

# Social Networks in Enterprises



Software Group



Welcome to the podcast on the topic of “Social Networking”. Tony Wehrstein, Technical Sales Specialist in the Lotus field, explains to us the meaning, merits, limits and dangers of social networking. The interview was conducted by Christian Achermann.

**Christian Achermann:** “Tony, could you tell us a little about yourself and about your function here at IBM?”

**Tony Wehrstein:** “I am the technical sales specialist for the Lotus brand for IBM Switzerland. Here I support the sector in the German speaking part of Switzerland, which is about 1800 potential customers, and I am responsible for technical enablement, questions about architecture and the deployment.”

**Christian Achermann:** “How do you personally assess the significance of “Social Networking” in today’s working environment?”

**Tony Wehrstein:** “It is not possible to imagine today’s working environment without “Social Networking”, as when we consider the available knowledge within the company, only 10-15% of this know-how is actually on paper or stored in some form. The vast majority, i.e. 85%, is in peoples’ heads or is stored somewhere via the networks, and it is exactly these networks that need to be tapped.”

**Christian Achermann:** “What are the advantages of a large social network?”

**Tony Wehrstein:** “Well firstly, I don’t agree that it needs to be large. What is important is that with my profile, I can find like-minded people within the social network; this need not be many people, but they must be the right ones. The more exactly my profile agrees with that of another person, the more likely it is that we share the same interests and can exchange and extend information. This benefiting from the experience of others is the decisive factor.”

**Christian Achermann:** “Which prerequisites are there for the setting up and functioning of such social networks?”

**Tony Wehrstein:** “Social networks only function when the participating persons are motivated to share their data. This means, each social networking piece of software must create some sort of motivation so that the people really want to enter the data. The motivation for each individual can be completely different, but it must be present; without this it will never work.”

**Christian Achermann:** “Have you already come up against cultural barriers?”

**Tony Wehrstein:** “Yes, there are indeed cultural barriers, which are not especially related to the culture, culture group i.e. country of origin, but are culture barriers in the sense of age differences. There is a tendency for younger people to undertake this profiling noncritically and to disclose a great deal about themselves so that the profile is as precise as possible, whilst, what I’ll call the older generation, without wishing to seem ageist, are rather skeptical with respect to disclosing their personal data over a network. There are also differences in networks dealing with China. There it is difficult to undertake this self-profiling as there may be sanctions to be reckoned with. Here there is the problem that the state always reads the entries. So it is sometimes not really free interests that are reflected there, but the focus is rather on the company’s interests or the content of the interests. This is supported!”

**Christian Achermann:** “Can you identify other limits of social networking?”

**Tony Wehrstein:** “There are legal limits, through which a state would like to control what happens in such social networks, or there may be networks via which organized criminals exchange information in the botnet. Botnets are quasi kidnapped personal PCs through which spam mails are distributed. It is necessary to control those parts which work with criminal resources via the network.”

**Christian Achermann:** “Let’s move on to another topic. Is there a recognizable tendency that these new methods of communication, such as for example blogs or these community pages, are replacing classical communication via e-mail?”

**Tony Wehrstein:** “Replacing them? They create their own type of communication. I’ll quote a very prominent IBMer, Luis Suarez, with his Web 2 theory in which he says: “I don’t need mail; I can do without mail completely.”

Everything that happens that concerns me, takes place in blogs and on Web sites." These social networks, and these blogs and this information can help in that I need to pack far less into mails. Mail will certainly not be dispensed with within the next 20 to 30 years, and it will not be possible to suppress it completely, because the generation that grew up with it as the primary medium will hang on to it. However, I do think that we will use these social networks and the information contained therein far, far more to obtain information and know-how."

**Christian Achermann:** "What personally fascinates you about the whole topic of social networking?"

**Tony Wehrstein:** "Well, that's relatively easy to say. Through social networking here in IBM, I have got to know and gained access to people who I would never have met or contacted, and that despite working in India or South Africa or China, have the same interests about which we can profitably exchange information. This enables me to act differently locally, and whatever I can pass on to the local company customers, to refer to what I said at the beginning, I can put into an international context.

**Christian Achermann:** "Many thanks for your remarks Tony."



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