



## IBM

**ABSTRACT:** One of the largest and most ambitious Enterprise 2.0 (e2.0) initiatives, the IBM case study exemplifies a number of components critical to success when rolling out an intra-enterprise social strategy. The most significant aspect of the IBM case is its scale: nearly 400K employees worldwide will ultimately be included in the social transformation. Second, there was a specific business purpose driving the effort in that IBM employees could better articulate social business strategy if they lived it themselves. Third, the initiative has executive support, as well as a dedicated worldwide team staffed to roll out the 2.0 initiative. Finally, with over three years invested in the effort, the IBM team has developed innovative ways to interact with its communities and share expertise. The team has also overcome some of the critical issues that arise from cultural disparities spanning IBM's large global geographic footprint.

# Selling Social to Sales and Beyond

## Introduction

One of IBM's chief evangelists, Luis Suarez, Knowledge Manager, Community Builder & Social Computing Evangelist, has been part of IBM's social transformation from the beginning. Suarez points out that IBM is no stranger to social tools. As early as 2001, social software became available at the company. But it wasn't until May 2005, when IBM issued its Blogging Policy and Guidelines, that Big Blue saw the external potential for these tools and began to evangelize their use internally.

One of the first areas of focus was to help the IBM sales force understand how the tools worked, how customers were using them, and in turn how to use these tools to generate business revenue. It was necessary to foster meaningful conversations with customers where an IBM salesperson could speak knowledgeably about the tools and demonstrate their business value.

Suarez points out that the secondary audience for IBM's e2.0 effort was the rest of the IBM population. "It means that everything we generate for the sales force, we want to translate to everyone else." By "drinking our own champagne," as Suarez puts it, IBM can raise awareness of the tools and their business value. "It was our mission to position IBM as the showcase for social software."

As such, Suarez is also part of the core team that manages the BlueIQ Ambassador Program, a worldwide community of social software evangelists who energize and enable every IBM employee to use social software,

both internally and externally. The BlueIQ ambassadors support the BlueIQ program's mission to transform IBM into a showcase for the business benefits of social software adoption. The scope of the first BlueIQ program mandate was to analyze and make recommendations to improve the productivity of Software Group (SWG) sales and client technology professionals. The scope of BlueIQ's program has since expanded to help process improvements across the organization, including improving individual, team and organizational productivity, and to add value to clients.

“*The reason we came together, which is actually still our primary goal, is to get our sales workforce on social software tools.*”

## Highlight The Solutions, Not The Tools

Before deciding on solutions, Suarez and his team realized they needed to first accurately identify the problems at hand. Using online surveying tools and face-to-face interviews, they identified three pain points for the sales teams:

- Difficulty finding experts
- Difficulty finding the appropriate information
- Lack of a knowledge-sharing culture

Winning over the sales teams hinged upon proving that social tools could address these pain points. So for each of the three issues, Suarez and his team developed a specific stream activity that would solve each problem. For example, they demonstrated how to use profile tools, build reputations, and network with other users in order to locate topic experts. This focus on actual use cases that dealt with tasks and activities—and not general tool overviews—helped to demonstrate the power of social tools.

Once the solutions were identified, the next step was to develop enablement programs

that would serve to train and coach the sales team. But this led to another challenge—Suarez's small team was not equipped to handle the implementation across such a large group. The fix was, of course, an Enterprise 2.0 solution: a community of evangelists was recruited out of a pool of heavy internal users. What started as 50 dedicated e2.0 enthusiasts grew to more than 250 within the first 6 months and then skyrocketed past 1,300 members within a year.

Expertise spans beyond SWG sales to cross the entire IBM organization. Adoption of social software in sales was just the starting point; the goal was expanded to then drive the adoption of social software through the rest of IBM, in order to accelerate how people work regardless of geographical location, anywhere, any time. The BlueIQ team, along with the community of ambassadors, looked across roles and teams to find valid ways of measuring how business collaboration impacted the business, in order to drive further adoption.

“*We had a kick-off where we sat down and discussed the issues that the sales force were experiencing.*”



## Success Means Many Things

IBM is a large organization. Out of its nearly 400,000 employees, Suarez estimates that there are several hundred thousand using collaborative tools. “The access rates depend on the tool. The way we work, this culture, it depends on how people want to do work.” For example, Suarez points out that the blogging tool gets different usage than its social bookmarking solution. The mix will vary by business and might point to an organization’s proclivity for one form of collaboration over another.

In terms of encouraging collaboration participation, IBM has learned from past initiatives. “As soon as you remove the incentives, you lose the drive.” IBM focuses on the soft benefits of employee collaboration, mainly individual and group productivity.

To support these productivity claims, IBM encourages employees to bring forth anecdotal evidence. There hasn’t been an urgent need to provide hard bottom-line metrics such as Return on Investment (ROI). The extensive anecdotal evidence clearly proves the value of the initiatives—for now; more business-oriented metrics and dashboards are needed and are in development today.

Suarez explains, “We’re measuring how many sales people are using the tools, and how do they feel about the tools.” It’s still about the soft benefits, but that is changing.

**“We want to evangelize everyone. We tried to ensure that people understand that we want them to see that at some point, they will get enabled.”**

“*We ask people to write a blog post about their success story. We have thousands of success stories.*”

## Continuing Cultural Change

Although the initial focus of the program was not on quantifying successes, Suarez and his team recognize that tangible proof is important. They continue to gather anecdotal success stories and record sales “wins” that occurred because of social tools.

But they are also beginning to quantify results. In the last few months they’ve begun the process of analyzing metrics and tracking the number of sales people who use the tools. Through satisfaction surveys, they’ve determined which parts of the program should be continued and what features are needed for future versions.

Internal adoption metrics indicate that social software is hard at work. IBM Connections statistics show significant and growing numbers on internal usage. IBM’s BluePages application provides the basis for Profiles with over 600,000 profiles hosted and over 1 million searches per week. IBM Communities have grown from 2100 to over 36,000 over the past two years. IBM’s blogging platforms host 33,010 blogs, compared with, 16,337 blogs in 2009, an increase of over 50%. Meanwhile, IBM’s internal Activities (light-weight social project management) and internal social file sharing and storage service contain 176,099 unique activities and 239,642 file shares, respectively.

“*We prefer to create traction, generate attention, enable people, and THEN measure.*”



The BlueIQ Ambassadors continue to galvanize all of IBM to adopt social software both inside and outside the firewall. Communication is key to their success. The sharing of their own experiences, on-going education through lunch and learns, and sharing information, key learnings, and use cases in virtual forums, communities, and wikis, along with expanded networks, provides the foundation for social business transformation.

Technology, business and cultural needs fuel change. Email quotas and the need to access information in varied and disparate locations will spur employees to use social software to access critical information quickly and with ease without exceeding their mailbox size or losing data. Viral adoption is growing with IBM

**“Suarez has found that the perception of IBM as a slow and hierarchical organization has already begun to change.”**

and with a top-down approach, executive advocacy for social software is quickly gaining momentum.

Most recently, Sam Palmisano, IBM CEO and President, in his January 2011 IBM Centennial address, encouraged all IBMers to use social collaboration in their day-to-day work.


Through the use of social tools, Suarez is looking forward to changing the view that people outside of the company have of IBM. Since empowering sales people to become evangelists who spread the gospel of social software, Suarez has found that the perception of IBM as a slow and hierarchical organization has already begun to change. As the social collaboration program expands globally, he will be continually challenged to maintain the program on local levels. But he will also make sure that everyone knows that IBM's workforce has shifted to communities and networks and that anyone—internally or externally—can easily navigate through the teams and processes at the company.



Source: Wikipedia

	
<b>Type</b>	Public (NYSE: IBM)
<b>Industry</b>	Computer systems, Computer hardware
<b>Founded</b>	1911 (Endicott, New York)
<b>Headquarters</b>	Armonk, New York, United States
<b>Key People</b>	Samuel J. Palmisano (Chairman, President and CEO)
<b>Revenue</b>	US\$99.870 billion (2010) <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Operating income</b>	US\$19.273 billion (2010) <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Net Income</b>	US\$14.833 billion (2010) <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Employees</b>	426,751 (2010) <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.ibm.com">www.ibm.com</a>
<small><sup>[1]</sup> 2010 Form 10-K, International Business Machines Corporation. United States Securities and Exchange Commission.</small>	



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