



The Conversational Corporation:

How Social Media is Changing the Enterprise

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At Dow Jones, we spend a lot of time creating content. But we invest as much or more time managing content—and helping other enterprises master their own.

So what does it take to develop products and services that comb the Web for relevant information? That assemble knowledge structures out of the vast brick lots to data? That help seekers of insight find wisdom—and wise people—inside and outside of the organization?

It takes a lot of listening. A lot of chit-chatting. And a lot of just plain hanging out. Fortunately, I have the privilege of hanging out in Silicon Valley with many of the tech elite, the innovators, visionaries and talking heads who are shaping the way the world creates and shares information.

In fact, this eBook itself arose out of a conversation, a discussion with Robert Scoble about the popularization of enterprise tools generated by the technologies and services that he reviews on his blog, [Scobleizer](#). While Robert and his frequent collaborator, Shel Israel, may not be the most familiar names in the corporate household, among the Weborati, they are respected as the leading experts on social media. Their first book together, “Naked Conversations: How Blogs are Changing the Way Businesses Talk”, introduced blogging to the corporate world. Published in January 2006, Naked Conversations used more than 50 case histories to explain why blogging is an efficient and credible method of business communication. Coming in at a total of 232 pages, only a few were dedicated to other types of social media that are now driving enterprise conversations just three years later.

As a joint project created by Robert, Shel, Greg Merkle (a Dow Jones colleague) and myself, this eBook extends the conversation even further and brings it deeper into your enterprise. We will look at new ways that your employees are communicating and collaborating, and discuss their impact on the corporation—particularly on the changing expectations of your customers and colleagues. We’ll discuss the busy intersection between business and social media, and show you a “starfish approach” that opens new conversations while capturing the content—and value—every corporation needs.

Finally, we’ll summarize our thoughts in a handy list of tips you can reference immediately. But the conversation doesn’t have to end: we encourage you to join the discussion on our blogs.

See you there!

Daniela Barbosa
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New Generations, New Conversations

What the Web hath wrought...

Something happened in 1991. At the time, it went relatively unnoticed except by the geekiest among us. A computer scientist named [Tim Berners-Lee](#) figured out a way to use the Internet to collaborate with other computer scientists in preparation for a conference. He called it the World Wide Web and it turned out to be pretty useful in quite a few ways.

Our sense is that we ain't seen nothing yet. The first children born after the birth of the Web are now applying for college. What will the world look like in three, five, 10 and 50 years when this next generation graduates college, enters the marketplace and replaces Boomers in corporate seats?

What does your own company look like?

If you want to understand what is going to happen to your business and just about everything else, there's a better place to look than here. There's better evidence than any crunched data an analyst's report can give you. Chances are, you have a good market sample in an adjacent bedroom—your own kids. If you listen closely, you can hear them tapping out some comments to friends in chat rooms, on SMS or in MySpace.

We form habits when we are young and we keep a great many of them all our lives. When Shel started college, he discovered free copies of *The Wall Street Journal* in his university commons and it became his lifelong habit to read the paper.

When his granddaughter enters college, chances are she'll have omnipresent Internet access that allows her to get the information she wants from whatever sites she wishes.

Statistics show that the habits of kids do not include reading newspapers and that they fast-forward their way through ads on television. In fact, according to eMarketer, an online statistical aggregator, they watched between 12% and 21% less TV in 2007 than in 2006.

Instead of sitting and passively watching, eMarketer estimates that about 95% of U.S. adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 are active online. Internet activities, particularly interaction with friends, influence what they buy, watch, listen to, where they visit, even who they vote for. Their behavior is being determined more by peers than by traditional marketing efforts.

Some 71% use mobile phones. Nearly 60% are registered in at least one social network. One in four of them have their own blogs and nearly three in four read other people's blogs. These are astounding figures considering that in 2005, those numbers would probably have ranged from zero to five percent.





The choice of a new generation

We call this emerging online generation “Gen O.” They represent the most compelling and enduring argument for transforming your organization into a conversational corporation. Nature requires that they will inherit the Earth as we Boomers complete our careers and migrate to the Jurassic Park Senior Center where we will join the other fossils.

What has started in recent years will play out over the next 60 years, during the Gen O watch. The Broadcast Era now closing will be remembered with the same interest and curiosity as the Age of the Telegraph or the Age of Steam, or so it seems to us.

Gen Os are embracing the Internet in greater numbers and at an earlier age. Some, as young as four, have begun using safe social networks such as Club Penguin, a property of Disney Interactive Group. Disney’s idea is to start kids on a nicely animated social network at an early age and continuously migrate them to other Disney properties as they grow up. Before these children enter kindergarten they have friends located in other parts of the country, in other parts of the world.

What fascinates us is to watch young children so immersed and engaged — and to realize the habits they are forming will remain with them throughout their lives.

We wonder how they will see the world, when the Internet has reduced the barrier of geography and is likely to eliminate the barriers of language in their lifetimes.

This is a new phenomenon. While in the last generation a great many companies became global, Gen O is comprised of global people.

Gen O is the agent of change

Since June 2007, Shel has been interviewing people all over the world regarding social media’s impact on business and culture, a project sponsored by SAP, the world’s third-largest software company. He has talked with a diverse range of people in more than 30 countries. In every single case, he was told how young people were driving social media adoption. In every instance, it’s peers, not luminaries, who are influencing decisions. In none of the situations has a direct marketing program successfully integrated into a social media environment. In no case has he found evidence of young people not embracing social media once they have access to it.

Which tools are most popular? The answer is they’re all pretty much trending upward in adoption. According to a March 2008 Universal McCann Wave 5 global usage report:

– 82.9% of all Internet users watch videos

– 72.8% read blogs

– 63% share photos

– 57% are active in social networks

– 45% listen to podcasts

Evidence is overwhelming that this trend will continue upward until reaching some saturation vanishing point as Gen O replaces Boomers in the marketplace.

There is yet another reason that we feel Gen O is the killer app for social media adoption. Companies that do not embrace social media will be hard-pressed to attract the best and brightest new employees. [Ethan Bodnar](#), a Cornell-bound high school junior and an Eagle Scout, was interviewed by Shel for the SAP survey. Shel asked him if he would ever work for an employer who prohibits blogging.

“Why would I work for company that doesn’t trust me enough to let me talk about my job?” Bodnar asked.

Shel had no answer.

Conversations in the Corporation

A great deal of attention is placed on the public conversations of social media. Yet close observers speculate there are more social media projects being started behind the firewall, rather than in front of it.

We have no way of knowing whether or not this is true. Since these conversations are private, it is pretty much impossible to count or monitor them. But our sense is that there is a great deal of activity in the area of private online conversations and private communities.

Does this indicate that the enterprise is moving away from the conversation? Not at all, but as most people will agree, some conversations are best held in-house.

If you are part of a large organization, you have an entire ecosystem often geographically strewn across the globe, and social media can enable private collaboration with existing partners, customers and employees.

Corporate conversation programs can be used for knowledge-sharing, training and ongoing dialogue. From anecdotal evidence, we see great cost savings, productivity increases and reductions in time-to-market as well as reduced cost of goods sold.

While we cannot provide statistics about all the conversations going on behind firewalls, it took us very little time to find an abundance of good examples of internal corporate conversations.





A few of our favorites:

What started as a small experiment to ask front-line, in-store employees to report on customer support at Best Buy has evolved into the BlueShirt Nation, a closed community of 20,000 retail staff who discuss customer needs and complaints and suggest ideas on improving merchandising and services. Management told us the community has eliminated the cost of in-store marketing surveys and provides better information. By creating this online private community, Best Buy has also raised morale and has made for a generally sharper retail staff.

At Intel, executives including CEO Paul Otellini post an internal blog for conversations with employees. All employees are encouraged to comment and Otellini often responds to those comments, sometimes by email and sometimes in public. Otellini has asked all 86,000 employees to keep the conversation private. Since 2005, there has been but a single breach when an employee sent a post extract to the San Jose Mercury News. Otellini asked employees not to do it again. In the past three years, no one has.

Both General Motors and Ford use virtual reality to collaborate with partners and at multiple design and manufacturing sites. Both companies say they reduce a lot more than travel costs. For one thing, they now build far fewer costly prototypes. GM says it has reduced the number of prototypes by over 75%. Time-to-market costs for the models they do choose to build have also been cut. Further, by having vendors review designs in advance, they are reducing detail snafus, such as placing a fastener where it is difficult to tighten. People who don't leave their offices can review designs globally. Local issues get resolved. For example, a car built in Detroit intended for distribution in Ireland (where roads are narrower) may remount mirrors for the more restricted profile.

A global field engineering company must replace retiring field engineers with a new and inexperienced generation. The company stands to lose hundreds of years of experience solving structural engineering problems. They have elected to build an "Old Joe" archive, where the retiring engineers will be video recorded to share stories of what they discovered and solved during their lengthy tenures. The videos will be tagged, so that search per topic will be easy-to-find and accessible to engineers in remote locations via the Internet.

Accenture, one of the world's leading consulting firms, has an internal community that bears an amazing resemblance to FaceBook, except that it is private, and instead of discussions of favorite music and dating, it shares the business expertise of 15,000 employee participants, allowing them to tap each other's knowledge skills.

New York City's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is building a new data center and plans to use virtualization and automation to make its IT environment as dynamic as possible, according to Kamal Bherwani, the city agency's CIO of Health and Human Services in a Smart Enterprise magazine article. The magazine also reports that numerous other CIOs are employing social media in various ways behind the firewall.



Reality check: bringing the outside in

Internal conversations are wonderful things. But unless they're also informed with fresh insights from the outside world, participants can, over time, become trapped in narrow perspectives and stale viewpoints. This isn't merely a philosophical dilemma — any enterprise doing business in the world must know what that world has to say about its products, services and brand.

The Internet's primary virtue, its vast breadth and depth, is also the very thing that makes it difficult to monitor. That's where a tool like [Dow Jones Insight](#) fits in. As deployed by Dow Jones and its clients, Insight scours the Web for the words, ideas and issues that matter to clients. The resulting information provides statistical analyses as well as opportunities for drill-downs into source articles, blog posts, Web pages and more.

Yet Insight is more than a means for monitoring the media and comparing internal beliefs against external attitudes: it's a way for enterprises to free themselves from inaccurate "gut checks" and embrace fact-based decision making rooted in real numbers and precise data.

Talk ain't cheap — it has real business value

Examples of productive conversations abound. They are as unique as snowflakes, but far more substantive. Companies are using blogs, wikis and videos as parts of the larger corporate conversation. They are building huge global private communities to provide significant efficiencies. Twitter-like microblogs are being used where only the users can follow and participate in the conversation.

Some customers run communities themselves and the companies that found them just listen and learn. Wells Fargo Bank built an online community of small business customers helping each other on problems that often go beyond banking issues.

Many companies played around privately behind firewalls before starting successful social media programs. For them, it just felt safer back there. For others, behind the firewall is where the conversations are most needed and most productive. It's just better business back there.

SAP uses a combination of public and private social media programs. There are internal blogs, employee collaboration wikis, even a Twitter application called "Shout It" and an internal LinkedIn application called "Harmony."

Simultaneously, the company hosts three large public communities, each dedicated to a slice of the company's global ecosystem, one of which is used by several hundred thousand people. These communities use a combination of tools — blogs, wikis, online video, forums, etc. Anyone can tune in and anyone can redirect the conversation as they see fit. Michael Prosceno, an SAP communications officer focused on social media, says the external programs allow SAP to get closer to their constituencies while expanding the number of constituents the company can actually engage.

When at all possible, SAP uses social media out in the open. Shel asked Prosceno why.





“We serve an ecosystem which, as in nature, must consist of competing organisms in order to be healthy,” he told us. “Debate, discussion, opinion, even dissent often happens better in open, rather than closed, environments. In nature, closed ecosystems weaken the DNA of any organism. Competition and collaboration create healthier environments.”

What’s right for your organization? It depends on whom you want to have conversations with and why you want to have them. The key, we maintain, is that you move from monologue to dialogue.

The Starfish Approach to Mastering Corporate Conversations

Opening the tool shed

Back in 2005, when Shel and Robert wrote *Naked Conversations*, they spent 220 of the book’s 232 pages on blogging. They dedicated all of two pages to podcasts, one page to wikis and a single, lonely paragraph to online video. Chris Shipley, executive producer of the DEMO conferences, had not yet even introduced the term “social media.”

What a difference four years makes in the world of the Web. Now blogging is but a single tool in a vast tool shed of social media technologies. Each of them can perform in a wide variety of ways depending upon who’s using them. Each can be used with other tools by an individual or an entire team to produce widely varying results.

We have heard enterprise thinkers express great angst over which tools to use. We think that’s the wrong approach. We love tools as much as any geek. But ultimately the tools are not important; what’s important is the conversation.

[Shel Holtz](#), a respected corporate communications consultant, recently quoted Michael Pusateri of Disney Studios “The key to using ‘social media’ is in having something to say and a plan to say it. The tools are secondary. Too often the tools come first — ‘Look, we have a company weblog’ instead of ‘Look, we have something interesting to say.’”

Adds SAP’s Michael Prosceno, “Social media is both a toolset and a state of mind. First, understand what it is that you want to accomplish then use the tools and rules of social media to help you achieve your goals.”

Twitter, FaceBook, blogs, wikis, social networks, communities, podcasts, online videos and so on offer enormous choices, and each tool is versatile, usable in numerous ways behind or in front of the firewall.

Yet tools get refined all the time. New ones replace old ones. The real issue isn’t the tool per se, but the context in which it is used — and that context changes all the time as your teams, your customers and your business change.

What you really need is a strategic vision that creates a core for your conversation. The individual tools may change, but you’ll always need a way to capture the substance of your conversations even as the tools for conversations expand, shrink, disappear or re-emerge in some new form.

Consider the starfish

Children are mesmerized by starfish and rightly so. Should a starfish lose a leg, the entire creature doesn't die; it merely grows a new leg. Even as the legs grow, are lost, and grow back again, the body of the starfish survives.

Now consider your social media program within the context of your organization. What should it look like? Hopefully, much like a starfish, with the body serving as the core of the organization and each leg as any one of many social media options or tools.

Forgive us for flogging a metaphor, but the main points are these: like a starfish, your organization should be able to grow, adapt and even abandon new tools ("legs") without threatening the health of the larger organism. And just as the starfish's legs are always connected to a central core, your social media strategy should serve as a body that connects all the tools together — and all your constituents to each other.

Preparing for a sea change

The Starfish concept was first discussed by Robert following a half-day meeting he had with Sun Microsystems' Peter Reiser, who had listed four corporate goals for building Sun's 9,000-member Community Equity 2.0 (CE 2.0), or "SunSpace," behind Sun's firewall. They were:

- Audience participation
- Prevent knowledge death
- Keep email for what it's good for
- Discover and reuse

The main body of Robert's Starfish represents "conversion" of social media into the four goals of SunSpace. Each point represents a social media program based on a tool or toolset.

Some organizations may use only a couple of tools, say wikis and blogs. That's fine, according to Robert. These entities can walk along like a human and humans do quite well.

But when a sea change is rolling over you, a starfish may be a stronger configuration than a two-legged critter. In fact, in a sea change, the more legs the better. The more legs, the faster it moves and the greater the conversion of content into knowledge useful to your organization and its constituencies.

A company using not just blogs and wikis, but also virtual worlds, text messaging, Twitter and face-to-face events would be stronger and convert more content more quickly in ways that would return greater results to the company and its ecosystem. The more knowledge that comes in from multiple points to the main body, the healthier the entity becomes and the faster it grows.



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“...knowledge is power. But in the collaborate enterprise, the new mantra must be, ‘sharing is power’”



The health of the conversation can translate into greater health for the entire business. When we asked Reiser why Sun had invested so heavily in the years of work and significant dollars spent by his team to develop and deploy SunSpace, his conversational community, he gave us what might be the most astute perception on the real ROI of a great number of social media programs:

“The return on Sun’s investment is in real-time knowledge exchange,” he said. Instead of having 9,000 engineers just consume information, Sun has built a system where all participants give it back. In return, each of the 9,000 participants has access to everyone else’s knowledge.

Advocating the Community Conversation: What We Can Learn From SunSpace

We think Reiser’s goals are applicable to almost any company using online communities and almost any company using any social media tool combination. In Sun’s case, the enterprise wanted to convert social media efforts into something useful, valuable and sustainable for the enterprise and Peter Reiser, also known as “Reiser 2.0” within the organization, was the man to do it.

“Our main objective,” Reiser says, “was to consolidate technical Web venues and knowledge repositories into a single, integrated Web 2.0 experience.” Reiser and his colleagues designed SunSpace as a huge aggregation platform that can integrate any internal or external data source or service.

The crucial part, Reiser notes, is a federated tagging service that combines the social tagging, or folksonomy model, of a Digg or del.icio.us, with a controlled vocabulary that prompts users with tags pulled from the enterprise’s taxonomy. (See Daniela’s [Taxonomy Folksonomy Cookbook](#) for a detailed exploration of this hybrid approach.) These controlled tags, in turn, apply the latest semantic technologies to link relevant issues: for example, any discussion of Sun product development in Europe would automatically summon tags connected to Sun’s European office locations.

“Sharing is power”

Any new tool is only as powerful as the will to use it. For Reiser, that means rethinking the meaning of power — and building a methodology that rewards collaboration. It’s not just about connecting data to data or even data to people, but people to people — to knowing who knows what and how.

“In the old way of thinking,” Reiser says, “knowledge is power. But in the collaborative enterprise, the new mantra must be, ‘sharing is power.’” To encourage participation, people must be recognized for their efforts. That’s why Reiser and Sun developed an innovative “Community Equity” system that dynamically calculates the value of contributions — posts, tags, comments, downloads, edits and more — made by individuals. These calculations assign a numerical ranking to each contribution, acknowledging active participants while helping users rapidly identify real expertise— and real experts they can trust.

“Today, the community validates knowledge,” Reiser says. The old model of the Web was Web-centric — people seeking information had to conform to the structure of the site or portal. Now, Reiser believes, Web 2.0 is moving to something more people-centric. “The new systems understand who you are and what you need,” he says, “and can push information to you based on your profile.”

What’s next?

Reiser stewarded SunSpace into a dynamic reality of more than 15,000 users and over 200 communities— and it continues to grow by almost 50% each month. Based on what he has observed at Sun, what does he see on the horizon for enterprises like his own?

“For starters,” Reiser says, “this platform won’t be limited to techies. The next big wave will be socially-minded communities for the entire enterprise.” Web 3.0, Reiser believes, will evolve into a semantic model in which the system understands the actual context and meaning of words. Finally, Reiser says, “Federated tagging will change the way we conceive and design enterprise architectures. The ability to capture social activities will become a fundamental part of any new system.”

Capturing the Conversation

If individual social media tools are merely the legs that can be created and discarded as necessary, then your knowledge management strategy is the core that connects the legs and retains life even as the legs change.

In their roles within Dow Jones Client Solutions, Daniela Barbosa and Greg Merkle have been advocates for enterprise content management and active designers of solutions that meet the real-world needs of worldwide companies. What have they learned? That your core content strategy should include the following considerations:

Simplicity

A tool’s value is only realized through its use. Learn from YouTube: they didn’t invent online video—it already existed in multiple formats through multiple viewers. But YouTube made online video simple. YouTube sweats out the formats and viewers so we don’t have to. As a result, millions use it every day.

Easy editorial enrichment

Ordinary newsletters can be a good way for organizations to distribute information. But dynamic newsletters—ones that allow readers to contribute and share information—are even better. To encourage use, however, the tools have to be simple. For one of its clients, Dow Jones developed an [Editorial Workbench](#) with easy point-and-click features that allow all employees to comment on, share and rate the articles they read. Not only are the features user-friendly, but the editorial platform can absorb external RSS feeds submitted by anyone in the organization.





Integration

What's wrong with emails? They have a way of multiplying out of control, like the trouble with Tribbles on the Starship Enterprise. If I send one email to four colleagues, I've just created four unique instances of information exchange that are beyond the reach of the enterprise at large. Worse, any files attached to my email may be subject to as many as four different versions. The alternative is a collaborative workspace in which multiple participants can work together on one document that's preserved as one standard.

Trusted data forms common platform for underwriting

Dow Jones worked with a big insurance company with a comparably large problem: its brokers were pulling in important client and financial data from a plethora of inconsistent and not necessarily trustworthy sources. The solution? Dow Jones created a broker workspace that exclusively draws data from sources vetted and approved by the insurer. The resulting underwriting is now both more complete and more consistent.

Extraction

Yes, knowledge is power. And every bit of lost data represents a loss in value to the organization. It's not enough to encourage corporate conversations — businesses need to capture the content within these conversations in order to secure their lasting value.

Active information assembly ensures accountability

Every day, energy companies make trading and pricing decisions based on rapidly fluctuating changes in supply and demand within the marketplace. Dow Jones consultants designed an automated system for capturing email news, market conditions and pricing conversations into daily books that could be used to demonstrate transparency to regulators and shareholders

Gathering your gold

That research report from your Texas team. The audio podcast on your Web site. Those progress updates on a new product launch. Each has information of interest beyond its creators to the larger community within your organization. More importantly, every additional piece of content is like a sedimentary layer of knowledge that can help you build your organization — if you capture the content.

Information is like gold — it has enduring value, but it can be difficult and expensive to extract. Traditionally, extracting and preserving information has been the domain of “knowledge management” professionals, people, such as librarians, who are responsible for gathering know-how and making it readily available on demand.

Just as social media tools have expanded, so too have the ways in which organizations have captured and categorized information. Let's consider the possibilities.

Connecting data to data

What's the relationship between the "widget 2.0" in the research report and the "widget 2.0" in the progress update? In an impulse as old as humanity's quest for fire, we've been creating categories of information for centuries. In the old days, this meant putting everything about "widget 2.0" in one physical place—perhaps a chapter in a book, or in an organized library of books. In the age of electronic connectivity, it means assembling all references to "widget 2.0" in a virtual space; seekers of "widget 2.0" insight can simply search the database (or other form of data index) under "widget 2.0" to find a list of documents that contain the given search term.

Creating such an index, or "taxonomy," can be time- and resource-consuming. In modern organizations flooded with data, the job cannot be done by hand; new text analytics tools have emerged that can identify key words and create connections among them automatically.

This is why active, collaborative workspaces are so important. By restricting work to a common area, the conversation is open to investigation by automated technology. A consumer end-user tool such as Twine, for example, can cull entities—people, places and things—from a bewildering array of sources and create an index of reference words, or "metadata", that exposes the entities for examination.

But these tools have limits. And some of these can push employees beyond their limits. In one example from a few years back, a product called English earned notoriety for crawling all employee files and emails for entity extraction without employee foreknowledge. The implication of violated privacy—whether justified or not—inhibited, rather than encouraged, the corporate conversation.

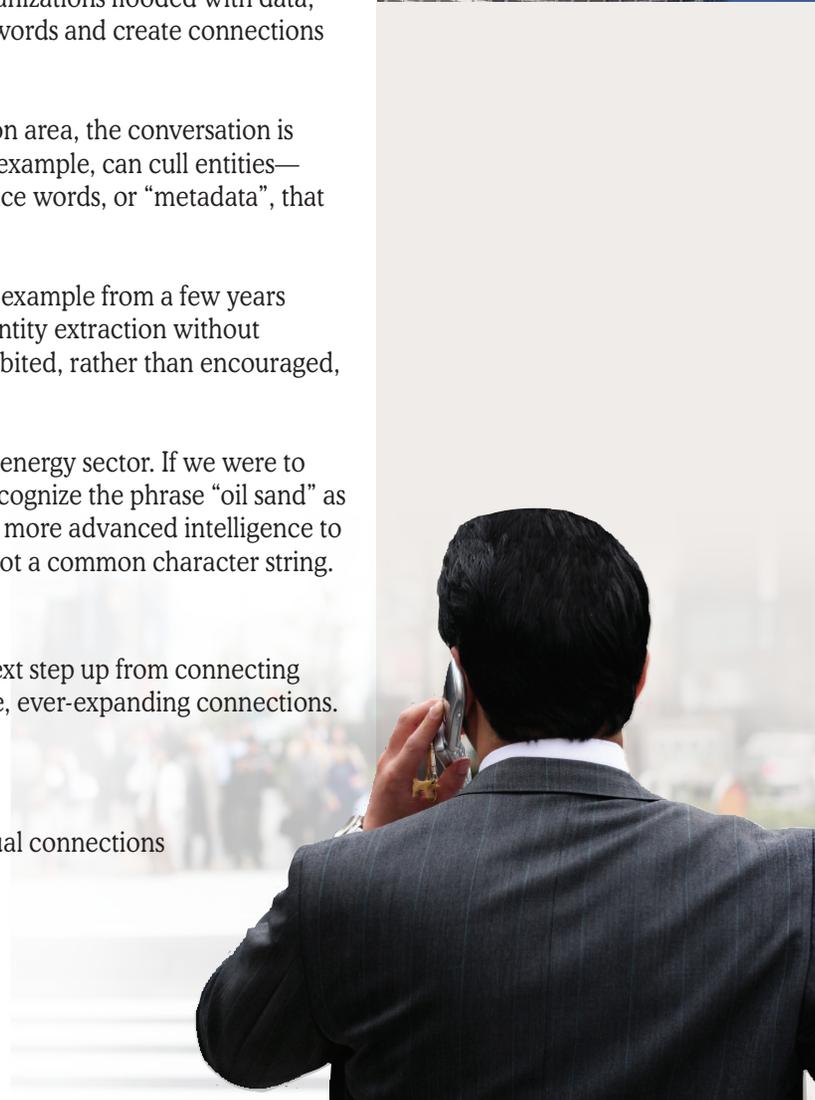
Worse, automated tools just aren't as smart as people. Consider a hypothetical situation in the energy sector. If we were to scan a report for information related to "hard-to-extract resources," we would immediately recognize the phrase "oil sand" as relevant. But the tool designed to recognize characters does not recognize concepts; it takes a more advanced intelligence to make the cognitive connection between two set of words that share a common concept, yet not a common character string.

Connecting data to people

What's missing in the previous examples is so obvious it's practically invisible: the user. The next step up from connecting data to data is to connect data to people—and then give people the power to make even more, ever-expanding connections. Bringing the user into the data equation helps you:

Capture concepts

Flesh-and-blood users can do what bits and bytes cannot—find, create and promote conceptual connections that automated tools don't see.





Find people

In the working world, we don't merely seek information, but experts: not just the "what" of knowledge, but the "who" of expertise that can help us. The previous generation of text search tools that gave us access to words must give way to an emerging generation of technology that gives us access to concepts — and the people who are talking about them.

Refine your taxonomy

Even the best index is a "best guess" list of the ideas people want and the way they speak about them. But what happens when you index "rap" and users search for "hip hop"? You say "gas" but they say "petro"? The rhetorical disconnect can separate users from knowledge. And in the real world, knowledge is fluid. You just don't have enough buckets to capture the raging streams of new information that flow through your organization, day after day, year after year.

Folksonomies bring power to the people

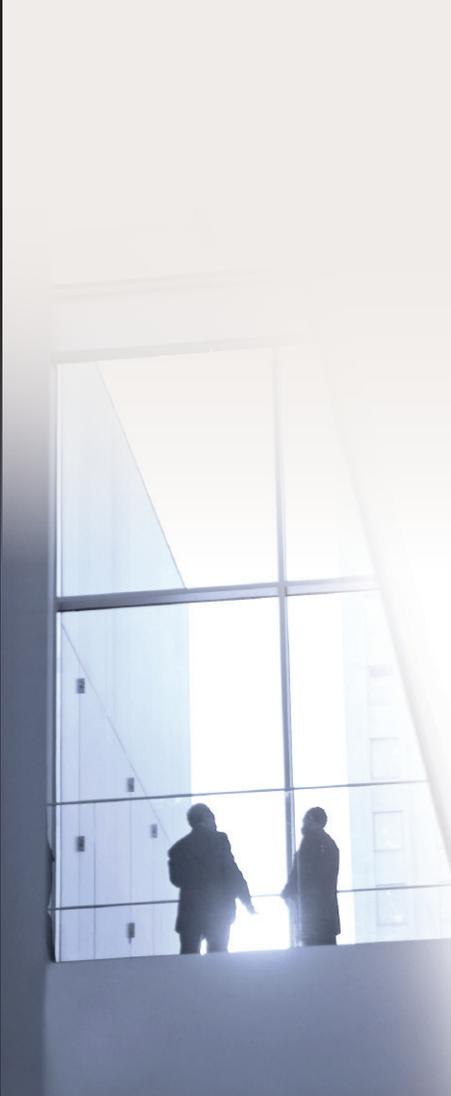
In many organizations, there's a missing link between corporate conversations and the need to capture their content. Fortunately, there are ways of bringing them together. And they're sitting in your cubicles right now.

Your people can make the connections themselves that might lead to the conversation — if they have the right tools. And these tools may already be familiar to you.

If you've gone to Flickr to find pictures of mighty waves off of Maui, you've seen one such tool: it's the "Tagged with" set of terms that helped you find the right photo by typing "surf" or "Hawaii" or "waves" into the search box. The engine itself cannot "read" photos, so it didn't produce the tags — Flickr contributors did, so that other people could find the photo.

If you've gone to del.icio.us to find fresh bookmarks on old topics of interest to you, you've found a similar tool. Thanks to the cooperative efforts of users all over the world, interesting information has been marked, or "tagged," to make it more readily visible to other seekers.

As opposed to "taxonomies" that impose an order that users must obey, these new social tagging tools, or "folksonomies," allow people to create an order that makes sense to them and their peers.



Folksonomies work well on the Web and can succeed within corporate conversations as well. By complementing the organization's traditional, static taxonomy with more dynamic folksonomy tools, you can:

- Provide an easy way to update your knowledge management structure so that it incorporates new data and knowledge as it emerges
- Capture the terms that real people use in the real world, via tags users and colleagues have submitted themselves
- Reveal the experts contributing to the conversation so that they can be identified and found by those who need them
- Expose concepts by allowing users to make judgments—and make connections—based on their understanding of information

By creating a structure for corporate knowledge, taxonomies still have an important role to play. But in the conversational corporation, in which new means of communication form “legs” that may come and go, folksonomies offer an organic way to connect information, capture knowledge and keep up with the steady pace of change. As was recently discussed in Daniela's eBook, the new conversational corporation can succeed by incorporating the best of both worlds.

The never-ending conclusion

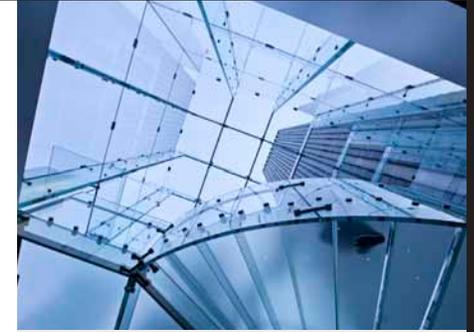
The wonder of online technology is not in the tools that we know today; it's in our knowledge that somewhere, somehow, someone is quietly toying with a new idea that, like previous experiments such as the PC or the Web browser, will substantially rock our world.

Even within the brief span between the conception of this eBook and its publication, there have surely emerged new tools, Web sites and user groups that are changing—or will change—the way we communicate, the way we share information, the way we work within our organizations.

We conclude then, not with a definitive stance on the nature of the conversational corporation, but with two guiding lights that allow us to walk confidently into the future:

- Access to knowledge can no longer be inorganically imposed through static structures, but organically evolves via dynamic conversations
- Wise organizations actively establish strategies for gathering, maintaining and sharing knowledge, even as techniques and tools are adopted and discarded

What lies ahead? The conversational adventure. Thank you for sharing a short stretch of the journey here. We invite those with an appetite for the road ahead to join us in an extended conversation at our individual blog sites.





10 Tips for Keeping Your Corporate Conversation Alive

1. Pick the goal before the tool. If you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there. You have to know why you want to encourage the corporate conversation. Then you can pick tools that best suit your purposes.
2. Know your criteria for success. Too many companies seem satisfied with analytics that show how far the needle moved rather than what moved the needle. Once you know your goal, you need to know how to measure it. Sun wanted to implement real-time knowledge exchange. GM and Ford needed to facilitate worldwide collaboration. They found the appropriate objectives to measure and the means for understanding what succeeded or not.
3. Understand your culture. Find programs that many will find useful, yet few will find disruptive. Companies that have open cultures tend to like open programs like blogging. Others, still uncomfortable with the spotlight, may be more comfortable with a behind-the-firewall wiki. Whatever you choose, reward participation by establishing a value system that acknowledges contributions and recognizes those who make them.
4. Give it time. It takes time to participate in a corporate conversation and it takes time to evaluate it. The longer you do it, the more likely you will be to discover value. Most people see zero value in microblogs like Twitter at the outset. At 30 days, they start seeing some value. At 90 days, they often see it as essential. The cost of participation in dollars is near zero, but the cost in time can be steep.
5. Listen. Listen. Geoff Livingston, a Washington, D.C., PR consultant, often points out in his talks that humans have two ears and one mouth. His point: the value is often greater in what you take in rather than what you send out.
6. Be real. The affected illusion that companies speak with one voice is a thing of the past. Speak in a human voice that sounds very much like when you are speaking with a business associate.
7. Take a stand. One of the highest causes of failure in corporate social media programs is mediocrity. Go read blogs and Twitter. Watch some corporate videos. A certain percentage of them are apparently made by people who don't care about the topic. Other than curing the reader/viewer's insomnia, such content serves little or no purpose.
8. Learn from the starfish. Social media tools, like the starfish's legs, come and go. But you need a strategy that connects the tools together and keeps your corporate conversation alive regardless of the status of specific tools.
9. Consider social tagging tools. Leverage the power of your participants. Social tagging or folksonomy tools allow you to track and manage content that might otherwise slip past automated tools or the smartest knowledge management professionals.
10. Capture the content. Your discussions have real value. But to realize that value, you need to plan ahead to gather the new content that's created—regardless of who's making that content or the tools applied to create it.

Glossary of Tools and Terms

Blog

A blog (a contraction of the term “Web log”) is a Web site, usually maintained by an individual, with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order. “Blog” can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog. [Wikipedia]

Enterprise 2.0 or Enterprise Social Software

Enterprise social software, also known as Enterprise 2.0, is a term describing social software used in “enterprise” (business) contexts. It includes social and networked modifications to company intranets and other classic software platforms used by large companies to organize their communication. In contrast to traditional enterprise software, which imposes structure prior to use, this generation of software tends to encourage use prior to providing structure. [Wikipedia]

FaceBook

FaceBook is a social networking Web site where users can join networks organized by city, workplace, school and region to connect and interact with other people.

Folksonomy

A folksonomy is a social approach to metadata that involves collaborative categorization using simple tags.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a business-oriented social networking site used primarily for professional networking.

Metadata

Metadata is data about data of any type of media.

MySpace

MySpace is an interactive, social networking Web site of friends, personal profiles, blogs, groups, photos, music and videos for teenagers and adults internationally.

SMS (text messaging)

Short Message Service (SMS) is a communications protocol allowing the interchange of short text messages between mobile telephone devices. SMS text messaging is the most widely used data application on the planet, with 2.4 billion active users, or 74% of all mobile phone subscribers sending and receiving text messages on their phones. [Wikipedia]





Social media

Social media is the use of electronic and Internet tools for the purpose of sharing and discussing information and experiences with other human beings. The term most often refers to activities that integrate technology, social interaction and the construction of words, pictures, videos and audio. This interaction, and the manner in which information is presented, depends on the varied perspectives and “building” of shared meaning among communities, as people share their stories and experiences. [Wikipedia]

Taxonomy

A taxonomy is the standard vocabulary an enterprise uses to describe its business.

Twitter

Twitter is a free social networking and microblogging service that allows its users to send and read other users’ updates (otherwise known as tweets), which are text-based posts of up to 140 characters in length. [Wikipedia] www.twitter.com

Twine

Twine is a social networking site that helps users organize, share and discover information through automated tools capable of semantic (context and meaning) understanding.

Web 2.0

Web 2.0 is a term describing changing trends in the use of World Wide Web technology and Web design that aim to enhance creativity, information sharing and collaboration among users. [Wikipedia]

Wiki

A wiki is a collection of Web pages designed to enable anyone who accesses it to contribute or modify content using a simplified markup language. Wikis are often used to create collaborative Web sites and to power community Web sites. [Wikipedia]

About Dow Jones Enterprise Media Group

Dow Jones Enterprise Media Group creates and collects news and information, enriched by insight and technology, to make business in financial services professionals more productive and successful.

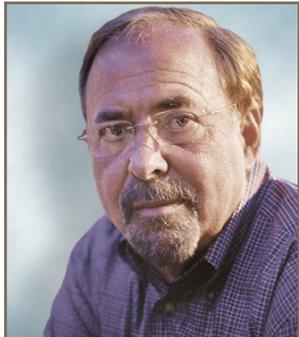
About the Authors:

Robert Scoble



Robert Scoble is an American blogger, technical evangelist and author. Scoble is best known for his blog, [Scobleizer](#), which came to prominence during his tenure as a technical evangelist at Microsoft. He is also the co-author of “Naked Conversations: How Blogs are Changing the Way Businesses Talk with Customers” with Shel Israel.

Shel Israel



Shel Israel writes and speaks on social media. He is the co-author, with Robert Scoble, of Naked Conversations—how blogs are changing the way businesses talk with customers and is currently working on his second book, “Twitterville: How Businesses Can Thrive in the New Global Neighborhoods.” (Portfolio, September 2009)

Mr. Israel has addressed social media topics in [BusinessWeek.com](#) and [FastCompany.com](#). His blog, [GlobalNeighbourhoods.net](#), is among the world’s 50 most popular business blogs, according to Ad Age.

Since 2005, Mr. Israel has interviewed more than 300 people in 38 countries on social media’s impact on culture and business. His subjects have been more than a little diverse and include Michael Dell, founder of Dell Computers; Wael Abbas, who posts hidden-camera videos of Egyptian police brutality on YouTube; Isaac Mao, China’s first blogger; and GM Vice Chairperson Bob Lutz.

Mr. Israel is regularly interviewed by traditional and online media and has addressed audiences in eight countries on social media-related topics.

Mr. Israel is a senior fellow to the Society for New Communications Research (SNCR), an organization that researches all aspects of social media for business, academia and government. He is also on the board of advisors to SmartBrief on social media.





Daniela Barbosa



Daniela Barbosa is business development manager for the Dow Jones Enterprise Media Group, where she is responsible for the Dow Jones Client Solutions business semantic and taxonomy management tool, Synaptica. Ms. Barbosa works with large corporations in deploying information strategies through various parts of the enterprise, including helping them develop and manage their corporate vocabularies. Connecting business information with vocabulary management solutions, Ms. Barbosa is responsible for delivering end-to-end solutions that help organizations add structure and value to existing information assets and connect users to the information they need, when and where they need it.

An avid social media fan and contributor, Ms. Barbosa has participated in various speaking engagements and written on the topic of information delivery in the enterprise. She continually uses social media tools and processes to engage with customers and prospects, and she often shares the results of her research work. Most recently, she published an eBook on hybrid approaches to folksonomies and taxonomies in the enterprise. Some of her thoughts on various topics around information delivery can be found on her blog [unstruc... chitchating about information delivery](#).

Greg Merkle



As vice president and creative director at Dow Jones, Greg Merkle is responsible for overseeing the user experience design within the Dow Jones Enterprise Media Group. With more than 20 years of experience in the electronic publishing and information industry, Mr. Merkle has both the big picture vision of where and how information is being used as well as the implementation expertise to bring goal- and task-oriented products and solutions to market.

Previously, he was associate vice president, Product Design, at Factiva and was responsible for user experience design for all products and services of Factiva. This included working strategically with the Factiva product organization and customers to prototype business ideas and build innovative products and solutions to meet their needs. The design group disciplines include: Information Architecture, Market Validation, Interface/Interaction Design, Human Factors/Usability and Data Visualization. Some of his perspectives on topics around the information industry can be found on his blog, [thinking](#).