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Gartner Says the Vast Majority of Social Collaboration Initiatives Fail Due to Lack of Purpose

"Provide and Pray" Approach Has Just a 10 Per Cent Success Rate

Gartner Analysts to Share Best Practices for Planning Social Collaboration at the Gartner Enterprise Architecture Summit 2013 in London, UK and National Harbor, Maryland, US

Egham, UK, 2 April 2013 — Although social technologies are employed by 70 per cent of organisations, Gartner, Inc. said most social collaboration initiatives fail because they follow a worst practice approach of "provide and pray", leading to a 10 per cent success rate.

"Without a well-crafted and compelling purpose, most social media initiatives will fail to deliver business value," said Anthony Bradley, group vice president at Gartner. "This provide and pray approach provides access to a social collaboration technology and prays something comes good of it, like a community forming and participants' interactions naturally delivering business value. As a result, this approach sees a 10 per cent success rate, and the underlying reason is usually that the organisation did not provide a compelling cause around which a community could form and be motivated to provide their time and knowledge. In other words, purpose was lacking."

Gartner's research into the social collaboration efforts of more than 1,000 organisations has identified several prominent patterns. The most apparent was that social collaboration initiatives that have a clear and compelling purpose from the outset tend to succeed. While this may seem obvious, the vast majority of organisations treat collaboration as a platform decision, rather than a solution to a specific business problem or a route to a desired outcome.

"Organisations approaching social collaboration in the "provide and pray" manner do not fully recognise the value of purpose and do not understand how to take an "architected" approach to it," said Mr Bradley. "Social collaboration efforts are a challenge for which enterprise architects are well suited, as these practitioners are often cross-disciplinary. They are able to work with social initiative leaders to define community purposes and condense these purposes into a strategy or road map which they can use to guide project teams during implementation."

Enterprise architects should begin by helping organisations identify and define, at a high level, the target community for social collaboration. Having defined the audience, they should then identify the nature of the collaboration and the desired business outcome. "A well-defined purpose identifies who the participants are, what specific issue they are collaborating around, what value they will gain for themselves, and what value will be provided to the organisation," said Mr Bradley.

However, all purposes are not equal in terms of their ability to catalyse a community. For example, some purposes are stronger and best positioned early on, while others may thrive after achieving a critical mass of participation in a social community. Enterprise architects can help an organisation evaluate the relative strengths of purposes and sequence their integration into a social collaboration initiative.

To assist them, Gartner has identified five characteristics of a good purpose:

- **Participant magnetism:** The purpose should naturally motivate people to participate. This is the "what's in it for me" characteristic. Users should easily grasp its importance and the value of participating. The purpose must have meaning to the participants, and build within them a compelling need to participate. If you have to create interest among users, especially through costly incentives, you've chosen the wrong purpose.
- **Community draw:** The purpose must resonate with enough people to catalyse a community and deliver robust user-generated content. The best communities are heavily unbalanced in their two-way approaches, meaning that the community contributes far more content than the supporting enterprise. Find out how powerful the purpose is for drawing in significant numbers of people and contributions.
- **Organisational value:** The purpose should have a clear business outcome. This is the "what's in it for the organisation" characteristic. Choose purposes where organisational value can be clearly measured and shared with the community as feedback and motivation to continue participating.
- **Low community risk:** Choose low risk over high reward. The purpose, especially early in an organisation's social application maturity, should be low risk. This overall characteristic derives from four types of risk:
 - **Culture risk** is the risk that the corporate culture is not conducive to mass collaboration.
 - **Adoption risk** is the risk that people will not be inclined to collaborate on this subject or in this community.
 - **Information risk** is the risk that the community's shared information will be sensitive in nature.
 - **Result risk** is the risk that, even if a community forms, its interactions will not bear fruit.
- **Promoting evolution:** Select purposes that you and the community can build on. Determine the dependencies between purposes. Some purposes have a more natural tendency to lead to others and to facilitate emergence, while that others are more subordinate. Those that have no dependencies but can lead to other purposes score higher.

Gartner analysts will examine how enterprise architecture can help deliver successful business outcomes from the disruptive nexus of social, mobile, information and cloud forces at the Gartner Enterprise Architecture Summit 2013 in London, UK, on 14-15 May and in National Harbor, Maryland, US, on 22-23 May.

For further information about the Enterprise Architecture Summit 2013 in London, please visit <http://www.gartner.com/eu/ea>. Information on the Summit in National Harbor can be found at www.gartner.com/us/ea. You can also follow the event on Twitter at http://twitter.com/Gartner_inc using #GartnerEA.

About Gartner Enterprise Architecture Summit 2013

A unique confluence of disruptive trends from the nexus of cloud, social, big data and mobile forces provide an unprecedented opportunity for enterprise architecture (EA) practitioners to deliver business value from EA differently than ever before. This year's Summit examines how a revolutionary new approach to EA can leverage the Nexus of Forces, driving strategic value and change, engaging key decision-makers and ultimately increasing the effectiveness of EA programmes.

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