

Leading in the age of Transparency: Impact of Web 2.0 and beyond

Anita Dhir, PMP

Medhira Enterprises



Leveraging project management for excellence, growth and transformation



Contents

1.1	Abstract:	3
1.2	Keywords:	3
1.3	Summary:	3
1.4	Introduction:	3
1.5	Project Manager to Project Manager 2.0	5
1.6	Create social media policy for the project and enforce it:	5
1.7	Communication Management 2.0:	6
1.8	Going Agile:	7
1.9	Key challenges:	7
1.10	Quantified benefits to business:	7
1.11	Conclusion:	8
1.12	References:	8
1.13	Author(s) Profile:	8



1.1 Abstract:

“The rise of instant communication technologies made possible through use of the internet, such as email, texting, and IM and new media used through websites like YouTube and social networking sites like Facebook, and MySpace may explain the Millennials' reputation for being somewhat peer-oriented due to easier facilitation of communication through technology. This trend of communication is continuing into Generation Z”. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Y)

The coming of age of Generation Y and the Net generation and their entry into the workforce poses interesting challenges for organizations, which must now become savvy and learn how to manage the use of these tools to attain project success.

The introduction of twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and other social websites has added a new suite of tools that may be used to manage project communications. Further, the availability of these tools via portable devices and spruced up cell phones has also introduced new communication channels and technologies that challenge project managers to reconsider their traditional communication and information management approaches.

Are you using wikis, twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and other social websites to manage your project communications? Are you interested in learning how to incorporate Web 2.0 and beyond (Web 3.0) into your communication and information management systems? This presentation explores the uses and challenges that these tools provide to project managers and project personnel.

1.2 Keywords:

Social Media, Project Management 2.0, Web 2.0, Social Project Manager, Project Communications

1.3 Summary:

This presentation explores the impact of “online all the time” on project communications.

1.4 Introduction:

In 2005, Tim O'Reilly, CEO and founder of O'Reilly Media Inc., brainstormed the concept of Web 2.0 (See Figure 1) at a conference. The Web 2.0 concepts that continue to be of interest to project managers are syndication, participation, blogging, search engine optimization, wikis, and tagging (“folksonomy”). [4]

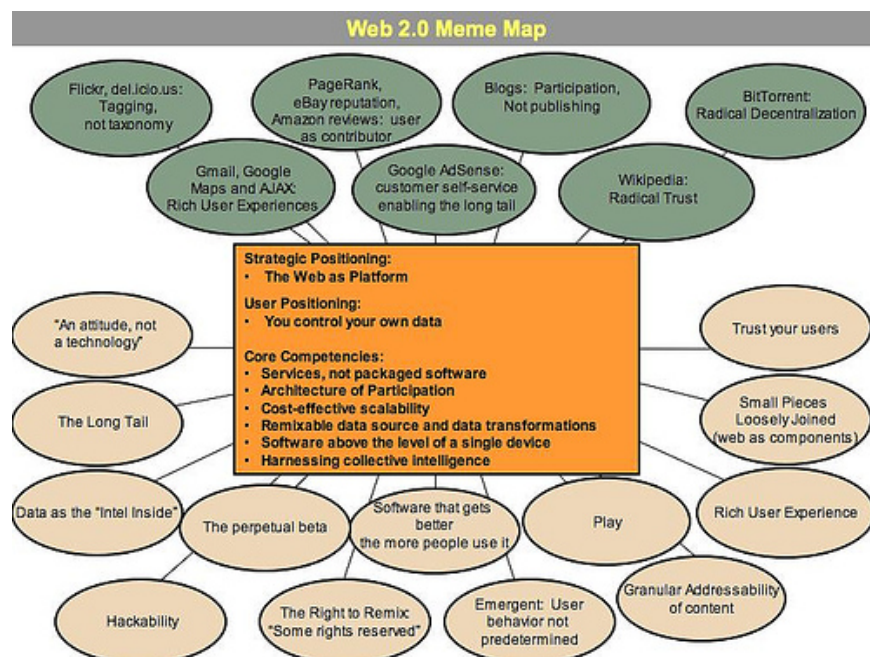


Figure 1 shows a "meme map" of Web 2.0 that was developed at a brainstorming session during FOO Camp, a conference at O'Reilly Media. It's very much a work in progress, but shows the many ideas that radiate out from the Web 2.0 core. [4]

Over the years, Web 2.0, also referred to as social media, has evolved from social marketing, social commerce, into "social business". Some consider that the year 2010 will be best described as "the year social media went corporate" due to the widespread adoption of social media for marketing, advertising, and customer engagement. [1]

In an increasingly connected world, as project managers, we must not just speculate but also decide whether social media is still living up to its positive traits as defined in 2005 or if it has become a productivity killer in the workplace and a gateway to litigation. To address this conundrum, project managers, responsible for a number of tactical operations in a company and for managing the productivity of their projects and teams, must decide whether to be reactive or proactive in incorporating social media into their communication strategies and practices.

Further according to Wikipedia, Project Management 2.0 (social project management) is the natural evolution of [project management](#) practices brought by [Web 2.0](#) technologies. This second-generation Web environment has imposed itself by virtue of new Web services and applications, which quickly replace traditional [project management software](#). Such applications include: [blogs](#), [wikis](#), [collaborative software](#), etc. With broadband as the new utility, [virtual teams](#) now can work together much more efficiently by utilizing the new-generation, Web-based project management tools. These tools challenge the original definition of project management. Project Management 2.0 represents a dramatic shift toward having [collaboration](#) as the heart of project management. The transformation appears in the role of the project manager and in the interaction with clients. [8]



1.5 Project Manager to Project Manager 2.0

Traditional project management is concerned with setting and maintaining boundaries. Currently, many project managers are still practicing traditional project management. Furthermore, on many projects, the project manager continues to be the “primary” communicator of the project. This results in restrictions on the level and flow of project communication. In the face of stakeholders who are lively bloggers, tweeters, and Facebookers, “open leadership” for project managers translates to having the confidence and humility to give up the need to be in control while inspiring commitment from stakeholders to accomplish project goals.[3]

Project managers may use social media networks to communicate ideas, network, propagate concepts/issues, conduct business and global trade, and leverage the use of the social media platforms to gauge the customer mood/sentiments, and to gain insights about specific groups. Project managers can use the social media to evaluate project and product performance, build an engaged professional clientele, network with users that they have had no access to in the past, and find people who can potentially become team members, as well as vendors. Social media can facilitate the stakeholder identification and analysis. It can also be used to manage stakeholder concerns and allow for faster and more open rather than restricted and heavily formulated interactions. Social media also allows for up-to-the-minute updates on project and product-related information, such as information on upcoming releases, new projects, and product reactions/user experiences.


Tools such as Facebook with its discussion boards (walls) can be used for professional/personal/conceptual networking, communicating with stakeholders, and for project evaluations. Twitter provides instantaneous and up-to-the-second communication that may be used to track project/product interest (more followers equals positive feedback) and LinkedIn provides client following and professional networking/endorsements. Other tools such as Blogs encourage an interactive environment, allowing visitors to leave comments, and even message each other via widgets on the blogs. This enables sharing of lessons learned, prompt responses to stakeholder feedback/concerns, and aids public relations.

Project managers who are eager to jump into the “2.0” bandwagon must keep in mind that their company may have restrictions on visiting such sites at work or from their Blackberrys or cell phones. Because of this, there should not only be guidelines around visiting such websites, but exceptions that allow project teams access to these sites for accomplishing communication or marketing goals.

Planned or under the table use of social media can have positive and negative consequences not just to the project, but also to the companies themselves. This concern makes it become the project manager’s responsibility to address and manage the logged-on all the time, tweet-happy, bloggers who post information about their team members, clients, projects, without thinking about the consequences of their social media interactions.

1.6 Create social media policy for the project and enforce it:

In order to be proactive, a good project manager comes up with a project policy on the use of social media, such as Twitter, MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn, and blogs, for their projects. This social media policy should mimic the company’s existing social



media policy (if such a thing exists) or be tailored to meet the project's needs. For example, a company may have banned the usage of any social media websites but the company's marketing team may have created a product launch/campaign oriented towards the use of social media. In this case, the marketing project manager would need to request permission to tailor the company policy to meet project goals. Further, given the nature of instant propagation of information, team members must be sufficiently warned and prepared for the use of social media. A prudent project manager may even appoint themselves as the approver of social media messages, which may, of course, result in communication bottleneck as well as deprive the project of the organic exchange of information among stakeholders.

Typically, this social media policy must be such that it enhances the positive impact of social media and minimizes threats that can result from the usage of social media tools. A good policy on social media is focused towards creating the appropriate openness in sharing project information and a collaborative environment, facilitating the work using virtual teams, managing the interaction with a diverse group of users and clients across the world while minimizing the loss of productivity, litigation, bad publicity, and destructive communications. This policy then drills down to appropriate practices and procedures that will guide the project in the use of social media. These procedures may also entail incorporating these practices while planning the communications for a project as well as actively updating and monitoring social media websites for project/product-related postings (often across multiple sites). Given the scope of the updates necessary to achieve product or brand awareness, a project manager may need dedicated "social media" resources for this purpose.

A good social media policy distinguishes between project and personal use of social media and creates an open, transparent culture using best practices which recognizes and rewards team members who contribute and share their knowledge and best practices in a respectful and responsible manner. Before Twittering become a trend, some project managers considered publishing blogging guidelines for team members. Currently, since a wrong tweet or a Facebook status can be a threat as well, project managers need good guidelines, rules of engagement, and training to prepare their team members who may be leveraging social technologies for work as well as deal with those who post inappropriate or sensitive information that can adversely affect project results.

1.7 Communication Management 2.0:

Project Manager 2.0 may have sites such as Twitter, blogs, Wikipedia, LinkedIn, Facebook, and MySpace mentioned as the communication tools for specific communications. At one time, these tools were simply a medium for people to network within. Now, they have evolved from simply "social networking sites" to powerful business tools available for marketing communications and internal information sharing that allow for 24x7x365 access and can involve all stakeholders, such as clients, users, and the public at large.

In the planning stage, the communication management plan 2.0 accommodates social media considerations and incorporates the use of social media tools as communication mechanisms. The plan may also identify comprehensive integrated collaboration platforms that can add means to track and execute projects "the social way".



1.8 Going Agile:

The current trend of using agile, which itself is based on collaborative, participative, virtual, and open environments, along with constantly evolving and emergent boundaries, begs the use of social media to make its techniques and processes a success. Tools such as Project Insight, 5PM, AceFlex, CoMindWork, Basecamp are examples of PROJECT 2.0 tools, which can facilitate the agile, collaborative approach to project management. [7]

1.9 Key challenges:

The use of social media can result in distraction, fragmented interests, and low attention spans among stakeholders although a research has found that workers who engage in "Workplace Internet Leisure Browsing" are more productive than those who don't. In other words, access to social media improves productivity. [5]

As project managers, we must consider the impact of "social media breaks" using the office internet and/or mobile devices on the team productivity and the team member's level of engagement vs. the bans that 70% of the organizations have currently imposed on social networking. Nielsen also issued a report in October, 2009 which shows that in the year to June 2009, the amount of time spent on social media sites came close to doubling, up from around 800,000 hours per month in August 2008 to 1.6 million hours per month in June 2009. The growth of social media put the category at second highest for time spent online, only marginally trailing entertainment, which had just over 1.6 million hours per month. Facebook surpassed the 8 million mark in August 2009 and Twitter was up 979% to 1.5 million in the same month. [1] These numbers are a reflective of the trends across the world. Among others, these visitors include our team members and other stakeholders.

According to the June 2009 study of 220 decision makers at US companies with more than 1000 employees, Proofpoint found that 18 percent of the companies had investigated a data loss event via a blog or message board in the past 12 months. Seventeen percent disciplined an employee for violating blog or message board policies, while nearly nine percent reported terminating an employee for such a violation (both increases from 2008, 11 percent and six percent, respectively). [2][6]

Other financial concerns include negative posts, tweets, etc that can create a negative public relations scenario/nightmare and cost a project or a client its reputation which can be measured in financial returns. On the other hand, a well-executed social marketing campaign and company reputation can create better relations with clients, increase stakeholder value, and encourage active (positive) feedback from customers.

1.10 Quantified benefits to business:

Projects using the social network channels provide transparency and more real-time information than those using web and e-mail applications. Although, currently tying the use of social media to realized revenue or savings is a challenge, project managers will need to measure the ROI related to the use of social media by using a focused approach and data collection.

1.11 Conclusion:


Companies as well as projects need to adopt more progressive policies and processes that will work for the “social media” age and not continue to operate as they did in the industrial age. Project Manager 2.0, the savvy project manager who uses the social media to be “open” while maintaining control to ensure that their project is social-media leveraged and protected, can help bring about this transformation. Project managers have the potential to benefit from embracing customers and other stakeholders in new ways with Web 2.0 technology, but will have to manage it intelligently and with purpose.

1.12 References:

1. Armano, David, Six Social Media Trends for 2010, , November 2, 2009, http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2009/11/six_social_media_trends.html
2. Armano, David, Five Challenges Social Media Will Bring to Business, August 14, 2009, http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2009/08/a_recent_survey_conducted_by.html?loomia_ow=t0:s0:a38:g26:r25:c0.002000:b27841326:z6
3. Li, Charlene, Open Leadership: How Social Technology Can Transform the Way You Lead, Jossey-Bass, 1 edition, May 24, 2010
4. O'Reilly, Tim, Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software, 09/30/2005, <http://oreilly.com/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html>
5. Meister, Jeanne C, and Willyerd, Karie, The Über-Connected Organization: A Mandate for 2010, November 11, 2009, http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2009/11/the_uberconnected_organization.html
6. <http://www.marketwire.com/press-release/Proofpoint-Survey-Says-State-Economy-Leads-Increased-Data-Loss-Risk-Large-Companies-1027877.htm>
7. The Best of Web 2.0 PROJECT MANAGEMENT, http://www.allthingsweb2.com/mtree/PROJECT_2.0/
8. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project_management_2.0

1.13 Author(s) Profile:





Anita Dhir, PMP®, President/CEO, Medhira Enterprises, www.medhira.com, a lead consultant and trainer providing project management & operational best practice solutions, has conducted over 500 plus workshops across the globe and shared her expertise with over 4,000 students. She is an Adjunct Assistant Professor at NYU & has recently authored PMP® readiness materials.

E-mail: adhir@medhira.com