kissing frogs
engaging the extraordinary

Is it just us or did the end of February sneak up on anyone else?

Our apologies that this Feb 09 newsletter is reaching you in March! This month has been very busy for the Kissing Frogs team with a fantastic response to our current marketing campaign and some recent speaking engagements. As usual, this month's issue will feature information and stories from a number of different sources around the world. We feature our first book review and we focus this month more specifically on social media and the ways they can be used to engage your employees. We hope you find this edition interesting and applicable to your workplace!
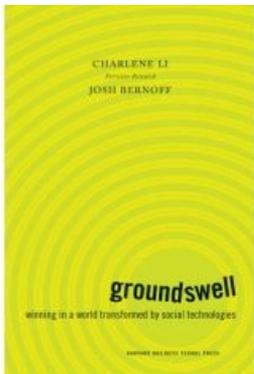
groundswell – by charlene li & josh bernoff

I started reading *Groundswell,* a book written by top analysts from Forrester Research Charlene Li and Josh Bernoff, after a very favorable review from one of the many blogs I read. I was interested in the book in part as a business owner to see what the most effective uses of social media to engage customers and as a employee engagement specialist to gather some hard data around the use of social media with employees. The book delivered on both fronts. It was well written with over 25 case studies being used to illustrate some great data.

In the first instance Groundswell is about business strategy. It does not provide details on what certain technologies are or what platforms are available but it does give you enough of an overview to ensure you understand your wiki from your tag and your blog from your Twitter. A large proportion of the book is dedicated to information on Social Technographics Profiles - essentially how to group people based on the groundswell activities in which they participate. Below is the Social Technographic Ladder showing the break downs by how each type currently participates in social media.   The book repeatedly reminds the reader that social media is all about relationships not technology.   As such organisations need to ensure they understand the extent to which their core business interacts on social media.   A great example from the book was an organisation that caters to new mothers with disposable incomes. They were set to invest large amounts of money on a website that allowed new mothers to blog about their experiences. When the research was collected they found that the largest proportion of their customers were not creators but critics and joiners, a blog site was just not going to give a ROI. They instead focused on sharing and rating articles written by experts with huge success.

In relation to social media and employee engagement the book dedicates a chapter to the successes at Best Buys, Intel and Bell Canada. If you are interested in social media and the effect it can have on your customers and employees I highly recommend the book Groundswell. Also check our their website, their blog is great too!

Creators	• Publish a blog • Publish your own Web pages • Upload video you created • Upload audio/music you created • Write articles or stories and post them
Critics	• Post ratings/reviews of products or services • Comment on someone else's blog • Contribute to online forums • Contribute to/edit articles in a wiki
Collectors	• Use RSS feeds • "Vote" for Web sites online • Add "tags" to Web pages or photos
Joiners	• Maintain profile on a social networking site • Visit social networking sites
Spectators	• Read blogs • Listen to podcasts • Watch video from other users • Read online forums • Read customer ratings/reviews
Inactives	None of the above

Groups include consumers participating in at least one of the indicated activities at least monthly

social media, where to start?

First of all, what is social media?
Social media describes a shift in how people discover, read and share news, information and content. It fosters the human connection by transforming a monologue (one-to–many) into a dialogue (many-to-many). Social media tools make it easier to create and distribute content and to discuss the things we care about. Some better known social media examples are Wikipedia, MySpace, YouTube, Facebook, Flickr and Twitter.

So where can a company start?
Companies can take small steps and start to benefit from the use of social media. For example, they can start with "intranet 2.0" which includes internal wikis, blogs, social network tools all designed to help employees participate in a company-wide dialogue. This can allow companies to foster collaboration; to enhance the communication between employees; and to enable employees to access the right resources, expertise and experience and to leverage the vast amounts of internal knowledge that are often not easily accessible. Not all intranets have lived up to their initial expectations. As a result, your intranet might be very static, only getting updated as little as once a month, and even then not necessarily with compelling content. All too often, intranets, that started out with a real mission to help staff better communicate, end up as glorified company news sites with a telephone directory attached. Start small and cheap – remember part of the point of social media is that it comes from the bottom up.

social media – friend or foe of employee engagement?

It is widely believed that Facebook could be responsible for a loss of $5 billion to businesses, as productive work hours turn into time spent updating profiles and connecting with friends and colleagues across the globe. In many companies across Australia and New Zealand, Facebook is fast being added to the list of sites on the 'banned' list, joining MSN Messenger, MySpace, YouTube and Second Life, all of which are considered addictive, distracting and a drain on productivity.

Can limiting access prove to be a productivity drain in itself?
According to a survey undertaken by Leadership Management Australia, "enjoying a good relationship with other staff" is one of the top 5 factors that will positively influence an employee. And today, many of these relationships start with email interactions. We are now used to saying 'it's great to finally meet you in person' because in many cases our daily virtual interactions outnumber our personal interactions. Facebook is just another way to connect with people, putting a face to a name immediately, and is being used by many organisations positively – providing social connectivity amongst those who don't have time to interact personally every day.
According to Matt Cohler, Facebook's VP of strategy, "we're seeing pretty encouraging levels of activity in work networks." Cohler gave examples of companies like Shell Oil, Procter & Gamble, and General Electric who have thousands of employees in their networks. And for the generation of employees who are growing up connected to the internet, restricting access at work can be a job deal breaker. Anne Kirah, Microsoft Senior Design Anthropologist who spoke at last year's TechEd conference in Sydney said during her opening keynote, "Jobseekers will think twice about employers who lock down work internet access." "These kids are saying: forget it! I don't want to work with you. I don't want to work at a place where I can't be freely online during the day." "People that I meet are saying this to me every day, all over the world." "Companies all over the world are saying, oh, you can't be on the internet while you're at work. You can't be on instant messaging at work..." she said. "These are digital immigrant ideas." Kirah defines 'digital immigrants' as people who were not born into the digital lifestyle and view it as a distraction rather than an integral part of life. The younger generation of workers have been using computers and mobile phones since birth and she calls them 'digital natives'.

Could limiting access to these lines of communication antagonize employees resulting in poor morale and even staff turnover?
"Bill Gates said years ago that if you worry about internet productivity, you're worrying about people stealing pens from your stationery cupboard... there are bigger things to worry about." But of course, there are serious threats when it comes to allowing access to sites like Facebook in the work place. In any popular platform there are always going to be loopholes for the unscrupulous to exploit; hacking is a threat that remains constant and employers need to make informed choices on whether the benefits outweigh the risks. If access is enabled, can it be harnessed productively?
Free internet access can be abused, but if an employee is actively disengaged in an organisation this is likely to be the outlet, not the cause. 'Actively Disengaged' employees aren't just unhappy at work, but those that are also busy acting out their unhappiness by undermining their engaged co-workers accomplishments. Even if employers choose to block Facebook and similar sites for these reasons, there is still much to be learned and observed from what causes them to be the phenomenon's they are.
Whether you choose to embrace the power of social networking or lock it down altogether, the one thing to take from its success is that facilitating personal interactions still matters.

- Naomi Simson

10 rules of social media strategy

Before you jump into social media, ask yourself whether your organization is ready. It's the job of the communicator to recognize and understand where and how social media tools might work in your business. So, here's a 10-step checklist to help ensure your social media development goes according to plan:

1. Assess your readiness - Before doing anything, assess your organization's cultural readiness. Will blogs, podcasts, wikis and so on survive in your organization? Do the new tools compliment your organization's processes and vision? Remember, social media won't necessarily suit all organizations and employees.

2. Focus on people, not the technology - Don't overlook the needs and preferences of the people who will use the new tools – focus on the human need for the technology and how they're able to adapt to it. You provide the tools, shape their use and set guidelines for use. The audience then decides what's useful and what's not.

3. Carefully consider the business benefit - Before rushing in, think about the purpose of the tools. Once you're clear on the actual business purpose of the tools, you'll be led by the goals you're trying to achieve, rather than the technology itself. Ask specific questions, such as:

    Who will use these tools?

    How can they support or generate useful conversations?

    How can they give employees better access to leadership?

    How can they help global teams collaborate and communicate better?

    How can they change the culture?

4. Grasp the difference between traditional and social media - Make sure you understand the difference between the two types of media. Without grasping the difference between the two fundamentally different methods of communication, it's unlikely you'll grasp the potential of social media.

5. Prepare to relinquish control and share the process - Social media places all users on an equal footing, so control is reduced for all organizations and leaders. Employees become equal partners in the communication process and are invited to take part in a conversation and share information, rather than have information pushed at them. Also, get comfortable with ambiguity. Simple person-to-person conversations can turn into large knowledge-sharing exercises if they're allowed to grow in whatever way they need to.

6. Be experimental and involve employees - Because social media isn't costly to implement, you can afford to experiment. Involving employees in trial and development encourages acceptance of the tools. It helps familiarize them with the tools so they feel comfortable using them, in their own time. Think about producing "beta" sites for employees to experiment with – this will help iron out glitches before going "live".

7. Give employees clear guidelines - However informal, there's no reason why communication taking place via a blog or a wiki should stray from the usual behaviors expected in any workplace interaction – such as professionalism or respect. Spell out the consequences of unacceptable behavior. Think about prohibiting anonymity, so employees will realize they'll be held accountable for their comments. You could also outline a blogging Code of Conduct.

8. Take a hands-off approach - People are instinctively fearful of radical change, so resist the urge to market tools aggressively. Social media tools seem to work best when they're allowed to develop and grow organically. Put together platforms and software and then consult employees about how to optimize their use and potential.

9. Work with what you've got - Use existing technology wherever possible, learning through trial and error, and develop tools based on what's working and what isn't. Integrate new tools and applications with your existing channels and media, rather than replacing your existing platforms.

10. Don't obsess about the numbers - For most organizations using social media tools, it's too early to measure their financial success with reliability or accuracy. Given that social media tools are cheap to implement, our focus should be on what can be gained from making them available, rather than the return on investment in financial terms. Focus on the outcomes rather than the activity surrounding them (e.g., the number of comments on a blog). Also, ask for anecdotal feedback from employees.

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frogs favorite blogs

At Kissing Frogs we have a number of favorite blogs or RSS feeds. Some of our favorites are Wally Bocks Three Star Leadership Blog, Bob Sutton's Blog, and on the lighter side Fail Blog, The Onion, and Broke Ass Gourmet. Kissing Frogs will be adding a Blog to our website over the next month so keep an eye out! We would love to hear what your favorite Blog or RSS Feed is. We will share all those received either in our next newsletter or on our new blog site!