Industry
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Social Business Systems

- success factors for Enterprise 2.0 applications

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The following company joined us in a special Task Force to investigate the progress of social business technologies, and underwrote this research. Without their help we would have to return to a paid subscription model. For that, we hope you will join us in thanking them:

IBM

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Process Used and Survey Demographics

While we appreciate the support of these sponsors, we also greatly value our objectivity and independence as a non-profit industry association. The results of the survey and the market commentary made in this report are independent of any bias from the vendor community.

The survey was taken using a web-based tool by 451 individual members of the AIIM community between July 29, 2011 and August 24, 2011. Invitations to take the survey were sent via e-mail to a selection of the 65,000 AIIM community members.

Survey demographics can be found in Appendix A. Graphs throughout the report exclude responses from organizations with less than 10 employees, taking the number of respondents to 403.

About AIIM

AIIM (www.aiim.org) is the community that provides education, research, and best practices to help organizations find, control and optimize their information. For more than 60 years, AIIM has been the leading non-profit organization focused on helping users to understand the challenges associated with managing documents, content, records and business processes. Today, AIIM is international in scope, independent and implementation-focused, acting as the intermediary between ECM (Enterprise Content Management) users, vendors and the channel. AIIM runs a series of training programs, including the Enterprise 2,0 Certificate course.

About the Author

Doug Miles is head of the AIIM Market Intelligence Division. He has over 25 years' experience of working with users and vendors across a broad spectrum of IT applications. He was an early pioneer of document management systems for business and engineering applications, and has most recently produced a number of AIIM survey reports on issues and drivers for ECM, Capture, Records Management, SharePoint and Social Business/Enterprise 2.0. Doug has also worked closely with other enterprise-level IT systems such as ERP, BI and CRM. Doug has an MSc in Communications Engineering and is a member of the IET in the UK.

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Introduction

When AIIM started tracking Enterprise 2.0 in March 2008[1], only 13% of respondents felt their organization had any real understanding of what it was about. That report focused on the definition and scope of Web 2.0 technologies and how they might be used in a business environment. The world has moved on somewhat in the last three years. We are more aware of the different demands of customer-facing, employee-facing and public Enterprise 2.0[2]. The phrase "Systems-of-Engagement" was coined last year by Geoffrey Moore in his AIIM-sponsored study[3] to differentiate communication-centric applications from more traditional transaction-centric applications or "Systems-of-Record". For this report, we are using the term "Social Business." This is a broad school, but most people understand or can guess at what it means – "business application of social technologies and applications." We are also in this report more focused on employee-facing or partner-facing applications.

Many early adopters of social and collaborative technologies were keen to try out different tools and services to see how they might work in a business environment. These pioneering toolsets have now converged to a much more defined set of products and application areas, albeit that any given social application, such as expertise sourcing across the organization, can be solved with a number of different tools. In this report, we look at the business drivers and adoption levels for social business, the benefits and issues being highlighted by users, and what platforms and infrastructures are being used for delivery. We also take a short look at three specific applications – Enterprise Q&A, Open Innovation, and Sales & Marketing collaboration. These application areas are covered in more depth in a follow up paper[4].

Key Findings

- Only 21% of responding organizations make no use of social business applications, including 6% where its use is specifically discouraged. 24% have ad hoc usage, 38% are moving to an enterprise wide strategy and 18% consider it to be actively used and coordinated across the enterprise - up from 6% in last year's survey[2].

- The key driver for social business is sourcing and sharing expertise, followed by the breaking down of departmental and geographic barriers.

- Corporate culture and a general lack of awareness and leadership are the biggest impediments.

- The IT department is most likely to take the lead in implementing systems. Despite some evidence of more widely spread usage, IT staff are still by far the more active users in most organizations, with the marketing department second.

- Only 12% of respondents are required to make a financial business case for investment in social business applications, compared to 20% in last year's survey. These projects are now twice as likely to be considered as an infrastructure investment (27%).

- Once in use, greater knowledge sharing, faster responses to queries and questions, and fewer multi-copy emails are cited as the three top benefits.

- Reluctance of staff to contribute, particularly senior staff, is given as the biggest issue. There is a growing concern about the level of non-business content, and this may be discouraging management-level staff from participating.

- 38% of those organizations using some form of Enterprise Q&A or expertise sourcing get half or more of their answers from unexpected sources within the business.

- Within organizations using an Open Innovation social platform for ideas and suggestions, 48% have successfully surfaced major changes to internal processes and 34% have come up with major changes to external product offerings.

- By using specific social collaboration between Sales and Marketing staff, the number of respondents reporting "poor sharing of knowledge and information" drops from 41% of organizations to 8%, and "poor working together" drops from 21% to 4%.

- Governance is still sadly lacking in most organizations, with less than half keeping their own history record or searchable archive of content that has appeared both on internal social sites and, more worryingly, public sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.

- 51% consider social business to be "significant" to their overall business goals and success. This rises to 62% in the largest organizations, including 18% who consider it to be "imperative".

- Spending plans in all areas of social business are set to increase considerably with a net of 15-20% of organizations planning to spend more or much more in the next 12 months, particularly on social business infrastructures.

Adoption and Business Drivers

There are many elements of the Enterprise 2.0 technology set that have been around for a number of years, and indeed, if we include project collaboration tools and instant messaging, we would probably find that almost all organizations have adopted them in some form. However, the essence of social business applications is sharing – sharing expertise, sharing experiences and sharing ideas – and it is the technology developments of the last few years that have provided platforms to allow this sharing to take place across departmental and geographic boundaries, enabling employees across the whole enterprise to readily share their knowledge and exchange their views with others.
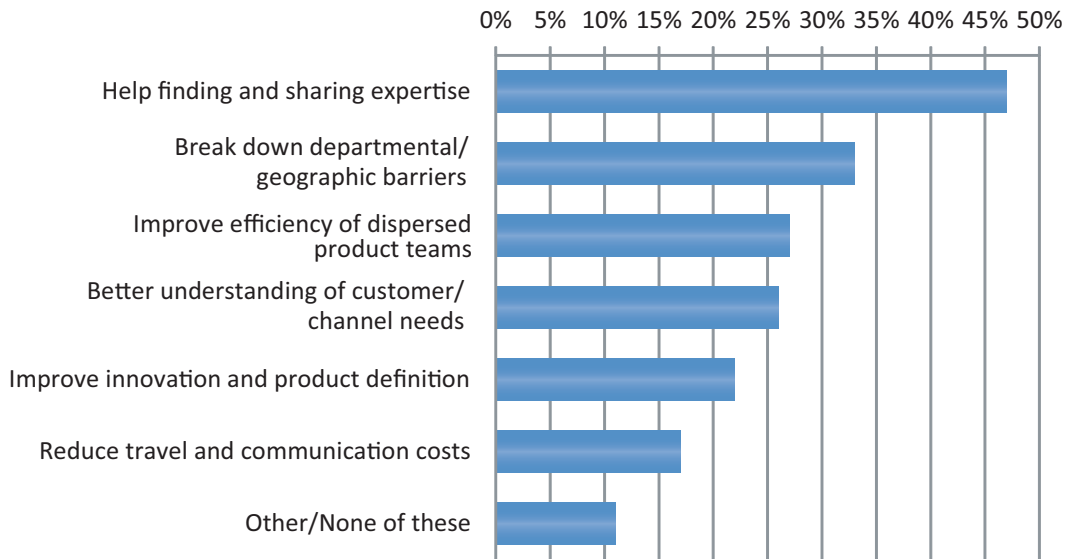
However, as with all "enterprise" technologies, wall-to-wall coverage does not happen overnight. For small organizations it takes time to understand the technologies and build a business case. For larger organizations, any enterprise-wide deployment is likely to take considerable time and resource. As we can see in Figure 1, 18% of organizations surveyed have completed enterprise-wide deployment, which breaks down as 13% of the largest organizations (>5,000 employees), 17% of mid-sized (500 to 5,000 employees) and 15% of the smallest (10 to 500 employees). However, at the other end of the spectrum, mid-sized organizations are showing more caution, with 10% discouraging the use of social business applications, compared to 4% of both the largest and smallest. Across business sectors, IT and high-tech companies are twice as likely to have deployed across the enterprise.

Figure 1: What is your organization's current approach to social business applications or Enterprise 2.0? (N=403, 10+emps)
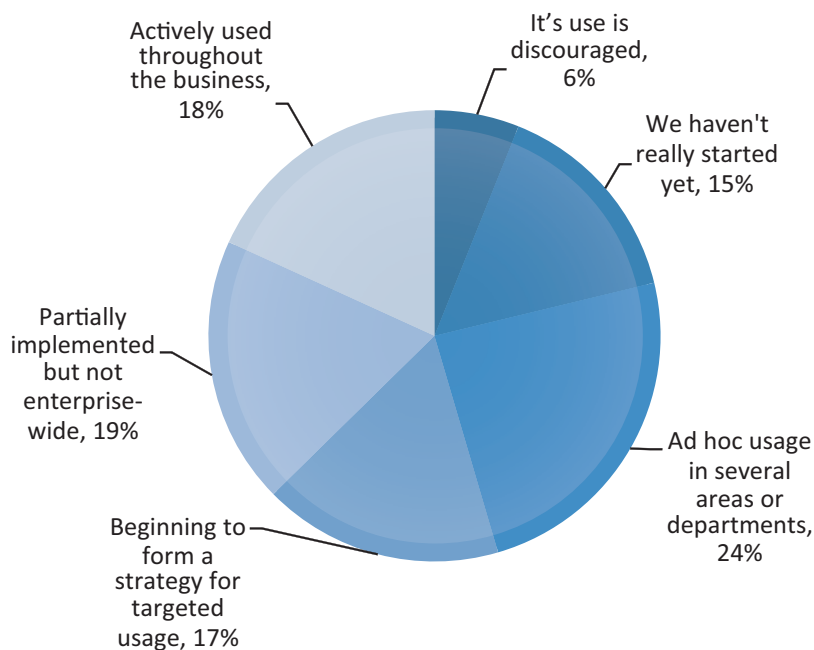
"Finding and sharing expertise" is the strongest driver for social business across all sizes of organization and at all levels of adoption. "Breaking down geographical and departmental barriers" is the next most cited and, not surprisingly, is more significant in the largest organizations. More efficient project teams and the enablement of dispersed teams are important drivers for many, followed by the better understanding of customer needs and improved innovation and product definition. Although "reduced travel and communications costs" is the easiest driver to put a monetary value on, it is cited least often.

Figure 2: Which TWO of the following would you say are the key drivers for social business/Enterprise 2.0 in your organisation? (N=403)

0%   5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35% 40% 45% 50%

- Help finding and sharing expertise
- Break down departmental/ geographic barriers
- Improve efficiency of dispersed product teams
- Better understanding of customer/ channel needs
- Improve innovation and product definition
- Reduce travel and communication costs
- Other/None of these

A key implication of the term "social business" is that it is inclusive and engenders a degree of leveling within the business. This can go against the culture of many established or overly-hierarchical organizations. As we see in Figure 3, corporate culture is given as a key impediment by over a third of respondents, followed by a lack of general awareness and a lack of leadership. Security concerns are indicated by 22% and 18% are struggling to make a business case to justify the costs.

Figure 3: Which TWO of these are the biggest impediments to wider implementation of social business applications in your organization? (N=369, excl. 34 "None of these")

0%   5%   10%   15%   20%   25%   30%   35%   40%

- Corporate culture
- Lack of understanding
- Nobody taking leadership
- Potential security leaks
- Lack of business case (ROI)
- No standardized infrastructure
- Staff unwillingness to participate
- Loss of control by management
- Cost
- Potential legal issues
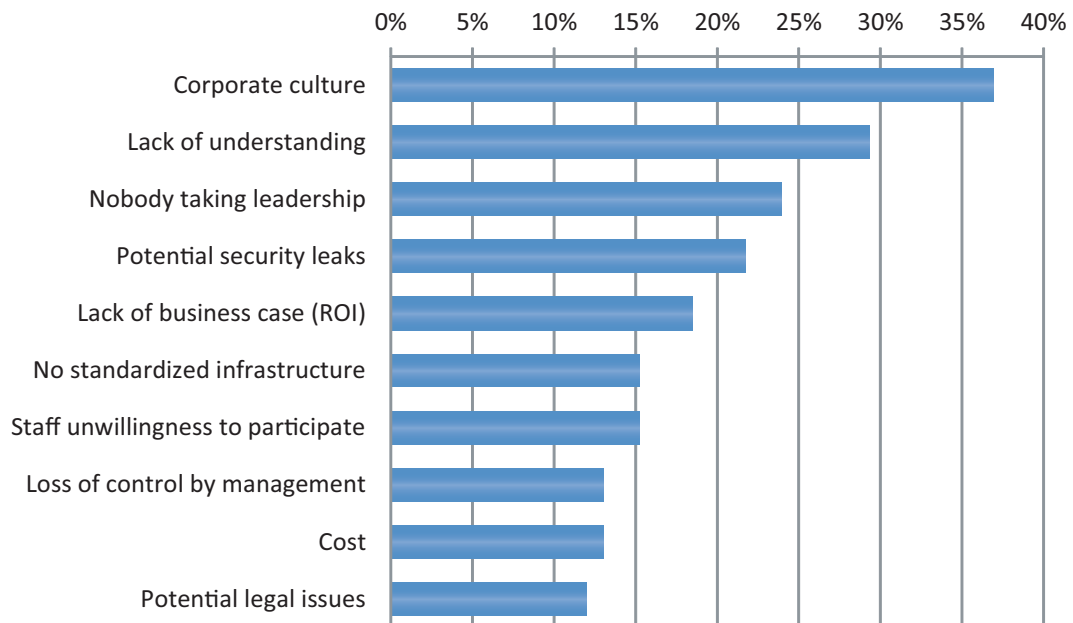
In spite of these pros and cons, 51% of respondents consider social business to be "Imperative" or "Significant" to their overall business goals and success. When broken down by size, this number rises to 62% of those in the largest organizations compared with 40% in mid-sized ones and rising again to 52% of smaller businesses (probably reflecting a greater number of IT and high-tech companies within the smaller category). Looking at the other end of the spectrum, only 7% of those in larger organizations consider social business to be of minimal or no importance, compared to 27% in the smaller ones.

Figure 4: In your view, how critical is social business/internal Enterprise 2.0 to your own organization's overall business goals and success? (N=394)

- Imperative, 12%
- Not at all, 5%
- Minimal, 13%
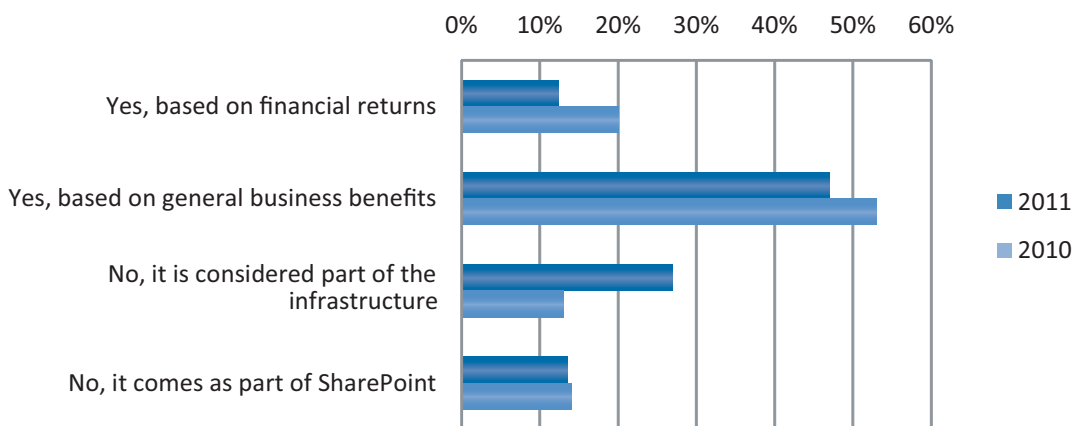- Average, 31%
- Significant, 39%
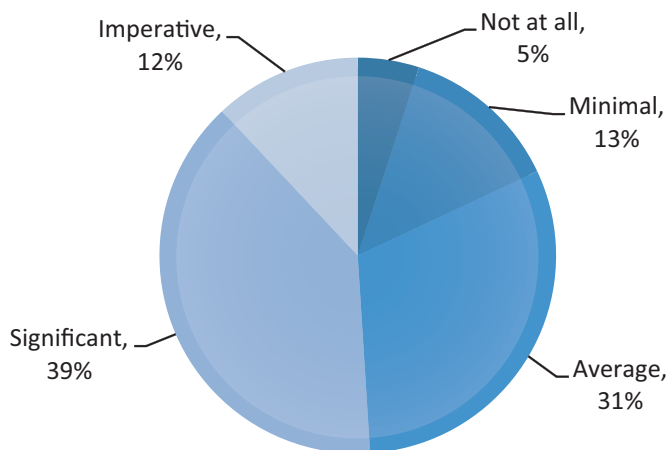
The business drivers for social business deployment are undoubtedly strong, but there is a wide spectrum of adoption between those who have achieved an enterprise-wide platform to those who still consider it to be a threat. Business culture is the dominant impediment to wider adoption, along with a lack of awareness.

Business Case

Here we can see obvious signs of maturity in the approach to social business. Compared to last year's report, there is a drop in the number of respondents who are required to make a financial case for investment, and a significant increase to 27% in those organizations who now consider social business applications to be part of the infrastructure in much the same way as email, messaging or teleconferencing.

Figure 5: Are you required to make a business case for investment in Enterprise 2.0/social applications? (N=289, excl. 109 "Don't know")

- Yes, based on financial returns
- Yes, based on general business benefits
- No, it is considered part of the infrastructure
- No, it comes as part of SharePoint

Legend: 2011, 2010

This infrastructure view is endorsed by the dominance of the IT department in taking responsibility for investigating, organizing and governing social business tools, although leaving the governance aspect to the IT department may not be the best choice as we will see later. The HR department is conspicuous in its lack of leadership, and in 28% of organizations, no one has been identified to take the lead. However, an encouraging sign is that in 19% of the larger businesses, there is a specialist unit, tasked with driving these projects through - up from 12% last year..

Figure 6: Who in your organization is responsible for investigating, organizing and governing
Enterprise 2.0/social tools? (N=402)
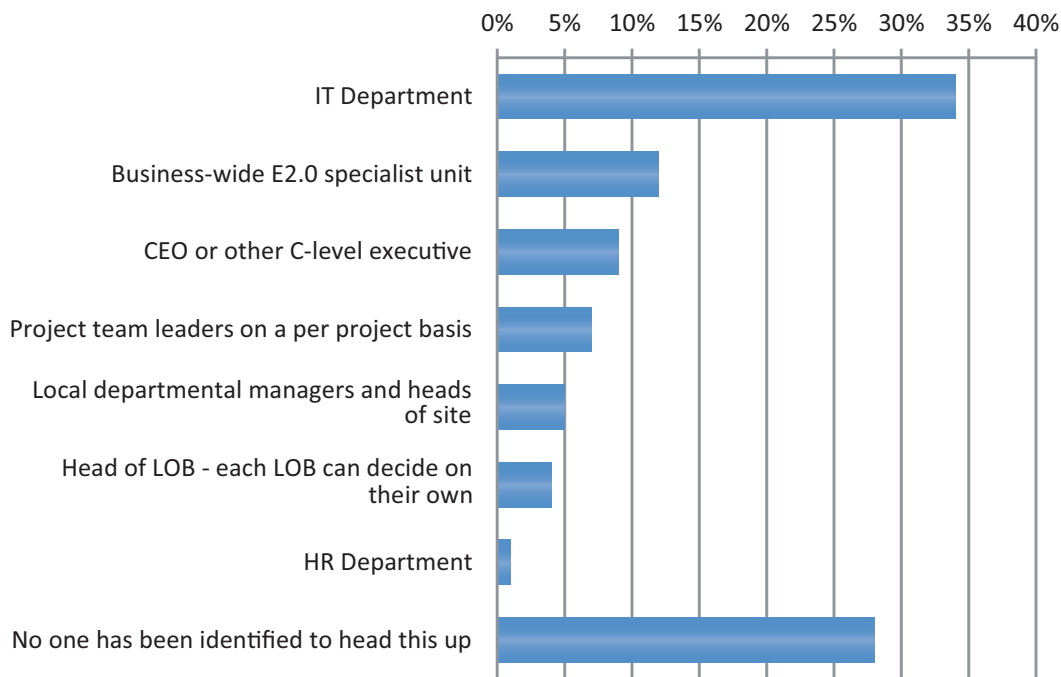
Although not always well known for their social interaction within the business, employees in the IT department are still likely to be the most active users of internal social business systems, followed by Marketing and then the Product Development teams. The dominance of IT staff has dropped from 68% to 51% since last year's survey. As we will discuss later, the Executive are generally not heavy users.

Figure 7: Which TWO departments are the most active users of your internal
Enterprise 2.0/social business systems? (N=394)
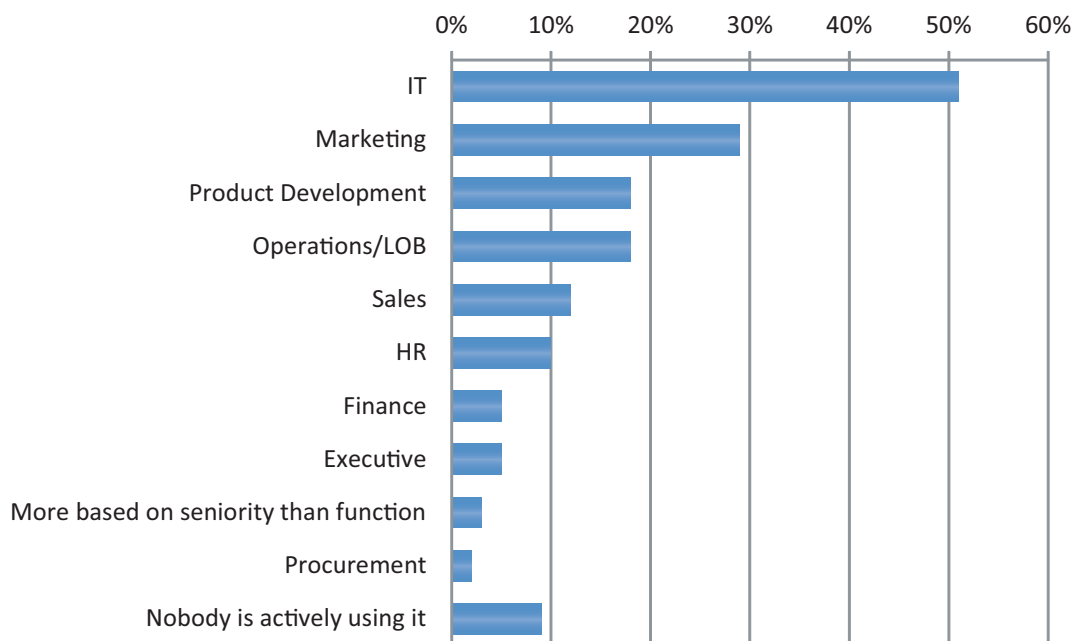
Enterprise 2.0 technologies and social business applications are increasingly being seen as an underlying infrastructure that can be made available within enterprise applications. As a toolset they can also be quickly invoked to implement innovative business processes and activities for product development, HR, sales and line-of-business operations.

Benefits and Issues

Looking at the benefits that users are achieving from social business applications, as we would expect "more knowledge sharing between staff" and "faster responses to queries and questions" come out on top. Posting to bulletin boards and micro-blogs will also result in fewer multi-copy emails, especially those to "all staff." Linking to a single-copy shared document reduces the number of attachments clogging up the email system.

Better innovation and shorter project timescales have each moved up the rankings by three places since last year's report, reflecting more tangible benefits as social business applications are more likely to be included in formal workflows. At the bottom of the graph, we see that the much quoted expectations of the younger generation of employees appear to have little importance when compared to the other more significant business benefits.

Figure 8: What are the THREE biggest benefits you have found from using social business/Enterprise 2.0 in your organization? (N=398)
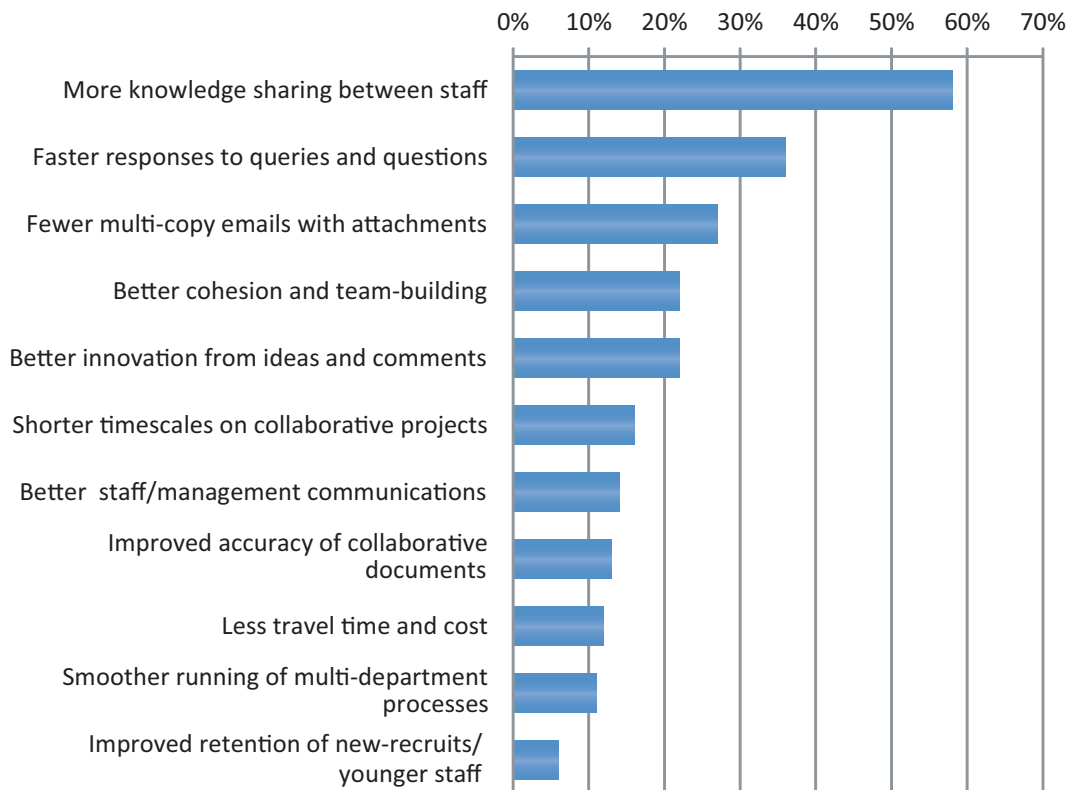
Social business applications are unlike other enterprise applications in both deployment and user acceptance. We should therefore accept that some additional adjustment and management effort may be needed in order to optimize usage and achieve the full benefits. Reluctance of staff to contribute is the biggest issue with our respondents, reflecting a general social behavior where there are many more watchers than players. "Non-involvement of senior staff" has increased its score from 26% to 36% since last year, and "Too much social, not enough business" has moved up from 6th to 3rd.

These two effects are likely to be related. Experience suggests that very light governance of forums and micro-blogs, and a degree of spill-over from Facebook or Twitter behavior, can easily lead to an excess of inconsequential or personal postings. This tends to clutter the site and busy senior managers are less likely to plough through it on a regular basis. In a similar way, attempting to increase staff involvement by mandating regular postings can have the opposite effect, creating an excess of non-useful material for other participants to sift through.

Figure 9: What would you say are the THREE biggest issues you've found with social business/E2.0
applications in your organization? (N=398)
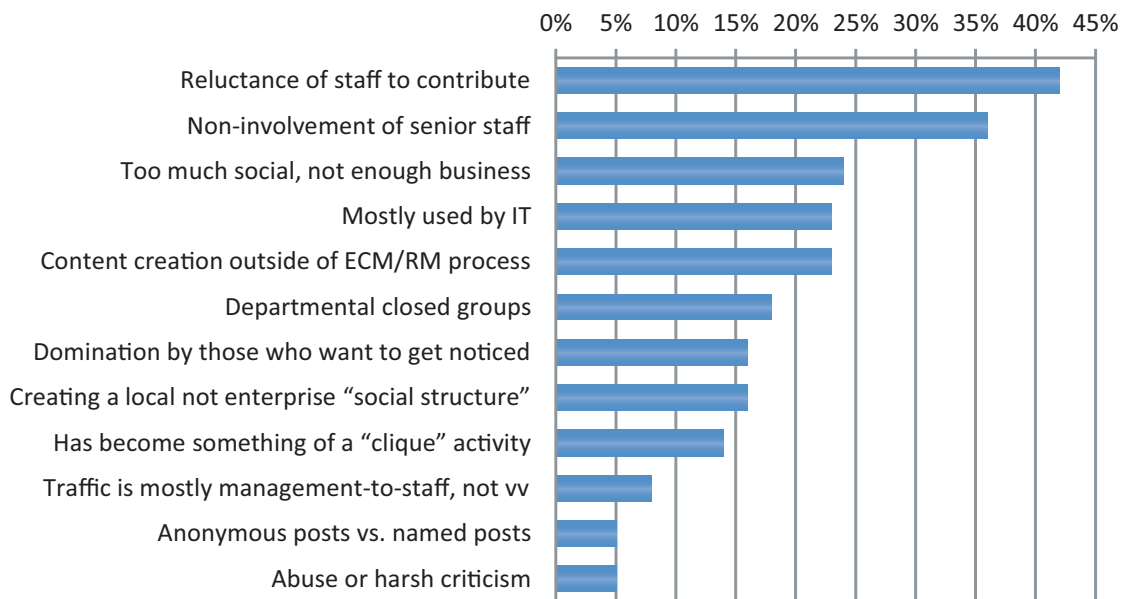
It is worth noting that 23% of the AIIM demographic are concerned that content is being created outside of the ECM/RM process, creating a risk that we will discuss later. Also from these results, it would seem that incidences of misuse or abuse are rare, but there is evidence of a small increase in irritating behavior such as dominant individuals or groups, and over-enthusiastic contributors.

Awareness and familiarity with the technical aspects of social business applications creates a confidence level amongst employees in the IT department that encourages greater participation levels. Until a few years ago, the same was true of public social sites, so we should assume that the business situation will resolve itself in much the same way and wider employee participation will ensue.

Application Experience

As we mentioned earlier, there are many different types of social business platform and they are generally sufficiently flexible or broad-based that they can be used in any number of different ways. It is easier, therefore, to categorize the principle application areas or example use-cases than to evaluate particular product types such as micro-blogs, wikis, forums, etc. For this study, three application areas were chosen, and further research has involved interviews with practitioners in the field as well as the online survey. The detailed results are published elsewhere[4] but we will summarize the key benefit findings here.

Enterprise Q&A

This is defined as "the capability to let people ask questions very broadly (i.e. throughout the company) and answer others' questions." Around 30% of survey participants have such a facility. There are variations as to the degree of categorization of questions, the level of moderation, and in particular, whether staff are rewarded for answering questions by recognition, monetary or otherwise.

As with many social applications, it is difficult to find a suitable metric to measure its benefit. In this case we asked about the source of answers and whether they came from unexpected sources, or from the usual subject experts. 38% of organizations indicated that half or more of the answers posted came from unexpected places within business. This suggests that a previously untapped expertise resource of some size has been brought into the open.

Figure 10: Do answers to questions generally come from expected or unexpected sources?
(N=90 Q&A users, excl. 22 Don't Knows)
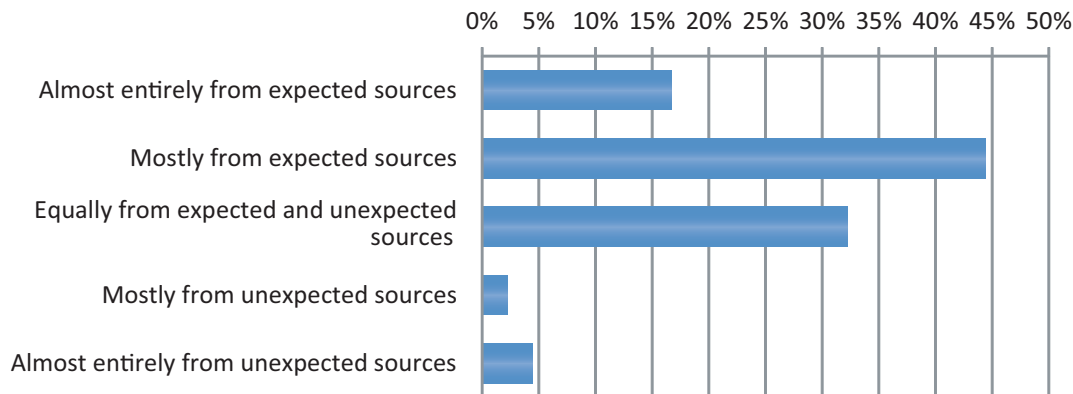
Open Innovation

Defined as "technology to support 'open innovation' or letting people (either inside or outside the company) become involved in innovation processes," 26% of the survey sample felt they had such a process in use. In most cases, these are aligned with existing "suggestion schemes", and are likely to carry some kind of reward or prize. Schemes using social platforms are easier to extend outside the company and 24% do this. The chosen metric for success is the degree to which changes to process or product surfaced through the innovation mechanism. By using Open Innovation platforms, 48% of organizations have successfully surfaced major changes to internal processes and 34% have come up with major changes to external product offerings.

Figure 11: Our open innovation platform has been successful at: (Check all that apply)
(N=84 Innovation users)
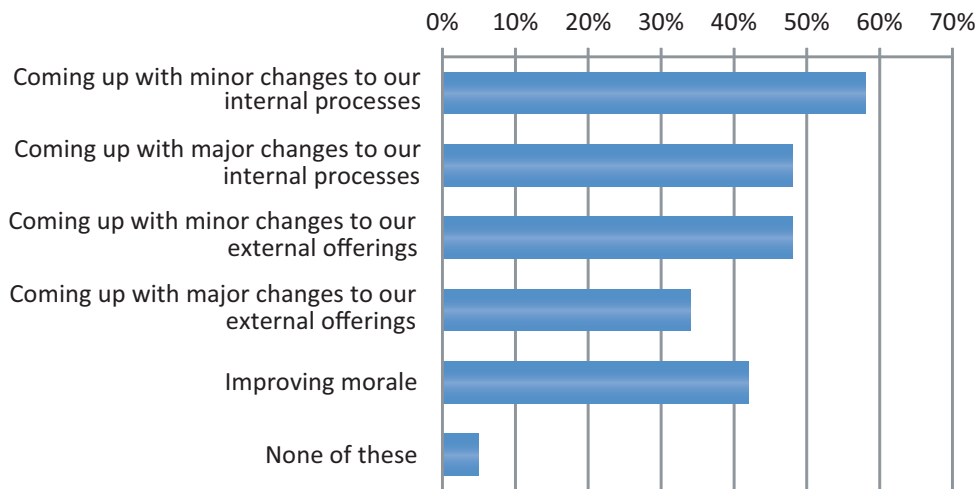
Sales and Marketing Collaboration

This is a more generic use case, chosen because the relationship between sales departments and marketing departments can be notoriously inefficient. We defined it as "an Enterprise 2.0/social business infrastructure that's intended to help marketing and sales work well together." Surprisingly, only 18% of our survey felt they had such an infrastructure in place. As we know from CRM experience, it can be difficult to get sales employees to utilize systems that share their knowledge and enhance team efforts, but acceptance of the systems described is generally good. The metric chosen was somewhat imprecise, but the results of the before and after evaluation are startling.

Based on the view of our respondents, the proportion of organizations where Sales and Marketing staff shared their knowledge "Fairly Well" or "Very Well" jumped from 30% to 77%. Those working well together on process execution jumped from 20% to 63% of organizations.
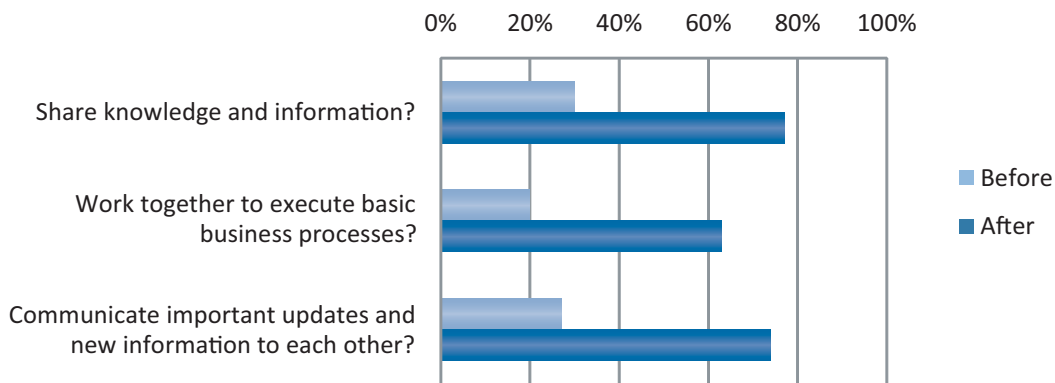
Poor sharing of knowledge dropped from 41% of organizations to just 8%, and poor communication of updates dropped from 21% to 4%.

These example use-cases have shown dramatic benefits despite the difficulty of providing suitable metrics. Uncovering hidden expertise in the business, drawing attention to process or product improvements, and providing a highly beneficial communications channel between Sales and Marketing departments, would be sufficient on their own to justify a social business platform, but similar applications can be very easily and productively rolled out once a suitable business-wide tool-set or infrastructure has been installed.

Governance

By its nature, social business content is often transitory and conversational. However, if it has value in current time, then it is likely to have value for the future, particularly for things like Enterprise Q&A. It is also true that any exchange of business communications can have potential implications for legal discovery, regulatory compliance and employee disputes.

Generally, less than half of the organizations we surveyed are keeping their own internal records or archive of internal social media content types, and more worryingly, even less keep any records of public postings on company Facebook or LinkedIn pages, or "official" Twitter posts. The fact that many of the external social platforms keep long histories is not necessarily a reason for complacency – in fact it raises its own concerns. Use of cloud and SaaS platforms may also restrict the ability to manage one's own records.

Figure 13: Does your organization keep its own history record or searchable archive of what has been published or communicated on the following sites or communications channels? (N=335 "Not Applicable" makes up to 100%)
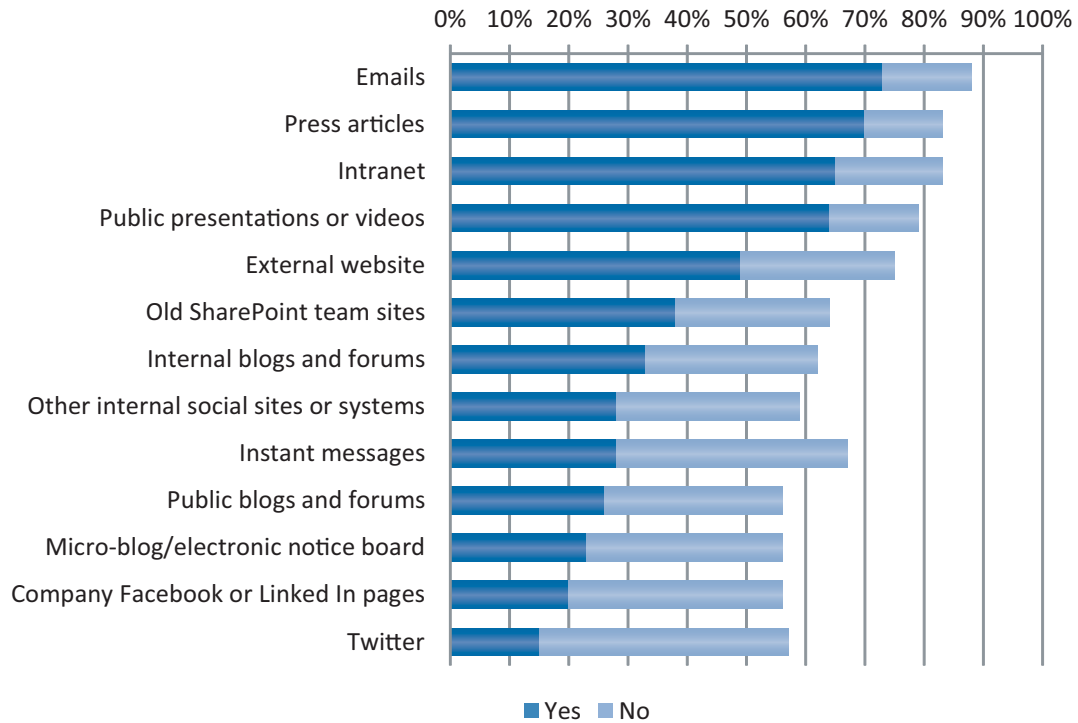
Delivery

Social business applications can be delivered in a variety of ways. Public social sites are invariably SaaS services based in the Cloud and delivered via a browser or mobile interface. Similar services exist for business use. These applications are quick to deploy, are accessible both inside and outside the firewall, and are generally simple to use. Alternatively, server-based applications can be used, and these may be stand-alone or may be provided as modules or extensions to existing ECM or web-content management systems. Server-based applications are easier to link to corporate directories for user security and access levels, and if they are supplied by the ECM vendor, will generally allow straightforward links into the document and records management repositories. As we can see in Figure 14, in general terms, 40% of organizations using any specific application have chosen to use a local application, 35% utilize an infrastructure sourced through their ECM supplier and 25% use SaaS or Cloud platforms.

Figure 14: What does your organization use to deliver these kinds of social/enterprise 2.0/collaborative capabilities? (N=340. "N/A Don't Know" makes up to 100%)
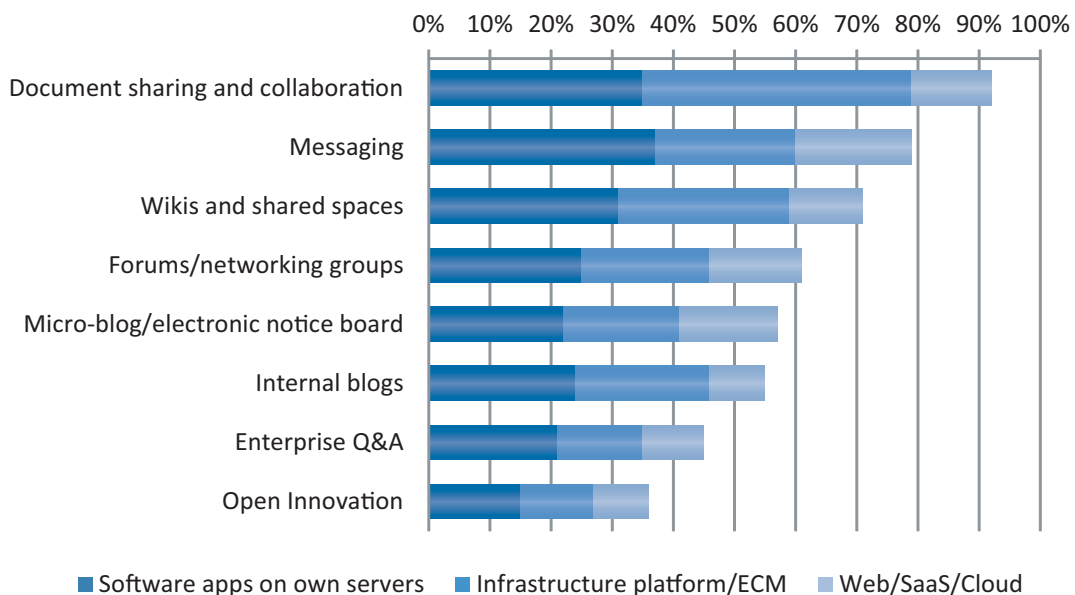
Spend

Growth in social business spend is strong, with a net 15-20% of respondents planning to spend more in the next 12 months across all areas, particularly to create a social business infrastructure compared to dedicated on-server applications. As befits a relatively new area, spending on consultancy and training is also set to increase.

Figure 15: What are your spending plans for the following product areas in the next 12 months compared to the last 12 months (N=314, "Same" listed on bar)

% of Organizations

Legend: ■ Much Less ■ Less ■ More ■ Much More
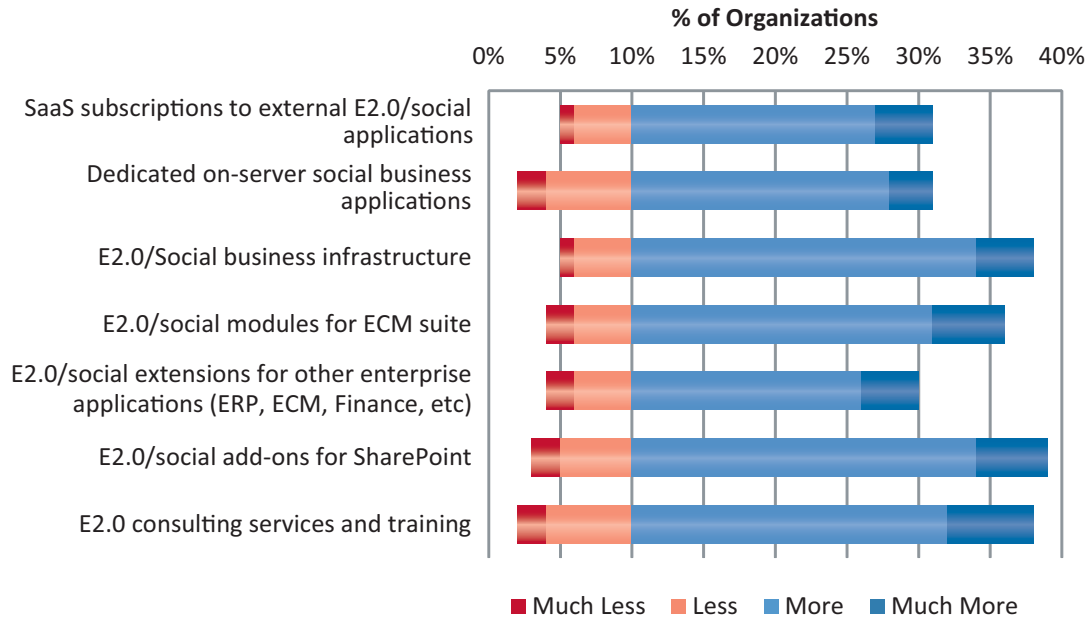
Conclusion and Recommendations

The collective experience of social business applications and Enterprise 2.0 technologies is that they are very beneficial to the business, leveraging expertise and speeding up response. In many organizations they are already firmly implanted as an essential part of the infrastructure. When analyzed against specific business processes or programs, rather than as technologies, the business case can be very readily made. However, for many organizations, social business applications run against the company culture, or are simply not being considered or championed. Organizations generally look to the IT department to initiate and manage social applications, but the quick wins may well be in product development, HR or line-of-business projects. Until social applications are firmly embedded in business processes and applications, management effort will be required to increase employee engagement and participation. This may best be done by example.

Social applications can be delivered in a wide variety of formats. They are natural SaaS/Cloud candidates, but a majority of users currently prefer to use on-server applications, with many utilizing social extensions to existing ECM suites. In either case, consideration needs to be given to long-term access to useful social content, and to the records-keeping implications of potentially non-compliant or discoverable material. The indications are that many organizations are at some risk, particularly as regards record-keeping of content published on external social sites.

Recommendations

■ Social systems used within a business environment present a number of unique challenges compared to other enterprise IT applications. There is benefit in prototyping or experimenting with some applications in order to gain experience, but don't let that be too ad hoc in its objectives and governance.

■ Employees will only participate in social applications if they find them simple, useful, and to an extent, entertaining. Managers and leaders should set scope and style early on.

■ Encourage staff to adopt a business-like attitude to avoid gossip and clutter. If necessary, have a separate social area for birthday congratulations and pet photos.

■ Defining a number of application processes rather than specific platforms will help to achieve early wins. Enterprise Q&A and Open Innovation schemes have shown themselves to be very productive.

■ If there is cross-over as to which applications to use for which purposes or processes, define the scope and set guidance.

■ If you expect staff across the enterprise to take time out to respond to questions and requests for help, set up a measurement mechanism and link it to a rewards system either in status or of monetary value.

■ To avoid the same questions being asked repeatedly, ensure that you have good search and FAQ mechanisms. Consider linking such content into a generic enterprise search portal or ECM system.

■ Think through the consequences of abuse, confidentiality breaches and potentially discoverable material being published on internal systems and set up appropriate response policies and record-keeping mechanisms.

■ Take even more care with material published on external sites. Ensure that all staff are aware of the rules, and consider a sign-off mechanism, or at least a "second pair of eyes" publishing policy.

■ If you have no in-house expertise in social business systems, consider independent training and/or external consultants. AIIM has a number of short online courses on these topics.

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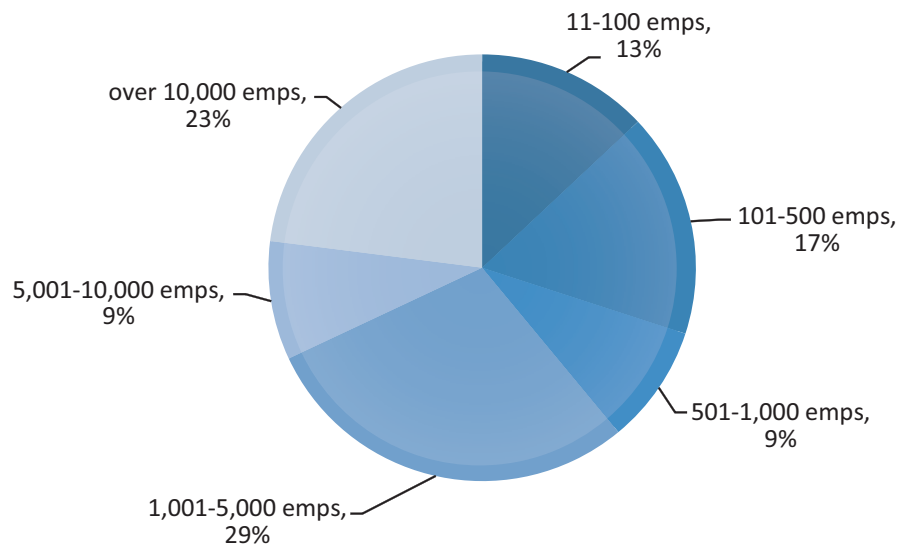www.aiim.org/research/aiim-white-papers

Appendix 1: Survey Demographics

Survey Background

451 individual members of the AIIM community took the survey between July 29, 2011 and August 24, 2011 using a Web-based tool. Invitations to take the survey were sent via email and social media to a selection of the 65,000 AIIM community members.

Organizational Size

Survey respondents represent organizations of all sizes. Larger organizations over 5,000 employees represent 32%, with mid-sized organizations of 500 to 5,000 employees at 38%. Small-to-mid sized organizations with 10 to 500 employees constitute 20%. 48 respondents from organizations with less than 10 employees have been eliminated from the results.

Pie chart — Organizational Size:
- 11-100 emps, 13%
- 101-500 emps, 17%
- 501-1,000 emps, 9%
- 1,001-5,000 emps, 29%
- 5,001-10,000 emps, 9%
- over 10,000 emps, 23%

Geography

56% of the participants are based in North America, with most of the remainder (32%) from Europe.

Pie chart — Geography:
- Mid. East/Africa, 2%
- Rest of World, 4%
- Australasia, 3%
- Europe, 19%
- US, 48%
- UK & Ireland, 13%
- Canada, 8%
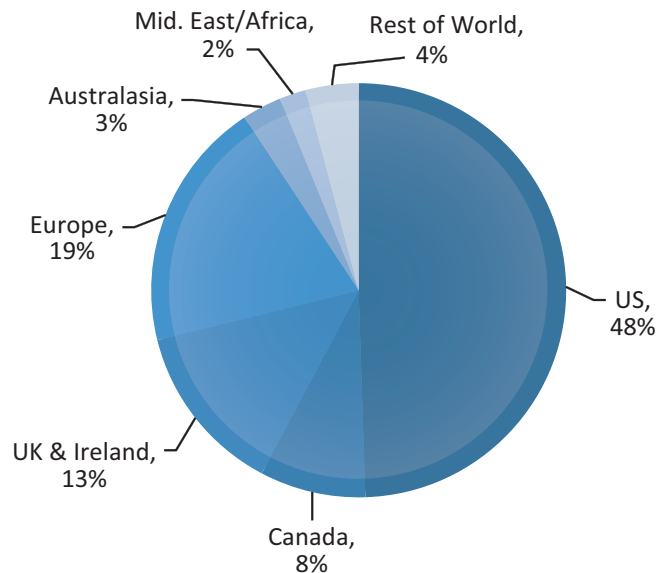
Industry Sector
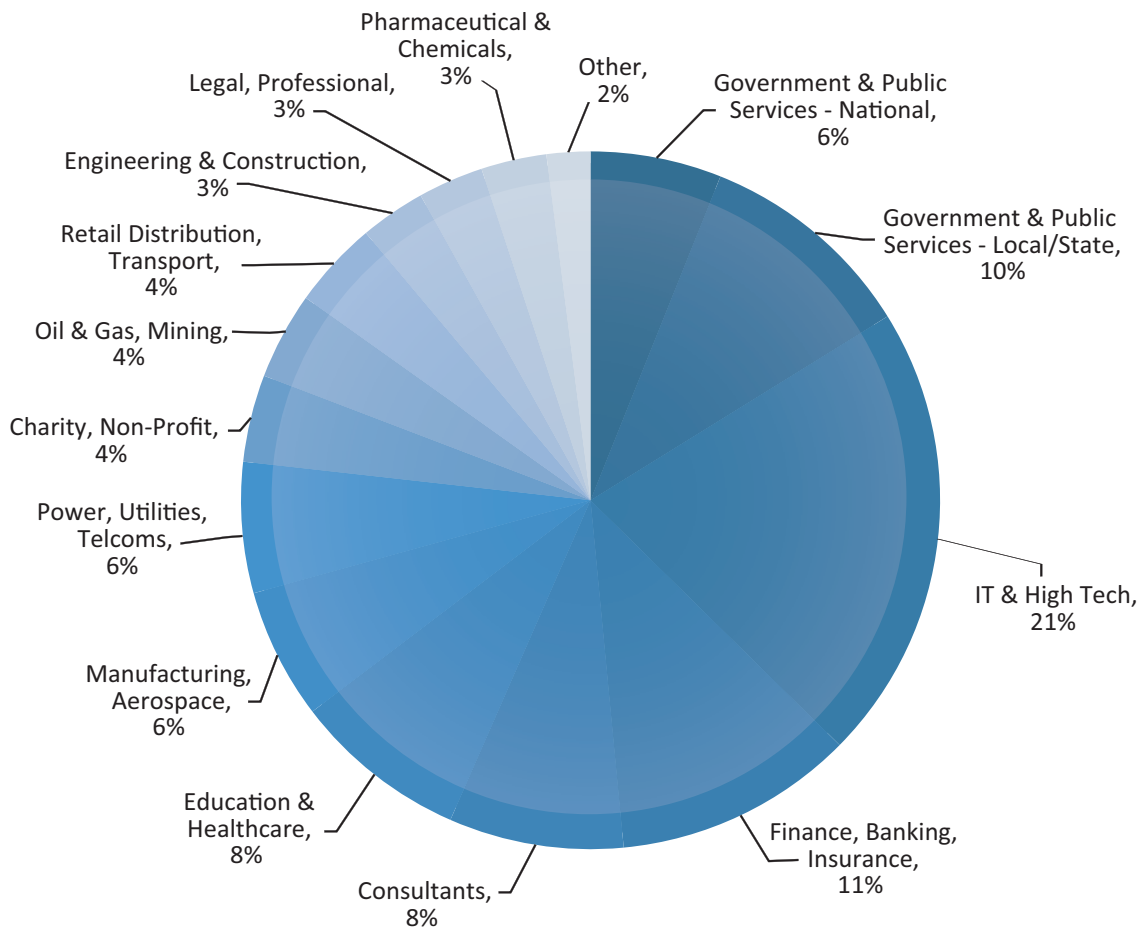
Local and National Government together make up 16%, IT & Tech 21%, Finance, Banking and Insurance represent 11%. The remaining sectors are fairly evenly split.

Pie chart segments:
- Government & Public Services - National, 6%
- Government & Public Services - Local/State, 10%
- IT & High Tech, 21%
- Finance, Banking, Insurance, 11%
- Consultants, 8%
- Education & Healthcare, 8%
- Manufacturing, Aerospace, 6%
- Power, Utilities, Telcoms, 6%
- Charity, Non-Profit, 4%
- Oil & Gas, Mining, 4%
- Retail Distribution, Transport, 4%
- Engineering & Construction, 3%
- Legal, Professional, 3%
- Pharmaceutical & Chemicals, 3%
- Other, 2%

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- success factors for Enterprise 2.0 applications

Appendix 2

What overall comments would you like to make about social business applications in your organization? (Selective).

- It's the common fabric that connects everything we do internally (a small company) as well as with hundreds of customers, technology partners, reseller partners, consultants world-wide. We couldn't function without it.

- It seems to work, but some people are still afraid of it and others "over-use" it which leads often to discussions between the two parties.

- Due to security restrictions, it is doubtful that we will use a social business system.

- It's not the "magic bullet" but can provide great benefits with proper planning and execution.

- We're really just beginning to scratch the surface.

- It's a journey ... people are using LinkedIn and SharePoint without realizing they are entry E2.0 but they would shun the descriptor "Social Business" as being too trivial.

- Needs to be adopted at a board level, and cultural change not technology is the inhibitor.

- It's still in very early stages. We have lots of disconnected efforts, a passionate small user base and very small leadership involvement.

- We have looked into this area and while there is perceived value we have not been able to discern a viable business case to justify investment.

- The use / dependence on E2.0 carries the danger of depersonalizing contact and creates faceless and therefore careless interactions, which in turn affects productivity on one hand and quality of life on the other.

- We've tried it in the past when both the technology and the culture were not mature enough. We're now ready to try again.

- Looking great and promising to become dominant.

- I got answers to my posted Questions in few days, sometimes instantly. Tagging feature makes Q&A searchable too.

- Overall very positive.

- Has improved re-use of information, has facilitated global communications across time zones.

- Culture change needed

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