

Don't view social as a bad thing

With recent statistics showing that the South African workforce is at its most unproductive since 1967, companies are under pressure to turn the tide. Gys Kappers, CEO of Wyzetalk, takes a closer look at the issue.



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Feature-rich devices, multiple technology platforms, easy-to-access software, integrated enterprise platforms and a myriad rich apps have elevated IT's role within the business. This proliferation of technology also means that decision makers are often throwing technology at the problem and expecting a miraculous resolution to a business challenge. Technology tools can certainly improve productivity and enable collaborative and faster processing (which makes it cost effective), but the basic business principles of people, processes and communication are still very much needed.

What is behind the low productivity numbers? Kappers believes that one only needs to look at how much time the average employee spends on administrative duties to realise the seriousness of the problem. "Reading and responding to email, finding the right information needed to do your job and the right people to complete a task with are all taking up massive amounts of time that could best be spent being productive."

Productivity has increased

A study shows that Americans spend up to nine hours a day?, a week? on digital media including browsing the web, email and social sites. A Microsoft survey found that 46% of workers say that their productivity has increased because of them using social media in the office.

Social media tools are used excessively by customer and marketing teams to monitor customer service (do we still need a call centre with Facebook or Twitter?), understand customer sentiment, accumulate big rich consumer data to analyse, gain valuable product or offering feedback and to gather new product requirements.

"We see it every day, companies are grappling with factors like poor communication, inhibiting silos, duplication of effort

and expenses, low productivity, a global competitor threat and the need to respond much faster to consumer needs for product innovation," commented Kappers. "This is coupled with the expectations for real-time feedback and a range of smart devices that make anywhere anytime access a reality; surely we should be more productive."

McKinsey research reveals some of the most startling insight, social business software technologies could be the most powerful tools yet developed to increase the productivity of high-skill knowledge workers - the kinds of employees that are, firstly, difficult to attract to your business and then retain, that cost you a lot but are the same one's that drive innovation and growth for your business.

"Social media has created a culture of openness, sharing and collaboration. People share information freely using the likes of Twitter and Facebook, which often translates to a similar mindset in the workplace. With millennials making up a significant number in the workforce we need to bring about this change in the way we work," added Kappers.

Company-wide vision

While technology could create the spark for change, there still needs to be a company-wide vision and culture to bring about a productivity drive that transcends simply using technology or spending less time on email.

"Once the strategic thinking and organisational will is there for change, the platform used becomes an important - even critical - component. It is with this in mind that we developed Wyzetalk, a communication and collaboration tool that mirrors social behaviour, but makes it all about the business," said Kappers.

"More and more corporates in SA are grappling with factors like ineffective communication, pressure to innovate, and growing disparity in worker satisfaction. Our advice is simply, don't view social as a bad thing, organisations can harness the spirit of transparency, communication that gets read and teamwork or collaboration that undoubtedly increases productivity that positively impacts bottom line results," concluded Kappers.

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