

## Briefing

# AGILE SOCIAL STRATEGY – ADAPTING SOCIAL SOLUTIONS TO MODERN WORKSTYLES

TODD RAY

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A lot has been written about enterprise social computing, and the value of *externally*-focused social (e.g. social marketing and analytics) is fairly well accepted. While the *potential* for internally-focused social computing initiatives is generally acknowledged - and companies continue to make significant investments in this area, opinions vary widely as to its realized value, with a number of factors impacting the equation.

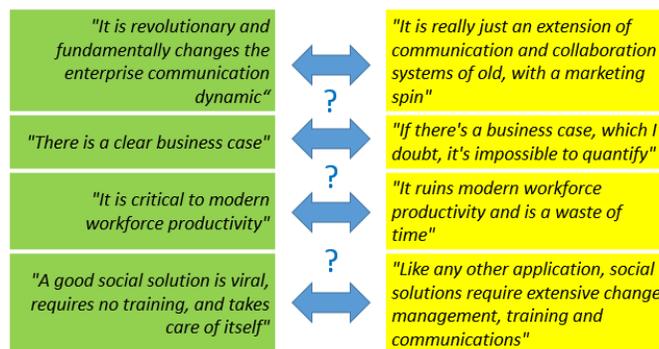
Some of these factors are well understood in terms of their influence on the "Social Impact Space", but newer forms of "Modern Workstyle Dynamics" can have significant influence on social solution uptake and should thus be introduced into the lexicon of enterprise social strategists, planners and designers.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the well-covered world of enterprise social computing, the value of externally-facing "social media" tools - e.g. Twitter and Facebook-related social marketing and analytics - is broadly understood and agreed upon.

While many pundits extoll the virtues of *internally*-focused social computing as well - e.g. enterprise social networks (ESNs), opinions vary widely as to whether the value generated by these technologies measures up to the hype. Examples of the range of opinions that I've heard expressed by companies I've consulted with include the following (just a few of many):



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Regardless of your opinion, the reality is that for any given organization – with lots of variability sometimes within an organization - the answer lies somewhere in between these extremes - and sometimes at the extremes, depending on a whole bunch of factors.

Given all that's been said about this topic before<sup>1</sup>, this briefing provides a brief summary of some of the things we know - things impacting the above that are well-documented (or that we've learned from experience) - and then introduces some new thinking into the domain to address some of its known challenges, including the following concepts:

- Social Impact Space
- Social Options Overload and IW Fragmentation
- Modern Workstyle Dynamics
- Changing Consumption Patterns
- Full-plate Syndrome
- MindShare Deficit
- Casual Computing

Finally, we describe how leading organizations are increasingly developing social computing-specific strategies to address the challenges we highlight in this briefing.

Whether developing your social computing strategy or designing social solutions, this will help get you started adapting your social solutions to the modern workstyles of your biggest asset - your employees!

## WHAT WE KNOW

The internally-focused enterprise social computing domain has been extensively studied by analysts, the press, and to some degree, organizations themselves. The following section summarizes some of this to provide a base-line and allow us to move on to some of the more pressing questions moving forward that you will need to address (refer to the section titled: "What's Next").

### Value: Impacts/Benefits/Value/M Measurement

- Recognizing significant potential impact on productivity through improved collaboration and communication, businesses are continuing to learn how to create value from social technologies
- Hard benefits may be somewhat elusive, depending on how much effort flows into the business case/measurement space

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<sup>1</sup> The author has written on this subject extensively and is very familiar with the analytical coverage of this space from Altimeter, McKinsey, Gartner/Burton, Forrester, Corporate Executive Board (CEB), Deloitte, Microsoft, IBM, etc.

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- Investments in internal social computing may potentially impact the following areas in many organizations:

### FUNDAMENTAL IMPACT SPACE (HORIZONTAL EXAMPLES)

- Information capture, awareness, sharing, and consumption
- Knowledge generation, capture and utilization
- Ongoing, passive expertise development via social learning
- Awareness and knowledge about the company and its people
- Productivity/efficiency/agility, etc.
- Collaboration, communication, coordination, etc.
- Decision making and problem solving
- Ideation and innovation
- Employee acquisition, satisfaction, retention
- Customer acquisition, satisfaction, retention

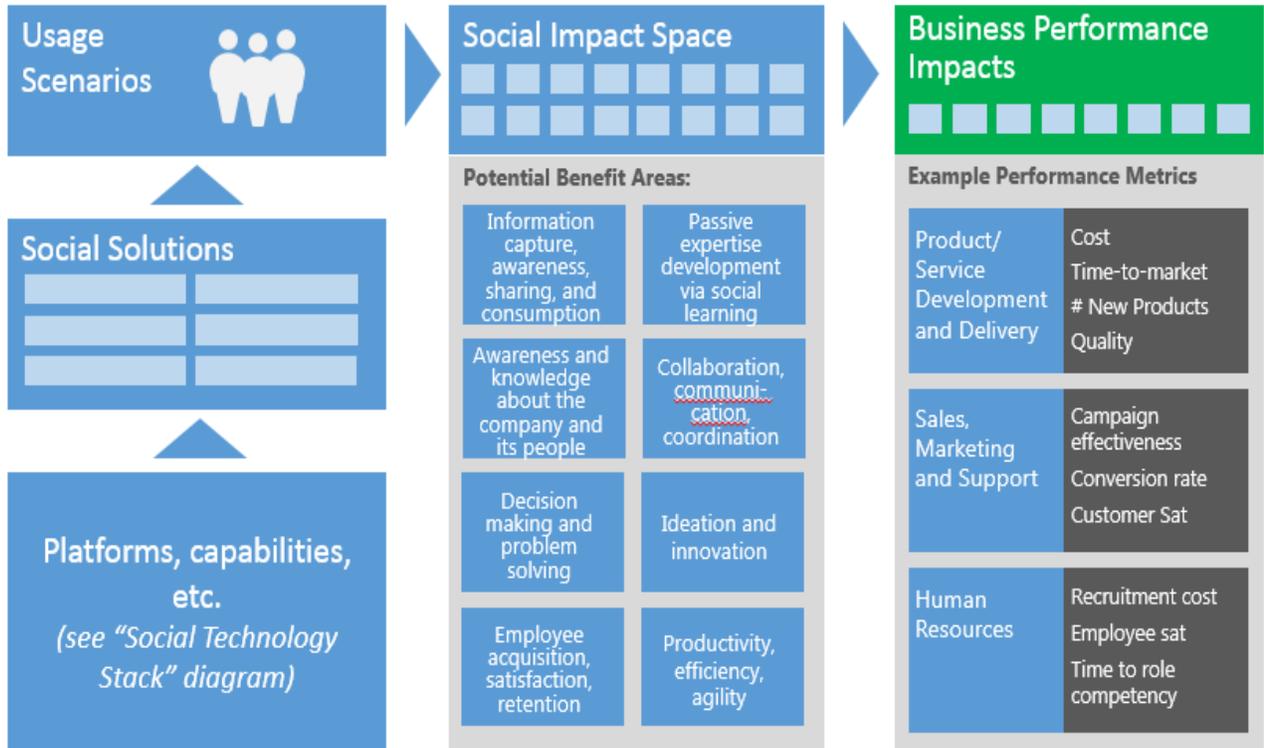
### DEPARTMENTAL IMPACT SPACE (VERTICAL EXAMPLES)

- **HR.** More efficiently attract, onboard, train, and retain employees
- **Corporate Comms.** Improve internal communications and feedback
- **Marketing/Sales.** Better customer insights and knowledge development; more efficient sales and marketing of products and services
- **Customer Support.** Easier to find experts and provide answers to customers; knowledge-base development
- **Product Development.** Streamlined customer input, ideation, innovation and commercialization
- **IT.** Improved adoption of socially-enabled business applications

Taking a closer look at this potential “Impact Space”, organizations wishing to take a more strategic approach to social computing (to ensure value creation from further investments in this area) need to understand what combination of platforms, solutions and capabilities drive positive impacts in desired areas (typically done as part of a strategic rationalization process).

In some cases, depending on how they’re governed (including how they fund initiatives), organizations also need to: (a) determine how specific Impact Space parameters relate to specific business performance metrics; and (b) design measurement/analytic/reporting systems accordingly.

This concept is shown in the “Social Impact Space” model on the following page:



**Action:** organizations should understand how their portfolio of existing or planned social solutions are used and which of the Impact Space benefit areas are influenced.

An assessment of this type can be performed as part of overall social strategy work or as part of a business case for a specific initiative.

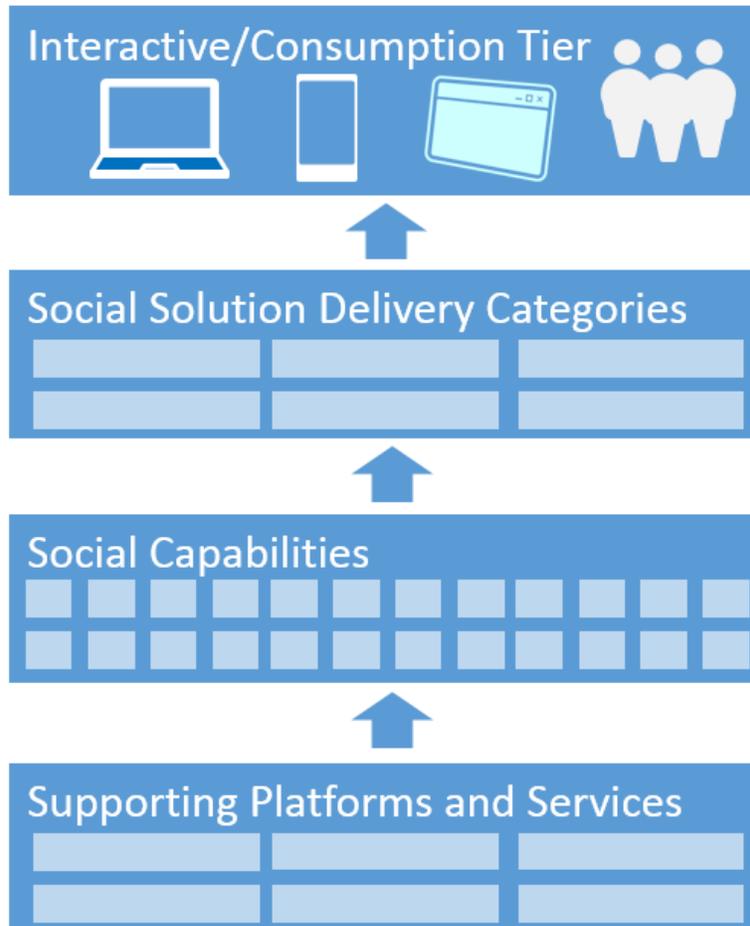
Enterprise Social Technologies - Devices, Solution Delivery Types, Capabilities and Supporting Platforms/Services:

- Enterprise-focused social technologies include those products and services that enable people to digitally connect and interact "in a social manner"<sup>2\*</sup> *within an enterprise*, or between an organization's employees and the outside world (customers, business partners, etc.).
- The "**Social Technology Stack**" is depicted in this diagram and described in more detail below.

<sup>2</sup> By "in a social manner", we mean non-email, web-based "many-to-many" means of communication, collaboration and content sharing using persistent (or semi-persistent) digital technologies.

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In short: *social platforms and services provide a number of social capabilities that can surface inside of multiple solution types accessible via a variety of device types in the enterprise).*



### DEVICES:

- Users may interact with social technologies via multiple device types, including desktops, laptops, tablet computers, smartphones and other new interactive experiences such as kiosks, smart walls and smart tables.

### SOLUTION DELIVERY TYPES

Generally accepted "social solution" delivery vehicles (i.e., sites/apps in which social capabilities surface) include the following:

- Enterprise social networks
- People Portals
- Communities of Practice and KM
- Media sharing sites

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- Team/Project Sites
- Organizational Portals
- Line of business applications
- Learning/training sites
- Ideation/Innovation applications

### CAPABILITIES:

- Platforms and services that provide social features (in whole (e.g. Yammer) or in part (e.g. SharePoint)) collectively provide "social capabilities" that can be categorized in many ways (see below) and surfaced inside of a number of delivery solutions (i.e. Tagging is commonly used in Enterprise Social Networks and Communities of Practice-type sites).
- Categories of Social Capability (partial):

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• Activity Feeds	• Profiles	• Rich media and other content sharing
• Microblogging	• Presence, Messaging and UC	• Wikis
• Suggestions (people, content, sites, etc.)	• Integration	• Blogs
• Trending	• Calendaring	• Announcements
• Alerts/Notifications	• Tagging	• Polls and Surveys
• Discussions	• Ratings, Reviews, Reputation and Sentiment	• Link sharing
• Relationships and Membership	• Stats and Analytics	• Applications

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### SUPPORTING PLATFORMS AND SERVICES:

- Social capabilities may be provided by a variety of platforms and services within an organization.
- Most large organizations have multiple solutions at the enterprise and departmental level, with some degree of "platform proliferation", a problem for some (requires rationalization)
- From a social capability delivery standpoint, there are lots of options for on-premises or cloud-based point solutions, departmental solutions, enterprise platforms and partner add-ons from big and smaller players with varying degrees of integration with other enterprise and cloud systems.

**Action:** investing in an overall social computing strategy and architecture roadmap is critical to ensuring the right investments are being made in your social technology stack.

### Adoption:

- Just because you build it (or provide it), they will not necessarily come. Counter to claims made by Steve Ballmer that adoption of well-designed, turn-key social solutions (like Yammer) should be viral, this is not necessarily true in large, complex organizations with many communication and collaboration alternatives and strapped employees.
- Initial enthusiasm for social solutions is often followed by withering participation, though a number of recommended practices are available that can address this
- Departmental solution adoption (people with similar goals) is typically better than cross-department or enterprise solution adoption
- Successful social initiatives require executive buy-in, communication and sponsorship as well as ground-level management and moderation
- Generational differences have been found to not be as pronounced as once thought
- Adoption may be higher if social capabilities are integrated into day-to-day workflow processes and LOB applications
- Incentives are important (WIIFM) and gamification is growing in prominence
- Social initiatives have a better chance of succeeding if filling obvious gaps (e.g. providing for communication on an otherwise underserved channel; e.g. retail bank employees without access to email)
- While standard change management, training and communication rules apply, clarity of purpose, simple solutions, intuitive interfaces and peer-to-peer learning can help increase “willingness to use” and reduce ramp time
- Managerial innovations specific to social computing are required to produce real gains

**Action:** this area (social solution adoption) has been written about extensively and derives much of its heritage from communication and collaboration solution adoption best practices that came before. That being said, organizations should develop both enterprise-level change management, training and communication strategies/guidelines as well as invest in change management as related to specific initiatives, with the former type being an important part of an organization’s overall social strategy.

### Risks

When approached strategically and executed in a coordinated fashion, the benefits of social technologies will likely outweigh the risks for most companies. That being said - the risks of enterprise-focused social computing need to be assessed, understood and managed. A few examples of well-known risks are listed below.

### **Not doing enough:**

- Fear of risks themselves results in doing nothing
- Falling behind competitors due to underinvestment in social technologies
- Business models disrupted by social technologies used by others
- Lagging employee productivity/satisfaction
- Lack of adoption

### **Not doing it right:**

- Excessive time spent on non-critical or non-work related activities
- Solution designers assume desktop usage and aren't adapted to mobile profiles and consumption patterns
- Competing solutions and social silos
- Differences between cultural norms of divisions, regions and countries
- Critical or abusive communication styles, bullying
- Leakage of IP, privacy violations, censorship
- Lack of governance or too much governance
- Can't measure benefits (or benefits difficult/expensive to measure)
- Benefits take longer to realize than ROI models allow (social innovations may take years to realize full potential)

### **Doing too much:**

- Too many communication options create "Social Options Overload" and confusion in the workforce
- Too much information at the individual level - exacerbated by internal social media - increases fragmentation

**Action:** the risks highlighted above are just a sampling of what's known and has been written about. As risks are very specific to an organization, you should invest in further understanding risks and putting risk mitigation plans into action as part of your strategic approach to enterprise social computing.

## WHAT'S NEXT

[Part I: Introducing "Modern Workstyle Dynamics" and why you need to adapt your solutions to them.](#)

In the previous sections, we presented a synthesis of some of what we now know about enterprise social computing that can be useful in planning your next (or current) social efforts.

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What's interesting about this space for me is that with all this knowledge about the potential impact space, technologies, adoption strategies, risks/mitigations, etc., why are some of the world's leading organizations still struggling with their social initiatives?

Maybe it's because they haven't read this briefing yet, and that might be the problem, but is it possible that there's something else missing from this conversation? I think the answer is yes, and it's big, as in, the proverbial "Elephant in the Room".

While this is still just an observational hypothesis from a practitioner point-of-view (this has not been formally studied but certainly could be), it's empirically obvious to me that most organizations haven't yet really adapted their social solutions to the following set of 3 closely related "Modern Workstyle Dynamics" - Changing Consumption Patterns, Full-Plate Syndrome and Casual Computing.

These are further discussed below.

### CHANGING CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

In most organizations, the average information worker (IW) is increasingly mobile, enjoying new freedoms derived from near ubiquitous (and inexpensive) wireless/cellular coverage, increasingly capable mobile devices (smart phones, tablets and lightweight laptops) and mobile-enabled applications and content access available on/off the corporate network.

Along with these freedoms and multiple access/consumption options, users also have new choices as to which device type they use to (and when they) perform which type of activity (e.g. corp. email access, corp. app. access, corp. portal access, corp. ESN access, Facebook access, LinkedIn access, etc.).

While trying to anticipate and provide for the entire range of possibilities from an application perspective would be impossible, a few things are worth noting that beg discussion, including a few dynamics that may influence when and how a person accesses, consumes and interacts with corporate-provided information systems.

### THE "FULL-PLATE SYNDROME"

Many information workers deal with a constant stream of information, changing organizational dynamics and very little time during their workday to perform even the essential tasks they know they have on their schedules.

Given the business challenges of the last few years, many of these same individuals are also struggling to keep their jobs. These people, you might say, have a "full plate". In this environment, savvy, well-trained and disciplined individuals will triage their time between essential activities and optional activities, which usually means: check for

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critical email/phone messages, prepare for the next meeting, and/or interact with mission-critical LOB applications that are part of their daily workflow.

If they're lucky, they'll get through everything on their plate, leaving them little time to engage in Enterprise Social Networking, consuming information from the corporate portal, or anything else new that comes in on optional communication channels.

When it comes to knowledge about (or intent to use) these latter systems, you could say they have a "Mindshare Deficit" - an inability to even contemplate where to go for this sort of interaction (or why they'd want to go there).

For the IT/Comms/HR person trying to get their people to engage with these other mediums as part of their day-to-day workflows, this can be a steep challenge, which leads us to our next dynamic.

### CASUAL COMPUTING

As we discuss above, most (good) employees are severely constrained when it comes to bandwidth (time) and are thus less likely to engage in optional computing behaviors during normal work hours. These same people, however, are often mobile-enabled and able to consume/interact with information and people when not at the office, perhaps standing in line for coffee; when commuting; waiting in line at the airport; waiting for a meeting to start, etc.

Thus, it is our contention that these sorts of individuals may be more likely to participate in social networks - enterprise or otherwise - during times when they are "casually computing" on a mobile device somewhere, not sitting at their desk in the office.

This may also apply to enterprise portal (and other social) content interaction, requiring a shift in thinking on the part of content producers and social network moderators as to the consumptive behaviors they should be designing for and managing on a regular basis.

### CONCEPT IN PRACTICE

A major consumer goods company - which had recently re-organized and down-sized - re-designed their enterprise portal and communicated the re-launch broadly, with the expectation of higher traffic and better top-down communications and feedback to the organization.

Unfortunately for the portal owners, they hadn't anticipated the fact that employees were worried about their jobs and had limited bandwidth during the day to consume this type of optional information, resulting in limited uptick in portal visits (hovering around 10% of the user population).

While this is currently in the process of being addressed, this problem may have been averted if the organization had anticipated the changing consumption patterns and made mobile access more of a priority.

**Action.** Organizations need to consider the Modern Workstyle Dynamics presented above in their social and otherwise information worker capability strategies (e.g. intranet/portal/comms strategies), including an assessment of: (a) current (and anticipated future) consumption patterns of the work force; (b) the degree to which the “Full-Plate Syndrome” impacts different parts of the work force; and (c) casual computing behaviors and how to optimize solution delivery vehicles to adapt to different ones.

### Part II. Strategically Addressing the "Social Impact Space"

Moving forward, we believe that enterprises have an opportunity to differentiate themselves from competitors by utilizing social computing technology to their advantage both inside and outside their organizations. However, a number of factors may limit an organization's ability to capitalize on this opportunity space, including the issues presented above as well as the following:

- Lack of understanding of the vision, goals, purpose and/or potential benefits of enterprise social computing in general and specific initiatives in particular
- Departments and business units implement projects in isolation from each other and the enterprise
- Lack of a big picture view to how various social capability delivery solution types can impact the "Social Impact Space" presented in a previous section.

This view can be critical to establishing everything from the business case for enterprise social overall (or a specific solution) to a specific social solution's design and rollout strategy.

### RE-VISITING THE "SOCIAL IMPACT SPACE" MODEL

A slightly modified version of the "Social Impact Space" model (presented in a previous section) provides a simple way of looking at how various elements of the "Social Technology Stack" can potentially impact a set of people-related business capabilities.

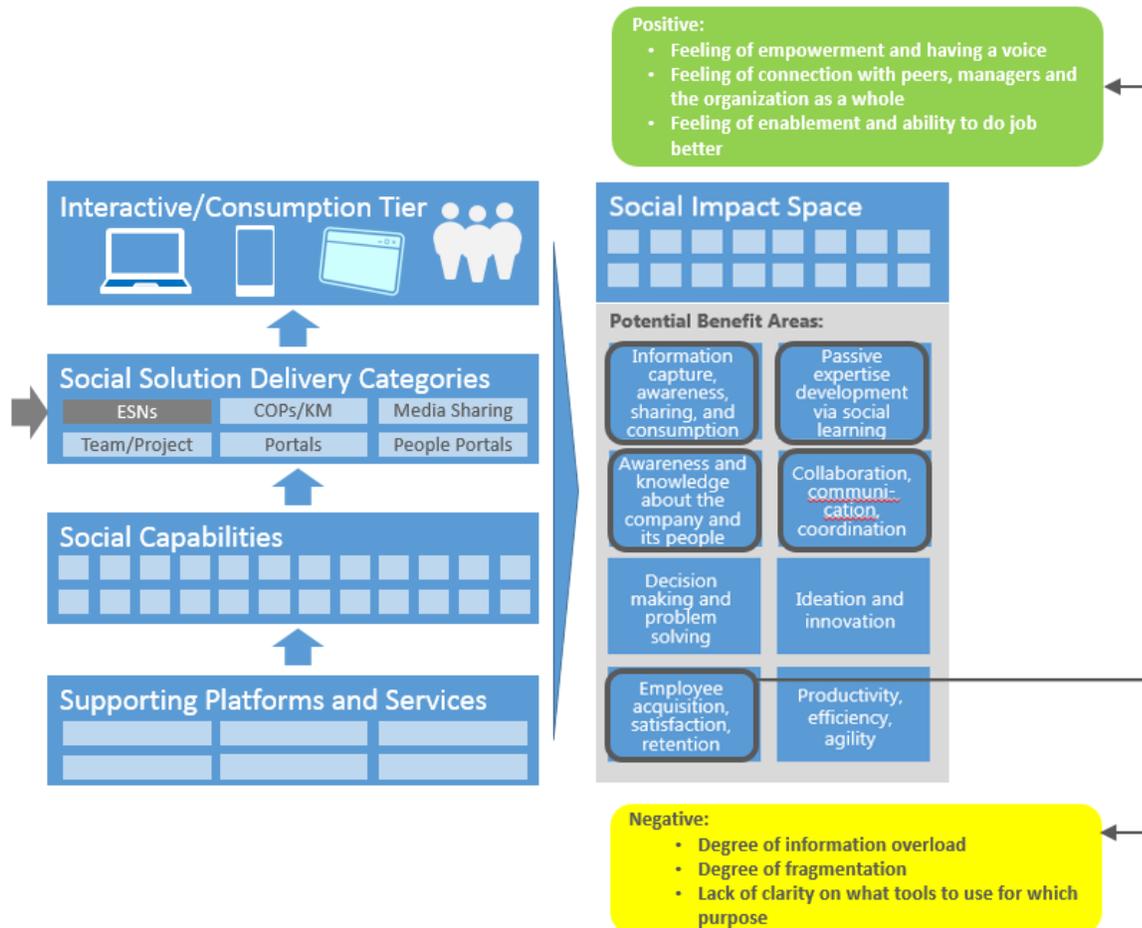
For example, as shown in the diagram below, Enterprise Social Networks can potentially impact a number of elements of the Social Impact Space (boxes with black oval borders).

Focusing in on one of those, "Employee Satisfaction and Retention", an Enterprise Social Network can have both positive and negative impacts on it, including (on the negative

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side – see yellow oval) the feeling of information overload, further fragmentation, and lack of clarity as to where to perform what type of communication with colleagues.

These can all be mitigated of course, but it's critical that enterprise social planners take these things into consideration when developing their social computing strategies.



## CONCLUSION

This briefing presented a brief summary of some of the things we know about the enterprise social computing domain and introduced some new thinking into the domain to address some of its known challenges, including the concepts of the "Social Impact Space" and "Modern Workstyle Dynamics".

We also described how leading organizations are increasingly developing social computing-specific strategies to address the challenges we highlight in this paper.

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Getting Started:

- **Strategy.** Take a holistic look at your people, systems, and organizational dynamics and develop a strategy to affect your “impact space” relative to your business goals and Workstyle Dynamics.
- **Design.** Envision, design and build social solutions that address the Modern Workstyle Dynamics highlighted in this briefing.

Whether developing your social computing strategy or designing social solutions, start adapting your social solutions to the modern workstyles of your biggest asset - your employees!

**For more information, please contact Todd Ray, Business Technology Strategist (toddray@alumni.stanford.edu)**