

Collaboration and Connection

Using Enterprise 2.0

Today's Web 2.0 technology appeals to the drive to connect with others to solve problems by bridging divides – social, geographic, and cultural – that restrict the flow of information and knowledge. Enterprise 2.0 technologies go further. They aim to deliver these same benefits while also overcoming organizational divides – functional, hierarchical and jurisdictional – and therefore speeding up problem solving, driving down costs and ensuring progress on organizational goals. Enterprise 2.0 tools may be a way to increase communication across organizational divides.

While technologies such as employee directories, departmental wikis and other collaborative tools are valuable, they all too often form a patchwork of applications within the “government society” rather than uniting communities of interest. The imperative to use Enterprise 2.0, social networking and collaborative tools is there, but the ability of these tools to help overcome divides inside a “verticalized” public sector has not yet been proven.

For government departments across jurisdictions, providing a platform to facilitate connections within an organizational structure is one thing. But the true value for the public service society is to have a platform that bridges the divides across departments, regions and jurisdictions. Consider the possibilities:

- employees search for a particular skill set or knowledge area and discover employees in other departments who possess this knowledge and can contact them directly;
- employees from several government jurisdictions create a workgroup with common interests and easily share ideas and information;
- employees who move within a department or across departments



by
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maintain one knowledge profile that allows that knowledge to be discovered and shared no matter where they reside; and

- communications can be targeted to particular organizations, sub-organizations or cross-department groups while allowing the central author to gather feedback from key audience segments.

Canada Post recently provided social networking and collaboration capabilities to their 75,000 plus employees to address the organizational divides within the “Canada Post society,” including the deployment of a tool called OneDegree, developed by Innovapost, which was driven by a need to communicate and collaborate with employees across regions, levels, functions and departments.

“Our employees have a variety of work and personal interests and skills that were previously going untapped,” said Brian Beehler, director of social media at Canada Post, who championed the initiative. “One-Degree allows employees to create groups based on their expertise, personal interests or activities and connect with other employees with similar interests and skills. They can generate blogs, find carpooling information, share photos online and discover people who aren't physically located near them but who can help them with a work-related problem. All of these things are helping our people become more engaged and productive at work.”

Connections are vertical as well as horizontal. Employees involved in Route Optimization at Canada Post can share their experiences and knowledge with others. Letter carriers and other field personnel can blog and share points of view. An employee in Vancouver can find an employee in Halifax who might have insights into a shared problem. Distributed employees can form cross-organizational work or social groups. And finally, management can send tailored communications to specific employee segments and get feedback on and/or collaborate about the contents of a message.

Since it seems inevitable that the government society will turn to tools that can bridge divides, solve problems and help public organizations serve Canadians more efficiently, perhaps Canada Post's use of Enterprise 2.0 can shed some light on how to balance these concerns while still connecting thousands of people to each other and instilling a sense that they are all working toward a common objective. 