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2009 Los Angeles Social Networking Conference Highlights Enterprise Experience

By Christopher S. Rollyson—Friday, 10 July 2009

Enterprise Social Networking Continues to Mainstream: Mid-year Adoption Snapshot

In January, I reported that enterprise social networking was showing many signs of mainstream adoption, and this conference bore that out. **Wal-Mart's Ben Newton** offered one of the strongest signs: in a recent survey, fully 83% of Wal-Mart employees *expected* the company to provide social networks for them to communicate outside of work. If Wal-Mart isn't a barometer for mainstream U.S. workers, what company is? Social networking managers from **Sun, Intel, HP** and **Oracle** shared their lessons learned, and these ran the gamut. They spoke as practitioners, not solution providers.

Los Angeles 2009 took place June 24-26, 2009 at the SLS Hotel in Beverly Hills. I was happy to see **Digg** talking about community and **Nokia** sharing a vision for mobile social networking. **Yammer** brought us current on enterprise microblogging, while **Dow Jones** mashed up business intelligence and business networking, **Electronic Arts** injecting the gaming element, and **Google** briefed us on marketing trends as only they can. And **The Facebook Era** was as enlightening as ever.

Between running a workshop and moderating a panel, I took enough notes to share the high points of most of the tracks, which I'll summarize before offering [Analysis and Conclusions](#). The reportage follows this convention: the summaries are from my notes of speakers' remarks. For more information on my workshop, Succeed with Enterprise Social Networking Initiatives, see the [description](#) and [preview](#). Click on logos for abstracts of the tracks.

Travis Falstad, Electronic Arts: Social Networking and Gaming: How the Business Grows Virally

[Travis](#) gave an eye-opening glimpse of how gaming plays with social networks ,^). He gave a demo of Pet Society, which has been intermittently the top game on Facebook.

- Travis is relatively new to gaming, having spent much of his career in music.
- Facebook and MySpace are major platforms for gaming within the networks; people play social games with friends: Mafia Wars, Scrabble, etc.
- Top game vendors gross \$30-80 million; a key metric is MAU (monthly average user, how many users play per month). Even more interesting is this ratio: daily average users/monthly average users is a good indication of engagement.
- Some demographics: generally, most players are in their early 30s, but the segment that spends the most money is women over 35.
- Travis illustrated some of the dynamics with some examples: Playdom's Mobsters on MySpace has 136 MAU. Zynga's Playfish is currently the top game on Facebook with 28.3 million MAU. Playfish's Pet Society is another major player that he demoed.
- FarmTown is another game that is notable for its cross-promotions with retail partners like PapaJohn's, where people can choose free "coin" coupons to spend in its game on Facebook.
- Gaming is big business, and Travis explained some of its eye-opening business features.
- Micropayments, defined as less than \$10 but in practice usually \$1 or less, represent 75-95% of game developers' revenue. Banner ads average .05% clickthrough because people are there to play (clickthroughs also generally low on Facebook and other social networks). If you want the best clickthroughs, you *must* tie ads to the content (the game).
- Time-based virtual goods are effective: although perhaps mind bending to some traditional audiences, if you buy a \$5 Christmas Tree for your pet in Pet Society, more people will see it than your \$150 Fraser Fir in the living room.
- Most games use the freemium model in which anyone can play for free but can purchase accessories or extra features. In Pet Society, for example, you can decorate your pet's apartment, give gifts to other pets, buy it clothes and food. In Pet Society, you can have the results of your transactions published on your Facebook Wall. The better care you give your pet the more experience



points you get.

- 5% of players buy on average, and the average purchase is \$.80 (80 cents). Game developers increasingly try to keep players within the game by enabling them to update their Facebook status, etc., from within the game. This can result in tens or hundreds of millions of dollars in annual revenue for top games.
- When marketing your game, be careful, or Facebook will block you. Encourage players to publish their activity on their Walls, so their Friends see it, get curious, and visit the game. Be very careful when promoting the game to non-players. Don't try to force people to pay to play.
- Fraud is usually not a problem with this style of game because you can't redeem coins or points outside of the game very easily.
- A useful site to compare games and find statistics is [developer Analytics](#).

Michael Brito, Intel: Social Networking Brand Loyalty: View from a Fortune 100 Firm

[Michael](#) is Intel's chief consumer evangelist. He engages people across all relevant social networks, and he's involved with creating significant content as the editor of a blog, [scoop.intel.com](#).



- Michael is the consumer marketing face of Intel, and his mission is to build brand loyalty within social networks. He is a former yahoo and evangelist for HP.
- Brands have to be believable (because there's a lot of skepticism); don't rush in and try to make a statement; begin by observing and listening. Ask yourself what is the environment like, what is important to people?
- Don't be too focused on monetizing (your social network activity). Yahoo is too focused on monetization.
- Enterprises are not human, so they need to learn to approach social networks as people first, and business later.
- Be conversational; don't look at social networks as "outlets for your message." Ask people questions, and respond to their tweets. Scott Monty is a friend who's doing this right.
- Twitter is fantastic for news. Dell has 50 people on Twitter. richard@dell.com is one community guy.
- Michael likes Forrester's [Ladder of Participation](#). Don't treat social media as exclusive, let anyone participate after they've gone through some training. Create your own social media guidelines.
- Intel thinks of itself as an "ingredient brand," so Michael is trying to get people excited about their processors to drive demand.
- Michael edits [scoop.intel.com](#). They also have [communities.intel.com](#), which is similar to Dell's [Ideastorm](#), and wepc.com.
- A big success has been the [Digital Drag Race](#) promotion, which was created for Intel by Razorfish. It engaged developers in high end video development (that requires ultra fast processing power). It won significant attention worldwide from influencers.

Adam Pisoni, Yammer: Effective Business Social Networking with Community Messaging

[Adam](#) gave us a summary of Yammer's version of "enterprise Twitter" as well as the category in general. They are very focused on enterprise collaboration and breaking barriers.



- Adam is Yammer's engineering lead, and he gave the audience a vision for enterprise microblogging.
- The evolution of a company goes something like this, from an organization perspective: (small) group in which everyone talks to everyone => cliques => business units => geographical orgs. This results in too-familiar silos and fragmentation and a breakdown of communication. Yammer fixes this.
- By comparison, Facebook has 200 million members, and it has had no reorgs.
- Enterprise software, by contrast, (mirrors organization and) requires training, and it's not fun. Why can't work software be fun?
- Yammer lets users choose (and form the processes, the software doesn't impose them).
- [SaaS](#) has evolved rapidly (not to mention [cloud computing](#)) and is enabling new ways to scale and manage software.
- Facebook debuted its news feed in 2007, while Twitter specializes in messaging.
- Facebook is ordered chaos; you don't have to decide where to put content; it's bottom-up.
- Finding knowledge leaders is easy in this environment (they have the most interaction and mentions); the corporation offers a terrible fate: ending up on a distribution list (you can't opt out)
- Email is more dangerous than Yammer (anyone can copy and paste on the Web), but no one questions it.
- Some Yammer users are Deloitte, Forrester and AMD; also the Real Estate Show.
- Yammer is enterprise Twitter; you have to register with the corporate domain (i.e. chris.rollyson@corpname.com); Yammer tightens the feedback loop. To understand what Adam means, imagine Twitter that can't go outside the enterprise. Other customer service tools he mentioned were [ZenDesk](#) and [UserVoice](#).
- Why didn't email work? There's no unsubscribe button; it's forced opt-in, you're on the dreaded distribution list.
- From Yammer's perspective, U.S. firms are far more skittish than elsewhere, a disturbing trend. (I pointed out that this was another benefit of the U.S.'s over-litigious culture); Europeans are more open.

- Yammer has a freemium model; any employees can use it for free, which leads to dozens or hundreds of users very quickly; it's very safe, as it's self-contained. However, the corporation gets benefits by "claiming its site" which costs \$1/employee/month.
- The most requested feature by companies that claim their sites is *removing functionality from Yammer!!* ,-D

John Ploumitsakos, Google: Google Insights—Advanced Information on Trends and Search for the Social Networking Consumer

[John](#) shared ten key points for succeeding in the age of social networks.



- From Google's multidimensional perspective, the six degrees phenom is adopting strongly, in all demographics. Beware of assumptions! Visitors are not necessarily who you think they are.
- There are many social networks, one for everyone; and portals like MSN are becoming social.
- Social networking ≠ marketing: it means two-way dialog, and advertisements must "participate" in the conversation; Google helps its clients through this (as it's very different since ads are one-way communication).
- U.S. advertising spend on social networks is growing by 200%/year; it will be \$3 billion by 2011. MySpace is 54%, Facebook 20% and Windows Live Yahoo is 16% current spend.
- John mentioned several success stories: Crest White Strips on Facebook, Aquafina's MySpace contest, the Beastie Boys video, Jack Box's profile on Facebook (Jack in the Box), Del monte's Pup-peroni and I Love My Dog site.
- Another key trend is [Open Access](#); the way Google sees it, everyone wins.
- Data portability is also key; let people use data the way they want. That means letting data come to people when they subscribe. That also means that they can unsubscribe easily.
- Find your audience, and target specifically (think [Long Tail](#)); Google has tools that help companies to microsegment and target. YouTube serves specific ads to MySpace members, for example (BTW, another Open Access partner).
- Creative reigns: ads must adapt, and [widgets](#) are a great example of creative advertising and adaptiveness. They can enhance stickiness; Google considers widgets an ad format.
- Watch for metrics to change constantly and be redefined (this is by no means a stable/static environment). There will constantly be new attributes to consider. This will challenge marketers to learn to understand and measure value.
- On the horizon.. look for everything to become more global and portable. For example, in India, 69% of Internet users use social networks; in Korea 53%, in the UK 34%, in the U.S. 20%.
- Mobile social networking will become very important.. Google anticipates this and has launched [Latitude](#) in response. Google Enterprise is a key strategy that encourages global collaboration.

Jeff Bruce, Dow Jones Business and Relationship Intelligence: Social Networking & Business Information Technologies

[Jeff](#) presented a fascinating concept, "social networking meets business intelligence (BI)."



- Jeff was a co-founder of Generate, which was acquired by Dow Jones; he now leads the media practice.
- The idea behind "Business and Relationship Intelligence" is that it combines business "social" networking with Dow Jones arsenal of news feeds and some other tools. For example: 17 million firm profiles (like Hoovers) + 28,000 executive bios + hundreds of custom news feeds via Dow Jones + news feeds from 1000s of other sources.
- Jeff shared a case study of Deloitte's TMT (Technology, Media, Telecoms) practice. The DJ app filters all the information and news and extracts the people involved, formatting the information in a BI-like dashboard. Imagine a synthetic LinkedIn (synthetic because it's packaged by algorithms, not the person) "profile," plus extracts of algorithm-driven relevant news feeds relating to people on a search term. Not only that, as with BI, you can drill down by clicking.
- Its algorithms also help define who is the best match to try to get in touch with someone.
- John pointed out that this solution involves no opt-in: it builds the connections maps by analyzing the connections of everyone in the firm, and massaging and presenting public information from the news feeds.
- Notably, unlike LinkedIn, you can't see anyone's connections, but they appear in search results. I believe you have to ask permission to use them.
- Unofficially, I heard (not from Jeff) that their solution is priced like an enterprise software solution; I'll be interested to learn more.

Sumaya Kazi, Sun Microsystems: Social Media Strategy Plans

[Sumaya](#) is a key leader of Sun's considerable social media initiatives, and she shared some of the strategy and tactics behind Sun's programs.

- Sumaya has been at Sun four years, two years specializing in social networks.
- As a company, you have to realize that the age of owning content is over; user generated content is the thing now. For example, Soulja Boy launched on YouTube as a 16 year old, and he is now a famous rapper.
- This also means that companies have the opportunity to grow their brands organically.
- Sun is involved in its own social network sites, and they invest in non-Sun platforms like Blog Talk Radio, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. One of Sun's first social networking initiatives was [Jonathan Schwartz's blog](#), which is just to celebrate its fifth anniversary (he was the first Fortune 500 CEO blogger).
- Sun has 5,426 bloggers on 4,437 blogs (some blog on teams). Sun's employees are very open, and there's huge goodwill and reach since so many are involved.
- Sun has a liberal culture, and social networks are ingrained in the company. You can get people involved by nurturing your early adopters. Having a CEO blogger helps! Make sure you create a workable and transparent code of ethics for social networking.
- Treat your employees like adults. Give them guidance, but trust that they'll do the right thing. In five years, we've had fewer than five incidents that were problematic. It's really okay.
- Sun is hot on wikis, they are everywhere (most are internal). Sun forums are not moderated. Legal doesn't review what's written; the community reviews itself.
- Blogging is in many people's job descriptions now, but most people blog on their own. Don't try to force people to blog.
- [Planets](#) is a syndication service; the Sun Developer Network is a vehicle for developer outreach. [OSOM](#) is a global university outreach site with 90,000 members.
- Sun launched [Facebook Fridays](#) in which it encouraged employees to connect and have fun. It began as a Sun employee-only venture but today is public, and Sun credits it with facilitating work relationships with employees and alliance partners; notably, it has helped Sun morph beyond its traditional email culture. Sun also supports many Facebook Groups and Pages. One Page is I Love Java. Sun employees are out there and help things spread fast.
- Sun Radio Network launched in April 2008; we interview CEOs, social media experts and thought leaders. There's no mention of Sun; we're not trying to sell anything; it averages 100-150 live listeners, but many times that listen to the podcasts of the live programs.
- [Twitter](#) is great for listening, and joining conversations is key. Most Sun employees are on Facebook, but not on Twitter yet.
- Sun has a social media training program.
- Social media is measurable; check out YouTube insights, numerous Twitter counters; Sun also uses [Radian6](#) and [Omniure](#).



Clara Shih, Faceconnector: Implementation of Enterprise Social Networking across the Company

[Clara](#) is the author of The Facebook Era, which describes social networks' transformational potential using Facebook as example.



- Facebook and other social networks are creating a new sociology; Facebook is rapidly becoming a new Internet portal for hundreds of millions of people. There are 660,000 developers of Facebook applications.
- Is email dead? Yes, except for older people.
- Facebook, LinkedIn and others created a template and an expectation for people to share unprecedented information about themselves.
- Now [Facebook Connect](#) and [Google Friend Connect](#) are enabling people to take their social graphs with them as they traipse around the Internet. In other words, if you authenticate at an e-commerce site with Facebook Connect (the site must be a partner), you can see which of your friends bought something on that site and whether one of them wrote a review. Citysearch is a partner, so you can see what your friends thought of that restaurant or dry cleaner. You take your community with you.
- You can syndicate your website and publish on Facebook feed (I believe she meant using Facebook Notes, which can automatically import RSS).
- From a business development standpoint, people will increasingly expect you to know them personally. Soon, it won't be enough to have the best terms; you'll have to get personal by leveraging friends.
- Transitive trust is a powerful concept. I don't know Jan, but Jan and I both know Robert; therefore some of my trust in Robert applies to Jan.
- Discovery (of relationship) is automatic now; it's actionable and pervasive.
- Facebook is creating new modes of communication such as Poke. The cost of being connected is rapidly falling due to social networks.
- Facebook makes the power of weak ties actionable; you can maximize them, capture the long tail of relationships, exercise options; you're always available.
- She repeated a story she told in Miami: of a teen named Tommy who is Facebooking everyone he's ever gone to school with, from elementary school on. He'll have all of his relationships on Facebook, his whole life.

- From an enterprise perspective, sales must recognize and leverage these changes; leverage transitive trust; she showed some screens of [Faceconnector](#), which makes Facebook profile information available within Salesforce.com under certain conditions. Its progenitor was Faceforce, [which I reviewed](#).
- B2B can leverage the social graph; as the price of your product/service increases, trust must increase as well.
- At Salesforce.com, we were integrating Salesforce with Twitter, but it was very hard because Twitter was growing so fast.
- Facebook enables hypertargeting for marketers; you can easily target age, marital status, location, school, workplace and even more personal things—because these are part of the Facebook profile. It enables you to tap *latent demand* economically (people don't realize they have the need. This is different from marketers pushing the same product on everybody because it's targeted and more likely relevant). Google searches are *active demand* (people are looking for that product or service). She cited [Bobobos](#), which sells trousers only through Facebook ads—and is up to \$1 million revenue after only two years.
- Facebook creates loyalty magnification through social ads, in which your friends appear alongside advertisers if they have social actions connected to that advertiser (i.e., Fanned a Page). It almost appears as an endorsement.
- Regarding sales employees, you need to start thinking about the person's level of influence times the size of his/her network.
- A big question is, how do we scale listening? It's rapidly moving to "everybody to one" in which everyone is talking to one person/company.
- She predicts that Facebook and Twitter will sell analytics.


Reno Marioni, Nokia: Advances in Mobile & Social Networking

[Reno](#) highlighted the growing mobile social networking phenomenon as well as some of Nokia's innovation to enable it.



- Reno's been with Nokia, focusing on partnerships with LBS (location-based services) providers for almost two years. He's steeped in the industry, having launched several startups. He's a veteran of NeXT and knows Coco well. He vets, makes and managed partnerships with LBS vendors (usually a 70-30 split).
- Implicit in his remarks was that it was somewhat eerie working for Nokia in the U.S., where most people have no idea of how massive the brand is globally. Nokia is the #5 brand in the world (and I'd bet it's growing fast). The company sold 1.2 billion phones (last quarter or year, didn't get that).
- Mobile social networking combines mobile with social networking; imagine your favorite social network that travels with you everywhere and layers in LBS, which enables you to take advantage of everything geo: which friends are in the area and commercial offers ("did you know your friend bought this laptop at the shop in the next block last week and loves it?").
- Mobile will transform social networking, and Nokia aims to play a significant role. The centerpiece of its strategy is [OVI](#), a "layer of services," a "personal dashboard" in which users can share content and sync between phones and PCs. Although Reno didn't say it, it sounded like a much more useful "deck" than can be offered currently, or a true "desktop" on the phone. (he didn't say this either, but this will be very interesting as it will jangle the value chain, which desperately needs disruption, in the U.S. especially).
- The context here is a natural evolution on the handset: telephone => email => SMS (text) => social networking. Social networking is a requirement for phone manufacturers.
- Twitter has added the pervasive real-time status to the mix. Twitter has an older demographic than Facebook.
- Nokia has a [BRIC](#) focus to power its growth.
- Don't make the mistake of considering "mobile" as (just) another channel. It's far more active (because people are out and doing things).
- Don't miss that mobile phones are rapidly becoming content creators. People are wowed by the iPhone's video creation, but Nokia has had several models that have done this (for a while).
- Another way to look at the mobile value prop is phone-only, location and semantic location (I didn't get all of this, but "location" probably means where the phone is, really. "Semantic" probably refers to the phone suggesting where you should be, based on your activity [since most of your communication is digital and going through your phone in some form, it has significant 'insight' into where you might want to be]).
- Reno also discussed the value chain struggles. There's a natural power struggle between "operators" (telecoms) and handset makers. (The details play out differently based on country).
- One way to monetize social networks will be paying for link referrals.
- Of course, Nokia recently acquired Chicago's Navtech for \$7 billion, the largest acquisition to date. Location is a huge part of Nokia's strategy.
- Two-way video conferencing is on some high end Nokia models today (obviously this is largely limited to 3G networks).
- Nokia has launched an "app store" (like everyone else, Palm, Blackberry). He pointedly suggested that there was huge opportunity for developers to develop applications for the OVI platform: (paraphrasing) Would you like to be 1/200 at Apple's App Store or #1 at Nokia's store, which has a much larger global audience?"
- In sum, Nokia is layering services on top of its hardware value proposition to consumers. It's moving up the value chain. Hmmm.

Marius Ciortea, Oracle: Enterprise Social Networking at Oracle

[Marius](#) leads some of Oracle's social networking initiatives, and he shared some of the company's challenges and learnings with initiatives "beyond the firewall." 

- Some of Oracle's social networking-like initiatives are: [Oracle Mix](#), [Oracle Partner Network](#) and [Oracle University](#).
- Oracle Mix is a major initiative in which we are asking customers and prospects to help us with product and service ideas. We connect customers and employees and customers with each other. We know that we can do better, and we are asking people outside and inside Oracle for help.
- We admire Dell [Ideastorm](#) and Starbucks' [mystarbucksidea](#).
- We launched Oracle Mix at OpenWorld 2008, and today it has 45,000 members. How do we take it to 100,000?
- Some of Mix's features are the user profile, friending, messaging and forums (like LinkedIn Answers). Oracle employees are designated by an "O" by their names, but otherwise they are the same.
- It's run by four core people; major communities are J Ruby Red.
- What really works is tying your social network with physical and other events. It helps with lead generation; for example, we have 2,000 E-Business Suite members.
- We get ideas from YouTube and Slideshare.
- Our key goals for Oracle Mix are understanding social presence, sharing experience, promoting trust and understanding who is going to events.
- Expose user-generated content anywhere.


Aubrey Sabala, Digg: Bridging the Gap—Taking Your Online Community to the Streets

[Aubrey](#) leads marketing for Digg, the social network and social bookmarking site, and she spoke about Digg's approach of using physical events to drive engagement on the site.



- Aubrey has been at Digg for 19 months, and she manages marketing programs to drive user growth and retention. Key programs are [Digg Town Halls](#), [Bigg Digg Shindiggs](#), [Diggnation](#) and [Digg meetups](#).
- Currently, the Digg community is 36 million, and the culture is analogous to rock music; the events are metaphorically like rock concerts, and leaders are rock stars. It's a very irreverent and vocal culture.
- Some stats: 36 million members, 48% female, 19-34 is the dominant demographic (13+ required); the late 30s segment is growing fast.
- Digg is a hybrid; it is a portal for all kinds of stories whose visibility is determined by community vote: stories with the most "Diggs" make it to the front page and gain significant visibility worldwide; these stories can be MSM, blog posts, YouTube videos, etc.
- They do a lot of video, so the physical events are a way to extend their engagement footprint.
- Several months ago, Digg management decided to be more responsive and engaging with respect to their community, and Aubrey's been involved with outreach. It's been very successful; people have even been known to quit their jobs and take their families to Digg events.
- Digg's main vehicle is its blog; they have a new tech blog; Digg also uses Facebook Ads and events; Digg founder Kevin Rose uses Twitter.
- However, Digg doesn't spend much money to promote its events, \$3,000 maximum per event. Digg is a Facebook Connect partner.
- They don't track who attends; there's no registration (consequently, the team required to organize isn't huge, either); they justify the cost by knowing that engagement and size of the community is increasing.
- One option Digg is considering is monetizing select opportunities in which advertisers could connect directly with segments of the community; another idea is "Diggable ads."
- Most Digg events have been unique, and the company is pondering doing them alongside other (non-Digg) events (like conferences). They did cover Republican and Democratic conventions, and that was a big hit with the community.
- They wonder how they can keep the momentum they have been building with the events.
- Digg and the enterprise? Digg is B2C focused, so the company doesn't have a current vision for pursuing enterprise business.

Ben Newton, Wal-Mart: Wal-Mart and Social Networking

[Ben](#) revealed how the world's biggest retailer is approaching social networking with its two million employees worldwide. 

- Ben has a senior management role with corporate communications, and he helps to lead the development of mywalmart.com, an

internal social network that is seeking to engage Wal-Mart's two million "associates," who work in 7,000 stores around the world.

- Wal-Mart conducted two years of research before embarking on social networking; one of mywalmart.com's key themes is helping employees live smarter and happier lives. This is in line with Wal-Mart's famous \$4 prescription drug program, its sustainability initiatives and other community enrichment programs. For example, the site can search for volunteer opportunities by postcode, which enables associates to get involved in their communities.
- 22% of Americans know someone who works at a Wal-Mart, and associates are brand ambassadors.
- Mywalmart.com is global, but the content and features are strongly tied to the stores because that's how associates are organized. Associates can get involved in programs around community, family, quality of life and job opportunity. They can communicate with each other via blogs and message boards.
- Research showed that 81% of associates wanted information about Wal-Mart outside of work (i.e. when they were off the clock). 83% expected a social network. It launched in March 2009, and there are already 375,000 registered users. The company doesn't know what portion of associates have Internet access.
- Benefits information is now delivered through mywalmart.com. They reuse the benefits site's authentication engine (slick).
- It's really important to engage key stakeholders in the beginning: legal, privacy, ethics, marketing, communications and IS. Our agency built the back end of mywalmart.com.
- Since launch, we have a cycle of refreshing content every two weeks, and many of the blogs are written in the home office (corporate). Associates can friend pages. We feature video chat during company events. We are planning to implement live chat soon.
- We have plans in 2009 to enable associates to interact with customers on mywalmart.com (he didn't give specifics; obviously this would be hived off and controlled since it's an internal site).
- The biggest risks for an internal social network. You need to think through control mechanisms that are appropriate for your culture: carefully consider legal, ethics and privacy. There are two extremes: all content pre-moderated (read "huge costs, slow") or all content post-moderated. Sections of the site use both methods.
- Since launch, only 3 photos have had to be taken down as they were inappropriate. The site has 17,000 photos.
- Ideation tools are separate (asking associates for innovation ideas).
- We plan to engage alumni, too, but we're not there yet.
- Mywalmart.com is not connected to the corporate intranet, The Wire.
- We are using Omniture for metrics, and we are building dashboards now.
- We have 3 full-time employees dedicated to mywalmart.com.
- We are working with recruiting to integrate career information.

Angela LoSasso, Hewlett-Packard: Social Networking in the Technology Hardware Space

[Angela](#) is a social networking manager who has a direct role in customer engagement, and she shared emerging good practices.



- HP is a quintessential tech company with an experimental culture, with 300,000 employees and thousands of blogs inside the firewall. Wikis are also a huge part of the culture as is chat.
- As an organizing principle, HP is focused on mobilizing employees (and enabling community and collaboration). We want them to be brand ambassadors.
- They also engage people in innovation, which is a huge part of the culture. HP Idea Lab is a major player in innovation.
- A big part of Angela's job is listening to and interacting with customers. They realize that, when customers talk, other customers listen more.
- She is focused on printing products (toner, etc.). She does everything: blogging, tweeting, etc.
- One way to add value is to collaborate with customers, like Staples and Wal-Mart. Exchange ideas.
- What are they doing? What do they want to do? How can you help?
- HP uses many different tools to measure what people are saying, like [socialmention](#).
- They have wikis with which they collaborate with customers.
- In general, you want to get to know people; it's good to lead the conversation by adding value (but you want to be focused on listening). Greet customers when they come onto your social network. Ask how you can help them.
- Add to their conversations. Angela shared the case study of [Pioneer Woman](#), who blogs extensively and is excited about HP printers. She's a real evangelist. Get to know people like that, and do what you can to help them however you can.
- Angela closed with some excellent advice. Even a tech leader like HP can be behind its customers. Don't be afraid to learn from them. "Some of our customers are way ahead of us, especially with mashups."

Christopher S. Rollyson, CSRA: Emergent Thoughts from "The Grand Panel"

I had the honor of moderating the "Grand Panel" for which we had excellent attendance, even though it was the last session after two grueling days. Conference attendees were itching to get things off their respective chests. We did a few interesting things, which I'll go into in a minute, but first, let me introduce the panelists (links to my write-ups of their sessions):



- [Travis Falstad](#), Head Social Networking Marketing, Electronic Arts
- [Sumaya Kazi](#), Social Media Manager, Sun Microsystems
- [Ben Newton](#), Senior Manager Associate Communications, Wal-Mart
- [David Sacks](#), CEO, Yammer
- [Aubrey Sabala](#), Marketing Manager, Digg
- [Clara Shih](#), Author, The Facebook Era
- [Angela LoSasso](#), Social Networking Manager, Hewlett-Packard
- [Marius Ciortea](#), Senior Project Manager Social Media, Oracle

As was designed, it was pretty unstructured, and since I was moderating, I'm going from very rough and scattered notes.

- Several panelists retweeted the importance of not being afraid to experiment, and the key is to be open and sincere. This sounds basic, but it bears repeating: people know transparency and authenticity when they see it. This is table stakes if you want engaged people and community.
- We had the predictable (and lively, -) privacy and security discussion. Several attendees wanted to know what panelists thought about the negatives of all the sharing: it's obvious that social information is being leveraged for criminal enterprise. The panelists explained that there were numerous safeguards and tools. Of course, the consensus was that there was absolute security for anything.
- Several questions about how you approach social networking practically, from an enterprise perspective, and panelists gave great advice. This discussion reminded me that we were in the early days; many people still have a hard time getting their heads around it, something it's too easy to forget when you're doing it 24x7x365 for years.
- We turned the tables after a few questions. I asked the panelists to ask questions of the audience, which was kind of fun in a crowdsourcing, community kind of way.
- More discussion on the concepts of "enterprise microblogging" and the potential of loose ties.
- There was extended discussion of how to achieve business goals while being authentic.
- One of the most lively discussions was my challenge to the audience of pitching us a solid social networking venture to score \$1 million in funding. One of the most impassioned contributions was a semantic web idea.
- Finally, the concept of digital goods and what role it would play (huge).

Analysis and Conclusions

The Social Networking Conference Los Angeles brought home some good solid advice from people in the trenches—as well as some surprising insights. That said, when you read them, you may find yourself thinking, "Well, sure, that makes sense, what's the big deal?" Social networking is social, and we are human as we have always been, so many of the underlying human interaction principles seem exceedingly familiar. We are used to technology disruptions as fantastic novelty, but social networking is not about technology, it is about us, although we're using technology to digitize and scale human interactions. The technology changes the context, injecting some mystery. Digital social networking is not difficult to understand, but it is difficult for most organizations to do well because they are not built for unbridled communication, and their structures constrain response and action.

- None of the speakers mentioned it in these terms, but there was a general theme of "humanizing the enterprise." Communicate with people by being people. This took several forms: **Sumaya** gave numerous examples of how Sun perceives its employees as its face of social media. True, the company has a much higher comfort level with technology than do many others, and employees consequently have a higher level of enthusiasm (social media is still often seen as a tech thing). As she explained, blogs, wikis and Facebook have become an integral part of Sun's culture and work processes. Their liberal (i.e. non-controlling) approach to employee content, as well as the few gaffes, show that employees can be trusted.
- A related but distinct thread was supporting and nurturing UGC (user-generated content). **Angela's** Pioneer Woman story reflected this. Brands often do not appreciate this dynamic, so it is a significant opportunity. When a blogger is recognized by a brand, that can energize her and her community. But companies must be grounded in supporting the individual without appearing to influence: the best way to stay on the right track is realizing it's her content and audience. Give her tools and information that other people don't have.

- Marketers still talk about "social media outlets," and that often reflects Web 1.0 thinking ("distribution for our content"), without appreciating modes of communication. **Aubrey's** account of Digg's explicit efforts to energize the community showed that companies could create energy by encouraging members to communicate using online, video and physical events. Social networks are online (in our context here), and Digg has done an excellent job at creating familiarity and excitement through the video Town Halls, which feature Digg execs talking informally, sitting on a couch. It's a very familiar setting (talking with friends on the living room couch), and the video medium brings it home to the Digg community. They strengthened this further through the onsite events.
- **Reno's** vision for mobile social networking suggested where we were going but simultaneously some of the limitations we face at getting there. Especially in the U.S., the oft-acrimonious relationships between operators and manufacturers constrain innovation. It will be interesting to watch Nokia's OVI bring semantic, location-based services. I agree with him that social networking will be an increasing part of the "phone's" value proposition.
- Of course, Wal-Mart is often in a category by itself, and **Ben's** account of mywalmart.com proved the rule once again: 375,000 members after a few months! By sheer numbers and mission, Ben showed that internal social networking will become a very strong part of corporate culture and the way companies operate. Most brands don't appreciate that people will increasingly expect to have social networks everywhere: just as "the Internet" caught most execs flatfooted during Web 1.0, this time companies will be shocked to learn that social networks will be a requirement—everywhere. Let me repeat Ben's eye-opening stat: 83% of Wal-Mart employees *expected* a social network. Those are Wal-Mart employees, not Valley techies. Think about it.
- **Jeff** presented an intriguing look at Dow Jones' mashup of business intelligence and "LinkedIn" (i.e. business social networking). This showed that there will be some interesting combinations of tech innovation and "enterprise" solutions, and market tumult will be rife for several years as startups and market leaders compete for customer attention. Expect many more of these.
- **Adam** and **David** of Yammer explained "enterprise Twitter, which they positioned against email. One thing they didn't say is that Web 2.0 can coexist well with enterprise stalwarts like email. It is emergent organization, so it doesn't impose structure. It organizes itself to cross gaps (or walls ^). People like using it because it's far more efficient in many situations, and it's almost always more fun to use. Expect to see more "Web 2.0" solutions built for enterprise clients.
- **Michael's** presentation was interesting on several levels: the "ingredient brand" angle was disruptive in that value "chains" of yore dictated that only one member would touch the end customer. Many-to-many communication also means that it's economical for any member of the value net to reach people via social media, and the Intel story reflects this trend well. He also retweeted the principle of developing relationship first and monetizing second. Many execs who cut their teeth during Web 1.0's "new new economy" will crack snide grins when they read that. But think about business development efforts, especially in B2B: what's the average "romance time" and convert rate? No one likes looking at it because it's so long. In business development, we are accustomed to investing in relationship. Most people who see social media as a marketing thing (it isn't, even though it may be used for marketing) miss the relationship connection. More on this in the [Social Network Life Cycle Model](#), which defines the stages of relationship development, complete with quantitative metrics for each stage.
- **John** retweeted that social networking was not marketing, but he offered that advertising has to adapt by getting much smarter: ads must reference the conversations around them, and they will do well to microsegment. (thankfully, the demise of ad carpet bombing appears nigh ;-).
- **Travis** showed that gaming could be a serious business, and like other "apps," it often runs on top of social networks' infrastructure. His remark about the (virtual) Christmas tree set off a series of thoughts in my head. I also had a lunch discussion with Dayna Grayson, Viximo CEO (they create and run virtual goods economies). I realized that a large part of all goods and services is virtual. You could buy a VW Jetta and get around, so why the BMW 7 series? A large part, for some people, is the intangible, virtual element of showing off. Or realizing you could travel at close to 200 mph, even though you rarely do. "Virtual" goods within games simply strip off the virtual part and, since there's no underlying good, they're immensely profitable.
- Finally, **Clara** described how the economics of relationships were changing at the virtual hand of social networks. Since finding people and maintaining connections via social networks drives down the costs, we can all have larger networks. She didn't emphasize, though, that there would be a significant learning curve for people to acquire the skills to succeed. I run into this constantly when working with clients with the [Executive's Guide to LinkedIn](#) et al. Her description of and vision for "taking your social graph with you" was powerful and bears watching. Each venue enables us to build "connections" or "friends" or "followers" with whom we have various degrees of trust. The concept and the technology is already there for us to call on them any time, any where, especially keeping in mind Reno's remarks on mobile.

About the Author

Christopher S. Rollyson launched *The Global Human Capital Journal* in 2005 to address the most poignant issues of day for chief executives, namely global transformation, the reinvention of the enterprise, technology and culture. Mr. Rollyson has been a technology and marketing visionary and pioneer for over fifteen years, with distinction in corporate strategy and innovation. As a consultant and marketing executive, he has had a leading role in launching such game-changing offerings as: Java with Sun, e-

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Recently the Vice President of Marketing at nVISIA, he developed executive marketing programs and service offerings to drive the value of software transformation through service-oriented architecture and Web services, working with IBM, Rational and Grand Central. Previously a subject matter expert for e-business and knowledge strategy in PricewaterhouseCoopers' Strategic Change practice, Mr. Rollyson developed original models and services frameworks for e-business strategy consulting. He consulted to clients in automotive, software, telecoms, consumer electronics, chemicals and petroleum industries, advising global enterprises in e-business strategy and technology start-ups on innovation and business strategy. Prior to PwC, he led marketing for KPMG's Midwest High Technology practice, where he built one of the firm's first intranets to transform the marketing organization to a real-time team. Before that the head of marketing at a leading edge Java consultancy, he played a key role in co-launching Java via marketing alliances with Sun and Netscape. Mr. Rollyson has done graduate work in corporate strategy and economics at the University of Chicago, with additional studies at Die Freie Universität Berlin, L'Université de Clermont-Ferrand in France and il Liceo Americano d'Aviano in Italy. He earned his undergraduate degree from Kalamazoo College. <http://rollyson.net>

About the Global Human Capital Journal

The Global Human Capital Journal addresses the global shift from the Industrial Economy to the Knowledge Economy, which is changing how human beings work and deliver value. In the Industrial Economy, products encapsulated the value of human work; in the Knowledge Economy, information produces the lion's share of value, and customer experience itself is the focus of commerce and government. A greater degree of collaboration among people of the world is possible than ever before, and increased interaction will bring unprecedented surprise and opportunity, especially because the potential is great to "level the playing field" among people of the world. Obviously, these developments hold significant ramifications for business and organizational strategy.

Global Human Capital covers two prongs of economic transformation: 1) strategically, how organizations can rejuvenate their relationships with customers and constituents by collaborating with them to drive innovation and 2) operationally, how organizations can build strong collaborative cultures and skills to engage the world's emergent network of expertise, both within and without their walls. We analyze how global sourcing and collaboration are transforming enterprise and government organizations, as they transition from relatively self-contained, closed entities to more networked, open organizations.

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