



## Driving Value on Both Sides of the Talent Equation

One of the emerging trends in talent management is the growing use of social networking and collaborative tools in the workplace. Senior level managers today can read the tea leaves. They are more amenable than ever to bringing social networking and collaboration tools into the workplace as the world moves to cloud computing, Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) and other related technologies. But to get maximum traction, HR professionals must be ready with a strong business case, and the ever-elusive ROI.

Of course, quantifying ROI and demonstrating business value for those new technology modes of learning and knowledge transfer may seem tricky, but it can be done, and there is more than one way to do it.

It's becoming clear that social collaboration through technology drives value on both sides of the talent management equation. For employers, social collaboration allows the organization to provide new levels of transparency across the workforce, and transform an organizational culture from one of silos to one of sharing and teamwork. For employees, it enables them to showcase their skills and expertise, share knowledge, and provide feedback and recognition to fellow employees.

As social collaboration continues to gain traction, the corporate ladder is being transformed into the corporate lattice. As a result, more organizations are migrating towards matrix-based organizational structures, where hierarchies are blurring and collaboration is critical for driving individual and corporate performance. Key talent processes, such as performance management and leadership development, are become more open and social, where feedback, coaching and development are ongoing, real-time and immediate.

Globalization also is forcing employers to share knowledge and best practices across the organization, while demanding that business leaders have the rapid ability to identify critical skills and talent. Social collaboration puts the power of knowledge in the hands of employees allowing them to openly share their knowledge across a company, interact with colleagues and provide immediate advice and recommendations.

### Measuring and Delivering Business Success

It is all proving to be very powerful stuff, with much upside potential. But even with that apparent game-changing potential, the responsibility for HR and business line leaders who promote social collaboration tools is to measure and deliver ROI and business success.

So how do you effectively measure the value of social networking and collaboration? A good place to start is by examining how HR already measures the efficiency and effectiveness of its overall learning and talent strategies (two processes that are inextricably intertwined), and use some of the same techniques.

For example, develop simple metrics that can tell you how many people are using social media and collaboration tools that are going to be in place. And of those using it, measure how active they are and what they are doing with the tools.

A word of caution here, it might be a good idea to keep the "I" in ROI low at first, reducing the dependence on "R." If the investment is relatively low, then you don't necessarily need to prove "R." Identify incremental versus "big bang" opportunities, with quick wins such as executive blogs or work groups – where the impact is easier to measure.

Part of any strategy for measuring social and collaborative efforts is a focus on proficiency rather than technology itself – try and make sure there is a built-in way to capture and measure productivity gains. Also, identify the potential impact up-front to all business units – Sales, Service, Product Development, HR, etc. Most of all, when measuring, look for synergies and unification – how these pieces can come together in a unified way to improve talent management and, as a result, employee empowerment and engagement.

As most employers already do with learning, provide feedback mechanisms for those who are using social media, and be sure to find ways within these tools to capture knowledge that can prove valuable to the organization. Most of all, try to show

how productivity and enablement are linked to any internal social media efforts.

### No Longer Just a Fad

Today's modern workforce requires a modern approach to learning, performance management, talent management and employee engagement. One way to help get there is by using these exciting social media and collaboration tools.

Of course, collaboration tools already are being used by today's workforces in their everyday lives. They are no longer just a fad. Human Resources has an opportunity to embrace these technologies and supplement their talent management strategies in practical and effective ways for managing and developing high-performing workforces.

But HR can only successfully achieve those goals by measuring and clearly demonstrating the value these tools can bring.

### About the Author

Julie Norquist Roy is vice president of Marketing for Cornerstone OnDemand ([www.cornerstoneondemand.com](http://www.cornerstoneondemand.com)), a learning and talent management software company based in Santa Monica, California.

