Social Project Management:

Engaging the Social Network to Deliver Project Success

A Trilog Group Whitepaper

August, 2012

Executive Summary

Project teams today face increasing pressure to perform, while they at the same time face significant obstacles to that performance. Because of the distributed nature of teams, highly volatile environments, and market pressures, project managers are faced with a dilemma – How do I increase the collaborative capabilities and maximize performance of my team while still maintaining control and oversight?

Project Management 2.0, the use of Web 2.0 technologies to enhance project collaboration and coordination, assisted greatly in enabling teams, especially virtual teams, to collaborate and share information. However, these tools, such as wikis, blogs, online file sharing, while enabling participation and automation, did not assist the project manager in the management of the core project management process, and in many ways made the work of the project manager more difficult.

Social Project Management goes far beyond Project Management 2.0 by recognizing that project teams are only part of the project community, and that a broader project community exists, which is both formal, and informal, and that the *engagement* of that community is the key to building trust and knowledge, to applying expertise, and to getting things done.

> **Project Community –** the entire social network related to a project, including the team, stakeholders, management, and other interested parties

Social Project Management builds on the gains made by Project Management 2.0 by enabling teams to bring their core project management process online. Then, by applying the social networking (i.e. – Facebook) paradigm to the core business process, Social Project Management Software makes the project process visible to everyone, both inside and outside the team. Without sacrificing traditional project management rigor, Social Project Management gives the internal and external project community visibility into the events of the project, as they happen, allowing teams to achieve transparency as to project progress and status, and to enable smarter and more efficient collaboration. Further, using the "re-tweet" paradigm, project teams can publish issues, needs, and questions to the wider corporate (and external) social network, allowing for anyone who is interested to engage socially with the team to assist in accomplishing the project and organization's goals.

The Project Management Imperative

Project teams today face increasing pressure to perform, while they at the same time face significant obstacles to that performance. These obstacles are well known, including the ad hoc nature of teams, constantly shifting project requirements, time pressures for delivery, increasing virtualization of teams across time and space, and the problem of knowledge dissemination across the team. In addition to and because of these challenges, the job of the project manager is becoming more complex. In response to these challenges, project management methodologies, project collaboration technologies, and communications techniques have been developed to help teams to work together, and to assist project managers in shepherding the delivery of projects.

This poses a dilemma for the project manager and management in general, namely, how to manage the team with appropriate rigor, without burdening the team with so much administrative work that project tasks are delayed, while at the same time maintaining team member engagement.

The Problem with Project Management 2.0

In response to project management challenges, project teams have turned to technology to attempt to streamline collaboration. The most visible recent development in technology-enabled project collaboration is the movement called "Project Management 2.0". Project Management 2.0 has been defined in a number of ways, but the basic definition that is shared is that Project Management 2.0 is the use of web 2.0 technologies to enable project teams to better share information, increase collaboration and to empower teams to get things done.

However, it is difficult to define what makes a particular technology a "Project Management 2.0" technology. The most common example used is the "Project Wiki", where all of the team members can update as necessary the tasks required, the status of tasks, project documentation and the like, and blogs have also been proposed as PM 2.0 technology, but other technologies as diverse as Voice over IP (VoIP), internet search engines and wifi have been put forward as PM 2.0 technologies. Because all of these technologies are general purpose technologies, it is hard to define when their use is for "project management", rather than more general collaboration, or simple user enablement.

Although they helped teams to collaborate, web 2.0 technologies came at a price. First, the technologies were islands. Users had to maintain accounts with a variety of providers, project team members might have to use multiple technologies for the same interactions across different projects. Second, many companies could not make use of the "free" web 2.0 applications due to regulatory, privacy or other security & administrative reasons. Companies in this situation would need to provide internally hosted web 2.0 technologies, reducing the cost benefit of utilization. Third, few of these technologies were integrated with the enterprise architecture.

Finally, the project management 2.0 "wave" seems to have left the Project Manager behind. While project collaboration can be significantly enhanced, and rudimentary project task management and tracking is possible, web 2.0 technologies do not address the core challenges that the project manager faces, nor do they assist the project manager in the aggregation of information about the

> Project Management 2.0 allowed teams to collaborate better, but left the project manager behind.

project. In fact, because of their distributed nature, these technologies increase the project manager's difficulty of assessing progress and status.

Project Management 2.0 certainly empowered a project team to collaborate to complete tasks. However, what is needed, and what Social Project Management endeavors to make possible, is the engagement of the full social network of the project community, in order to achieve the project's goals. Rather than focusing merely on the needs of each project team individually, Social Project Management strives to focus on the needs of an organization, by engaging the largest number of appropriate social network ties in accomplishing the goals of all the projects of an organization.

Social Project Management – Engaging the Social Network

It is recognized that to be successful, project teams need to have great people - experts in delivering the project goal. Additionally, project teams need to be able to apply that expertise in the right place, at the right time. Social PM takes this a step further by asking the question: "Rather than relying on the team alone, why not leverage the full expertise of an organization or other social network?"

The impact of social networking platforms such as MySpace, and especially Facebook cannot be denied. These platforms make invisible human social networks

visible. They allow people to share information of both the most important and most trivial natures. They allow people to find information, to find people, and to connect in ways that would have been nearly impossible previously.

Project teams are social entities, embedded in multiple social networks internal and external to the organization. Each member of the team has unique social connections inside and outside the organization. What would happen a project team could tap into those social networks for expertise (and even resource time) to complete their goals? What would happen if a project manager could "see" the social network of her team, and leverage those connections to better communicate with the greater project community?

Opening Lines of Communication

Traditional project management practices create defined and hierarchical communications paths. Social PM recognizes that while these traditional communication and collaboration channels may reduce information and communication overload, they are too slow, filter out important information, and do not allow the right information to get to the right person.

Social PM advocates that, since all projects are social enterprises, impediments to communication must be removed, people must be empowered to get the information they need, when they need it, and be alerted to changes in the project environment from which they must learn. Further, relevant communications should not stop at the boundary of the project community. Where appropriate, project communications should be extended outside the walls of the project team, to access needed expertise, gather and share information, and to engage the wider social fabric of the organization.

Social PM recognizes that the members of the project community need constant access to certain key information including:

1. What is the goal of the project (today)
2. What is the set of tasks required to be completed
3. Who has the skills and knowledge required to complete a task
4. Who is assigned to each task
5. What are the changes happening in our environment that affect the team or the deliverable
6. Where to go to get needed information and assistance
7. Where to share ideas and knowledge

Having access to the key information listed above is every project team's goal, but is difficult to achieve in practice. Project teams often limit themselves (or are limited by others) to looking for those answers within the formal project community. Often, the exact information and expertise needed by a team is available outside the project team, and many times could be leveraged by the project team if it could simply be identified.

Social PM calls for project teams to open the black box of their process and integrate the project into the social fabric of the enterprise. By exposing the project process, the entire organizational (or external) social network can be engaged. *When engaged in this way, the entire social network can, in a sense, be seen as the project team.*

Make Your Entire Social Network Your Project Team

Social PM advocates that the social networking software paradigm should be applied to the project management process. The use of social networking software such as Facebook outside of work has allowed for the creation of durable social networks, where time and distance do not hinder the sharing of ideas, information, and social interaction. However, Social PM software is not the same as Facebook. Where Facebook is structured around the goals of each individual user, and around the self-defined goals of a network of friends, Social PM software is structured around the goals of a project community.

It's about Project Management

Social PM software is first and foremost about facilitating the traditional project management process through extreme communication. In applying the social paradigm to the project management process, the tasks remain the same, but their execution and more importantly their outcome are completely different. It is important to note that while PM 2.0 offers faster execution by streamlining team processes through collaboration, Social PM offers faster execution and better outcome by leveraging the collective knowledge of the wider social network. Let's take a concrete example where a team member submits a newfound issue.

In traditional project management, he will communicate the issue to the Project Manager who would then organize a series of meetings and use different communication

and PM tools to discuss the issue, add a task to the plan, estimate it and assign it to be executed.

In PM 2.0, the team member may post the issue in a PM 2.0 tool, and propose a task be added to the plan to resolve it. He might then request help from someone (or everyone) to estimate that task. Once estimated, the PM can accept the task and allow a team member to self-select himself to complete the task, or assign the task based upon availability.

In Social PM, the team member would submit the issue. The system would automatically broadcast a message to the project community producing a chain reaction through their social connections to reach a subject matter expert (perhaps unknown to the project team) who simply posts a solution that everyone can see. By the time the project manager got notified of the issue, the issue was resolved thanks to collective wisdom of the social network. *Social PM enables the fastest issue resolution and therefore the best possible outcome*.

Table 1: Comparing Three Paradigms

	Traditional PM	PM 2.0	Social PM
Type of Project	Large	Small	Large & Small
Leadership Style	Top Down, Macro	Bottom Up, Micro	Top Down, Macro + Bottom Up, Micro
Communication	Hierarchical	Streamlined Internal Communications	Streamlined communities within larger social fabric promotes strong tie and weak tie communication
Execution Speed	Slow	Fast	Fast

It's about collaboration AND rigor

Project Management 2.0 had it right. Teams should use technology to help them collaborate. But while with PM 2.0 collaboration was enhanced, true project management rigor was challenged. Social PM platforms must provide the collaboration enhancing capabilities of PM 2.0, while enhancing the ability of the project management team to maintain the level of rigor required by its organization or client.

It's about empowering the entire team

With Social PM, every member of the team, regardless of role must be empowered. This takes the form of allowing team members to know what they are expected to be working on, and to get those things done. It takes the form of a Project Manager being able to see what is going on in as real time a process as possible. It takes the form of a project stakeholder being able to "check up" on the project and to

take the pulse of the project team. Each of these forms requires a different view into the project information.

Social PM software must provide the ability for project community members to see the information that is most relevant to them, in the format that is most conducive to each community member's goal. PM 2.0 did this for some roles in the team, but not for all.

It's about integration

Finally, Social PM is about integrating the project into the social ecosystem of the organization. PM 2.0 platforms were inherently disconnected from the organization. Whereas they might integrate with an organization via email, they became separate places to go to collaborate and share information. Large project communities might not all have access to the platform, nor understand how to use it to find the information they require. This results in disintegrating project teams from the collaborative and social fabric of the enterprise.

Social PM software should be able to, as seamlessly as possible, integrate with the core collaboration platforms of the organization. Whether that is merely email and calendaring, or a full-fledged social business platform, the Social PM software should be part of that place, and not require users to go to another, different location for project management and collaboration. In fact, Social PM software should be integrated to the point that users simply see it as part of the social technology fabric of the organization.

Only by integrating Social PM software into the wider social fabric of the organization can the promise of Social PM be realized. Without integration, the social networks of projects are limited to the formally recognized project community. Without integration, the Project Manager is hindered in his ability to broadcast needs and to find available expertise to complete tasks. Without integration, Social PM software is just another island for execution. A useful tool, but limited in its ability to maximize project team performance.

Trilog Group: Thought Leader on Social Project Management

IBM knows social business and Trilog Group knows social project management - ProjExec the Social PM platform. Having been recognized multiple times by IBM as the leader in collaborative project management solutions, Trilog Group has raised the bar

with its latest release of ProjExec, by adding social collaboration into project management tools and processes.

Trilog Group's ProjExec includes a unique social feature – the Project Wall – that makes ProjExec infinitely more than a simple reporting tool. The Project Wall lets team members easily share what they know and what they are working on using an intuitive and enjoyable Facebook-like social environment to do work. The Project Wall enables project participation. Like popular social media tools, The Project Wall enables spontaneous sharing of knowledge, spontaneous creation of connections and communities of interest, spontaneous identification of and learning from subject matter experts – all in the context of project work, tasks and activities.

ProjExec seamlessly integrates with IBM social business platforms, including IBM Connections and the IBM SmartCloud for Social Business (SaaS). Whichever IBM platform you use, ProjExec provides the integrated, rigorous social project management platform you require. ProjExec plugs into your Enterprise collaborative environment to complement existing Enterprise social and collaborative tools and services with tightly integrated and robust project management functionality that accommodates extremely large and complex projects with ease. ProjExec respects the business constraints, security concerns and business controls that are critical to any enterprise, large or small - all while leveraging the IBM social collaboration infrastructure to extend your enterprise and stay secure.

Most importantly, ProjExec Live for IBM SmartCloud enables the project team to interact on core project deliverables outside the boundaries of the project, engaging your entire organization and social business network to deliver.

A demonstration of ProjExec Live for IBM SmartCloud is available on YouTube at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2B4lSnq7D0k

To learn more, please visit http://www.triloggroup.com or the IBM SmartCloud for Social Business http://www.ibm.com/cloud-computing/social/us/en/integratedapps#scsb-project-management