needing to do more with less, Multiquip employees use Open Text social collaboration to quickly locate information and expertise. "To find the right people with the right knowledge fast for us is very important," says Michael Hanken, Vice President of IT at Multiquip. He adds that very often people are amazed at skills they never knew their colleagues had.*

### Compounding capability: Enabling employees to leverage the collective intelligence of the organization

One of the outcomes of using a collaborative workspace is that vastly more knowledge is captured as part of the process of doing work. In addition to the documents, presentations, spreadsheets, etc., that we traditionally think of as "knowledge," a shared workspace will contain the accumulated contributions, discussions, decisions, comments, and so on, which are also a very important part of knowledge.

These additional pieces of information—discussions, contributions, decisions, even errors and failures—are what we call "context." Another way to think of context is that it's the organization's tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge, according to David Jacobson PwC, is "the accumulated knowledge stored in our heads and in our



immediate personal surroundings.”<sup>2</sup> And, he says, it is “likely the largest, most valuable distributed database in any organization.”

Until now we haven’t had an efficient way to capture tacit knowledge. First-generation knowledge management applications that began appearing in the 1990s were supposed to store and manage knowledge, make it accessible to the entire organization, and thus greatly improve productivity for knowledge workers. Unfortunately, the KM applications of the 90s failed to meet expectations.

Here’s why: KM applications separate the act of compiling, managing, and seeking knowledge from the act of work itself. In other words, KM applications too often became a repository for storing the outcome or final results of a work stream or project, while the work was actually done using other tools, like email. As a result, the results were preserved, but the *context* was lost.

It’s also become increasingly clear that capturing context is notoriously difficult to do. While the creators of knowledge may understand the long-term value of capturing context as it’s being created, they hesitate to make the effort because they see it as an obstacle to getting things done, an impediment to their immediate productivity.

By contrast, social collaboration is designed to capture tacit knowledge and make it available across an organization. Open Text Social Media, for example, contains a collaborative workspace that fluidly documents knowledge as it’s incorporated into a project, saving not only the outcome but the process, not only the results but the context.

Aggregating and indexing this work offers everyone in the organization a tremendous research tool. The aggregated information is far more valuable than the team producing it is likely to anticipate. For example, before a new software product is launched, the marketing team searches for “launch plan” and finds not only documents, templates, and checklists, but also ideas, decisions, feedback, discarded proposals, and so on, all of it

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<sup>2</sup> “Unlocking tacit knowledge with social networking,” Dr. David H. Jacobson, Director Emerging Technologies, PricewaterhouseCoopers.



captured within a “workspace.” Having access to content like “decisions” can save time by providing rationale for actions (so those actions don’t have to be discussed yet again, only to reach the same conclusion).

This is how the organization’s tacit knowledge becomes explicit—external rather than internal, searchable rather than locked away, a competitive advantage rather than an asset that could walk out the door tomorrow.

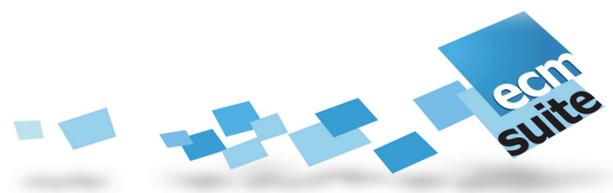
*Open Text Social Media connects knowledge workers to the people and content important to them within a secure, collaborative, community-based environment*



## Open Text Social Media for a More Productive Workforce

Providing the productivity tools employees want, while ensuring the compliance and security that organizations need, Open Text Social Media enables organizations to work faster, smarter, and more productively. It connects knowledge workers to the people and content important to them within a secure, collaborative, community-based environment:

- Provides a simple, but very usable interface where employees can create their own profiles. This step alone significantly helps people across the enterprise get to know one another so they can work together.
- Enables shared workspaces where teams can form, contribute work, aggregate work and iterate on work. The entire process of doing work is captured as content and becomes a foundation for new corporate knowledge.

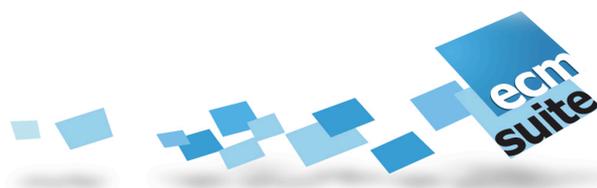


- Allows individuals and teams to tap into the collective intelligence and expertise of the organization so that people can leverage insight, existing work and work currently in progress by other teams or individuals.
- Promotes “ambient awareness”—the ability of knowledge workers to be aware of relevant information without being distracted by meaningless or irrelevant “noise.”
- Provides a unique, “socially aware” search engine that not only identifies content, in the form of docs, comments, Q&A and wikis, but also subject-matter experts or thought leaders on a given topic. In addition, the search engine indicates communities, projects, or networks where related activity is taking place.
- Lowers barriers through ease of use and a design paradigm geared to a generation of workers who have already adopted Facebook, Twitter, Yahoo IM, and LinkedIn. Open Text Social Media unlocks the potential of this new generation of employees by providing the social networking and collaboration tools these workers understand and want to use.
- Supports mobile platforms including RIM® BlackBerry and Apple® iPhone, enabling “anytime, anywhere” access to the people and content in a user’s online communities.

## Learn more about Open Text Social Media

Don’t just take our word for it. According to analysts like Forrester and Info-Tech, Open Text offers a leading social media solution for the enterprise. Info-Tech said this: “Microsoft and Open Text are the Champions in the collaboration landscape due to their excellent features and high accessibility... Open Text is a joy to use and features clever information management, while staying very affordable.” (“Vendor Landscape: Collaboration Platforms,” Info-Tech, March 2010.)

To learn more, contact us at 1-800-499-6544 or online at [www.opentext.com](http://www.opentext.com)



## About Open Text

Open Text is a leader in Enterprise Content Management (ECM). With two decades of experience helping organizations overcome the challenges associated with managing and gaining the true value of their business content, Open Text stands unmatched in the market.

Together with our customers and partners, we are truly The Content Experts,<sup>™</sup> supporting 46,000 organizations and millions of users in 114 countries around the globe. We know how organizations work. We have a keen understanding of how content flows throughout an enterprise, and of the business challenges that organizations face today.

It is this knowledge that gives us our unique ability to develop the richest array of tailored content management applications and solutions in the industry. Our unique and collaborative approach helps us provide guidance so that our customers can effectively address business challenges and leverage content to drive growth, mitigate risk, increase brand equity, automate processes, manage compliance, and generate competitive advantage. Organizations can trust the management of their vital business content to Open Text, The Content Experts.

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**Sales:** [sales@opentext.com](mailto:sales@opentext.com)  
1-800-499-6544

**Support:** [support@opentext.com](mailto:support@opentext.com)  
1-800-540-7292

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