The Business Value Of Social Content

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Introduction

Collaboration is a critical investment for many organizations looking to drive competitive advantage by better arming knowledge workers with information, access to expertise, and the ability to act collectively on trusted content. Forrester data shows that over 50% of organizations have implemented or are expanding their implementation of packaged collaboration software, which Forrester defines as tools like email, document collaboration, workspace technology, and enterprise social software. And close to 50% have implemented or plan to specifically implement social solutions like blogs, wikis, and activity streams. While the strategy remains valid, the challenge of driving user adoption of new and different tools can diminish time-to-business value. One reason for the poor adoption rates is that users do not know which tool is appropriate for certain tasks or circumstances. The boundary between document collaboration and social networking tools is particularly confusing to users. IBM has engaged Forrester Consulting to determine if a solution that contextually integrates enterprise social and document collaboration will lead to better and faster adoption and hence drive higher value of all collaboration investments that span both content and document collaboration. The results of that research are provided in this document.

This IBM-commissioned profile of North American enterprise social and collaboration technology decision-makers evaluates adoption of social and collaboration technologies and the value of integrated solutions based on Forrester's own market data, and a custom study of the same audience.

Overall Investment In Collaboration Is High

According to Forrester's Forrsights Software Survey, Q4 2012, over 50% of organizations (51%) have implemented or are expanding their implementation of packaged collaboration software (see Figure 1). Another 23% are planning to implement collaboration software. This shows the widespread adoption of a mature technology. The drivers behind collaboration investments tend to focus on four basic outcomes:
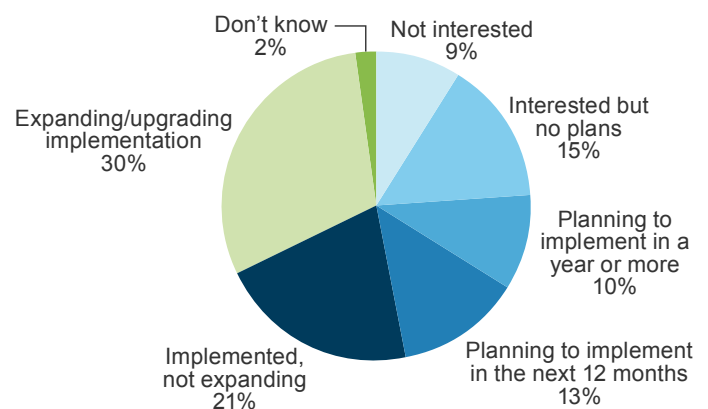
› **Better visibility into information reduces rework and improves business outcomes.** With the goal to better manage content and information for reuse and capturing

knowledge, organizations are investing in document collaboration and enterprise social solutions to move critical information out of email and into repositories designed to allow more efficient and effective collaboration by delivering context through social content queues (e.g., tags, downloads, likes, follow, etc.). Better access to and management of existing content can drive better sales and customer service outcomes and reduce rework cost across the entirety of an organization.

› **Ubiquitous access to information when and where business users need it.** Just as information needs to be managed in the appropriate systems to make it discoverable, it also needs to be available to users in a consistent format across all relevant devices, with a particular emphasis on ubiquitous mobile access. Access to critical information in the right time and in the right format can lead to tangible business outcomes, like making the sale or providing the right customer service "now" instead of "later."

› **Better ability to locate expertise.** A key driver of new collaboration technology, including document collaboration and enterprise social, is better association of expertise through identification of authorship and community-based recognition of skills. Again, email as the

FIGURE 1
Adoption Plans: Collaboration Software

"What are your firm's plans to adopt the following packaged (not custom) business applications?"
(Collaboration software)

Don't know 2%
Not interested 9%
Interested but no plans 15%
Planning to implement in a year or more 10%
Planning to implement in the next 12 months 13%
Implemented, not expanding 21%
Expanding/upgrading implementation 30%

Base: 565 North American enterprise IT decision-makers
Source: Forrsights Software Survey, Q4 2012, Forrester Research, Inc.

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dominant tool in use today for collaboration does not allow this level of discovery. Access to the right expert or experts can be a critical driver of optimal business outcomes.

› **The ability to drive collective action.** Another driver is the ability to move decision-making from a few key individuals and better leverage the collective intelligence of the broader organization. Enterprise social solutions allow a wide array of voices across geographic and organizational boundaries to collectively refine and drive decision-making. Sales, customer service, and new product development in particular are in the midst of revolutionary change with the advent of socially driven collective action.

Enterprise Social And Document Collaboration Are Hot Areas For Investment
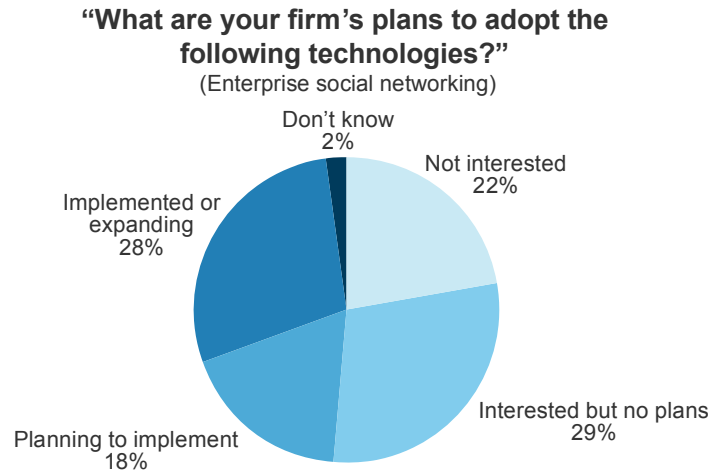
Many of the overall goals for collaboration investments are supported by moving content and communications out of email, which was never designed for broad sharing, and into platforms that are better suited to support the needs of today's knowledge workers. Document collaboration and enterprise social solutions play a particularly compelling role in the technology landscape. And investment in both has been strong. Adoption of social networking tools in particular is increasing. According to the Forrsights Budgets And Priorities Tracker Survey, Q4 2012, 46% of organizations have implemented or plan to implement social networking tools (see Figure 2). An additional 29% are interested in adopting.

Email Continues To Be The Tool Of Choice, Hindering Business Value

While reaching the strategic goals associated with collaboration requires broad investment, it also has traditionally required a leap of faith; that users would change their habits and adopt the newly provisioned technology solutions.

The unfortunate reality is that despite the investment in social and collaboration solutions, they are not widely adopted by workers. Forrester data shows that only 26% of North American enterprise information workers use document sharing sites, and a mere 11% use internal social networks (see Figure 3). Most of the collaboration in the

FIGURE 2

Adoption Plans: Enterprise Social Networking Solutions

"What are your firm's plans to adopt the following technologies?"
(Enterprise social networking)

- Don't know 2%
- Not interested 22%
- Interested but no plans 29%
- Planning to implement 18%
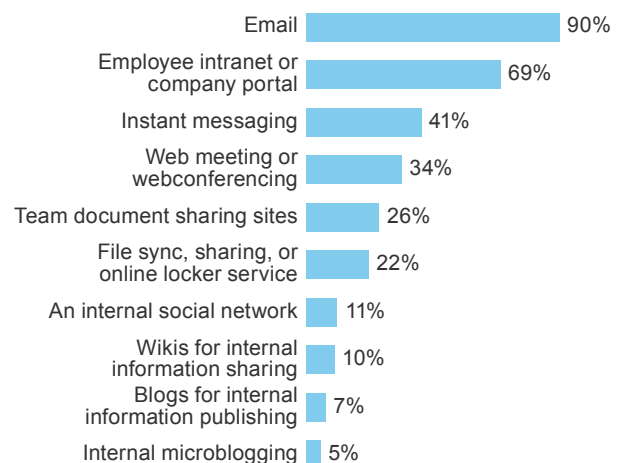- Implemented or expanding 28%

Base: 772 North American enterprise IT decision-makers

Source: Forrsights Budgets And Priorities Tracker Survey, Q4 2012, Forrester Research, Inc.

FIGURE 3

End User Adoption Of Social And Collaboration Technologies

"Which of the following other applications or services do you use on a computer for work?"

- Email 90%
- Employee intranet or company portal 69%
- Instant messaging 41%
- Web meeting or webconferencing 34%
- Team document sharing sites 26%
- File sync, sharing, or online locker service 22%
- An internal social network 11%
- Wikis for internal information sharing 10%
- Blogs for internal information publishing 7%
- Internal microblogging 5%

Base: 1,219 North American enterprise information workers

Source: Forrsights Workforce Employee Survey, Q4 2012, Forrester Research, Inc.

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workplace is still taking place over traditional channels. In fact, email still leads the pack in usage with 90%. Given that many of the goals associated with collaboration initiatives hinge on moving workers out of email and into technologies that are fundamentally better suited to knowledge worker empowerment, this trend is particularly concerning.

Users Are Frustrated By Multiple Tools And Lack Of Mobile Support

If email is fundamentally not suited for driving optimal results for key collaboration goals then why do better suited tools continue to suffer from poor adoption? Certainly familiarity with the email experience is a major factor, and was cited as an inhibitor to adoption of "competing" tools by 58% of respondents (see Figure 4). However, the fact that the new tools that are being introduced are all different, with different interfaces, and are not integrated with one another also was cited by 58% of respondents. Another highly correlated issue, that the abundance of new tools leaves users confused as to what to use and when, came in at 47%. Lack of support on mobile devices was an issue to 45%. Clearly, a lack of a holistic strategy that takes into account the highly interdependent nature of the tools creates challenges to driving critical adoption.

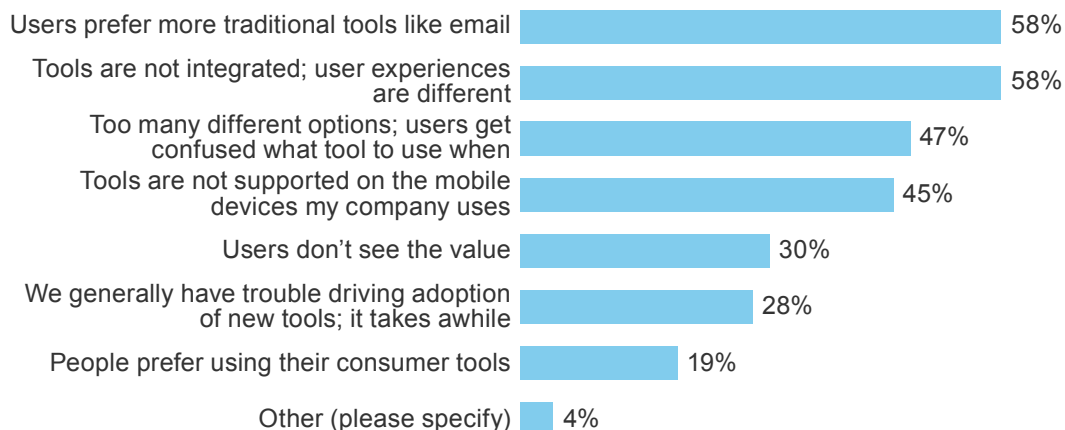## An Integrated Strategy Is Considered Better For Users

That critical interdependence of tools is particularly acute across document collaboration and enterprise social. The fact that the two critical workloads have traditionally been provisioned independently, often with solutions from different vendors with very different user experiences, presents significant challenges because:

› **Content development is inherently a social endeavor.** Sixty-six percent agree or strongly agree that developing content is a social activity (see Figure 5). Access to existing assets and expertise allows for the highest quality content development. The ability to access social capabilities from within a content management environment creates the necessary technical foundation.

› **Social interactions often require critical content for support.** Eighty-one percent agree or strongly agree that content supported with social interactions as an integrated solution is the preferred user experience. In the course of business-centric social activities, the ability to seamlessly surface relevant content in the context of the interaction can dramatically decrease time-to-decisions and increase quality.

FIGURE 4
Numerous Factors Inhibit Adoption, Including Lack Of Integration

"What are some of the factors that inhibit adoption of collaboration and enterprise social tools in your organization?"
(Select all that apply)

Users prefer more traditional tools like email	58%
Tools are not integrated; user experiences are different	58%
Too many different options; users get confused what tool to use when	47%
Tools are not supported on the mobile devices my company uses	45%
Users don't see the value	30%
We generally have trouble driving adoption of new tools; it takes awhile	28%
People prefer using their consumer tools	19%
Other (please specify)	4%

Base: 53 North American enterprise collaboration and enterprise social technology decision-makers

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of IBM, October 2013

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"How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?"

Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know
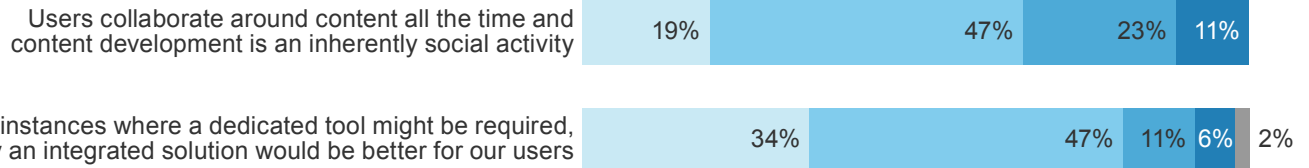
Users collaborate around content all the time and content development is an inherently social activity	19%	47%	23%	11%
There are instances where a dedicated tool might be required, but generally an integrated solution would be better for our users	34%	47%	11% 6%	2%

Base: 53 North American enterprise collaboration and enterprise social technology decision-makers

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of IBM, October 2013

An Integrated Approach Can Drive Significant Value

When presented with the possibility of a solution that integrates document collaboration and social capabilities, a mere 4% responded that it would not help their organization (see Figure 6). In contrast, 60% responded that it would allow better access to information and expertise, and 60% said it would drive better business results. Fifty-seven percent responded that it would help in providing better customer service. Two trends emerged that drive further consideration in driving adoption and the accompanying business value:
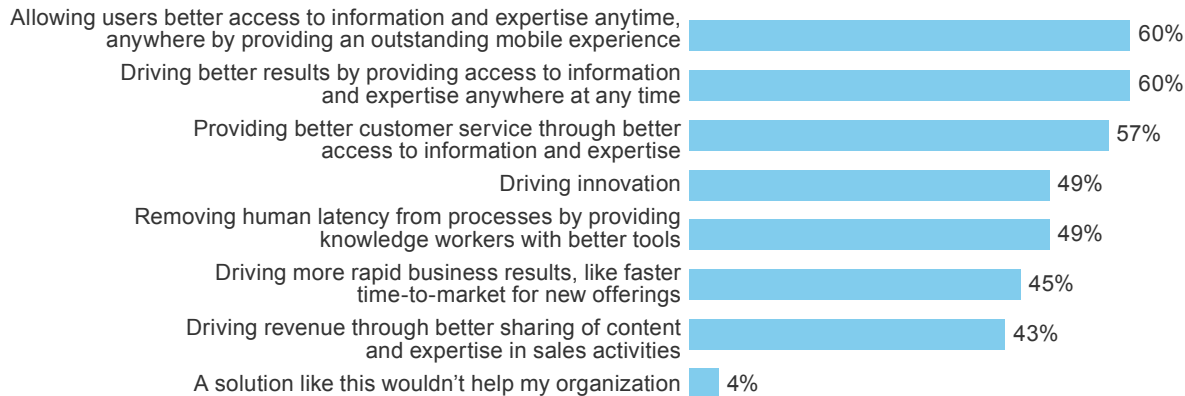
›	**Focus on a holistic and ubiquitous user experience.** This approach ensures that users are not confused by the multitude of products. It also drives further value by extending solutions to mobile devices and making the business benefits "always available." It reduces training costs associated with multiple interfaces and user experiences and better addresses adoption from busy workers that simply don't have time to become familiar with new tools. Lastly, if done with an open standards approach, e.g., HTML5, Web 2.0, and CMIS, businesses can extend out-of-the-box function to address application-specific use cases independent of device, platform, or operating system.

›	**Business value trumps all.** Organizations align success of enterprise social and document collaboration with identified business value like improved customer service, higher revenue, and processes that execute more quickly and efficiently with better results.

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FIGURE 6

A Combined Social And Document Collaboration Solution Can Drive A Wide Array Of Business Benefits

"Where could you see value in your organization for an integrated content, collaboration, social solution?"
(Select all that apply)

Allowing users better access to information and expertise anytime, anywhere by providing an outstanding mobile experience	60%
Driving better results by providing access to information and expertise anywhere at any time	60%
Providing better customer service through better access to information and expertise	57%
Driving innovation	49%
Removing human latency from processes by providing knowledge workers with better tools	49%
Driving more rapid business results, like faster time-to-market for new offerings	45%
Driving revenue through better sharing of content and expertise in sales activities	43%
A solution like this wouldn't help my organization	4%

Base: 53 North American enterprise collaboration and enterprise social technology decision-makers

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of IBM, October 2013

Conclusion

The goals for collaboration investments of better access to information, expertise, and collective action remain not only valid, but crucial to long-term business viability. With that in mind, consider the following in developing a high business value collaboration strategy:

› **The intersection of document collaboration and enterprise social holds significant potential.** This alignment is particularly critical at the intersection of document collaboration and enterprise social, which are highly correlated in the minds of users and have traditionally been arbitrarily separated across multiple solutions. The distinction is often arbitrary and based on existing investments. By leveraging the foundational capabilities of an enterprise social collaboration platform with embedded content management capabilities, corporate content is made available for use across the enterprise, thereby helping the organization to drive improved decision-making and business results.

› **Users prefer an integrated approach to collaboration.** The results of this research unambiguously indicate that throwing new tools at users will create confusion and drive them back to the familiarity of email. Ensure that your solution is straightforward and easy for users to understand with minimal switching between applications. Key critical functions that support document collaboration like relevant activity streams, community input in the form of conversations and ratings, following, and others should be thoroughly integrated into the document collaboration experience. Likewise, enterprise social activities that are supported by documents should not require switching the separate application to access key functionality like metadata, search, and library services. Lastly, the user experience must be consistent and familiar across all devices to drive optimal adoption.

› **Align new product acquisitions to support simple and ubiquitous access to content and expertise.** Create a collaboration strategy that emphasizes more functionality through fewer products. New functionality should be tested against this strategic goal.

› **Adoption of new collaboration solutions still lags expectations.** Let's be clear, the biggest impediment to driving value from collaboration is not lack of investment, it's lack of adoption. Forrester data supports this and you should provision all technology investments with an eye toward what is required to drive usage.

› **Change management is critical.** Be cognizant of the fact that what may be crystal clear to you may not be to the users — this will ultimately drive the success of these initiatives. Be prepared to look users in the eye and convince them that this change will benefit them and the organization in the form of identified business value.

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Methodology

This Technology Adoption Profile was commissioned by IBM. To create this profile, Forrester leveraged its Forrsights Software Survey, Q4 2012, Forrsights Budgets And Priorities Tracker Survey, Q4 2012, and Forrsights Workforce Employee Survey, Q4 2012. Forrester Consulting supplemented this data with custom survey questions asked of 53 North American enterprise social and collaboration technology decision-makers. The auxiliary custom survey was conducted in October 2013. For more information on Forrester's data panel and Tech Industry Consulting services, visit www.forrester.com.

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