London Business School

Managing Organisational Behaviour
C108 A SPR13
Networks & Power Brokers

How to make everyone in your company a Power Broker

Networks matter. Your business or career can live or die by them. If more employees acted as if they were powerbrokers – they would be more connected to their customers, suppliers and others in the office.

How to make everyone a powerbroker? Easy - just channel their networking and creativity for the company's own good. Harness the power of modern day networking and your businesses can reap the benefits that might currently be undermining productivity in the workplace through Facebook or YouTube, costing an estimated $650bn a year.[1] The return could be huge as people share insights, ideas and gather information from suppliers, or share new innovations and test them with customers.

Today, employees are always on. The more senior members have BlackBerry's that buzz, and younger members are tweeting to their heart's content. And it's increasingly so: This younger generation is also more connected than any other – effectively increasing the number of 'nodes' they are connected to, and thus empowering them as power brokers. Think that Sally in Sales seems to be connected to all 5 VP's in the office? How about Mark in Marketing who has 5,532 followers on twitter. Globally.

As we become more connected – managers need to embrace this change and seek ways to genuinely encourage employees to share and disseminate information. Beware this at your peril: Annoy your employee or customer and you'll be trending on twitter in an instant.

Internal Social Networks Increase Workplace Productivity[2]
Eliyahu Federman
Posted January 28, 2013

Access to social media is costing employers an estimated $650 billion a year. Blocking sites, installing expensive network monitoring software, and micromanaging employees doesn't work. What is the solution?

The *NY Post* case-studied our company's approach of harnessing social media energy through internal social media platforms that benefit the employer and foster a more engaged workforce:

A Miami-based e-commerce company, 1saleaday.com, got fed up with its workers wasting away precious minutes on social media …

After worker morale plummeted, management decided to introduce a social network just for employees, a … [Facebook] … clone called Yammer, and found that productivity and mood improved.

---

[1] Article Source: http://socialmediatoday.com/elifed/1191686/internal-social-networks-increase-workplace-productivity
[2] Ibid

"Instead of trying to suppress their addiction, we tried to channel it," said Eli Federman, a spokesman for 1saleaday. "It actually increased productivity by creating an environment where people collaborate on various projects using the site."

In 2012, Americans spent 74.0 billion minutes, or 20% of their time, on social media sites. Much of that time was expended during work hours. Social networking has become part of life both on and off the company clock. In an attempt to bring employee attention back to the work place, 42% of employers have opted to ban social networking all together. Unfortunately, attempts at banning have failed because most employees just use their mobile devices to access social networks. Research also shows that banning social media kills morale.

Even if banning worked, is banning social networking really the answer? What are the real reasons employees seek a break from their work? Boredom? Lack of challenge? No incentive to work harder? Dissatisfaction with their career?

Of all the reasons employees abandon their work, wasting hours on social media, the most fundamental is the need to interact with others. The reality is that employees feel the need to socialize—and will do so whether it's around the water cooler or online.

Employers who acknowledge the need for social interaction in the workplace should offer internal social media platforms, sometimes called enterprise social networks, to channel the need for social activity. An enterprise social network is an exclusive network only accessible to the business and its internal users (e.g., anyone with an @acme.com email address). An enterprise social network meets company and employee needs to be engaged. Users can share thoughts, photos, updates, and more without leaving the work environment.

This internal solution will increase workplace productivity by channeling that otherwise wasted energy back into the company's private social media forum. Employees in need of a "mental break" can remain connected to the company culture by engaging with their co-workers instead of frolicking outside the work context. Camaraderie and collaboration flourish in an environment where employees are interested in the discussions and can contribute. Intercompany engagement and productivity increases.

The author (Eliyahu Federman) thanks Anais Sori for her assistance on this article.