

Challenges  
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face when  
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networks



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## Challenges organizations may face when participating in social networks

Social network refer to communities of practice or open innovation and this is a relatively new phenomenon in context of challenges faced by different organizations around the globe. This concept has succeeded in gaining much ground within the business communities who need to expand their knowledge continuously by effectively participating in social networks. This concept has also provided the organizations with a new dimension of progress by making them learn in an educationally harmonious environment. “ As communities of practice generate knowledge, they renew themselves. They give you both the golden eggs and the goose that lays them” (Wenger and Snyder, 2000, p. 143).

The approach of open innovation has many beneficial potentials but it also presents many challenges to the managers and the business organizations at large. When following the open innovation approach, many big-tech companies find it hard to let go of things in order to engage in a social network where knowledge is shared and many concealed points are revealed. Letting go is a hard challenge raised by open innovation. Actually, large and established companies find it hard to share and reveal information in front of other member practitioners because they are understandably used to follow their own ways, run after their own corporate objectives, and process their personal organizational ecosystem.

Communities of practice basically comprise of groups whose members strive to share and gain experience-based knowledge in order to achieve similar set of goals. In doing so, many interpersonal conflict-based issues may also arise within a social network. As organizations grow in size and gain wider recognition in market, support of communities of practice also becomes

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increasingly important so that organization value could be strengthened, performance could be improved, and same goals could be achieved.

According to a research study based on observing seven organization, Lesser and Storck (2001) claim that some of the major common challenges faced by organizations when participating in social networks include mishandling of relationships by members who engage in the knowledge sharing process and who may not be co-located. Also, conflicts may process into full blown problematic challenges when practitioners find themselves unable to build work relationships based on mutual trust and obligation. Communities of practice are also unable to enhance organizational value when there is absence of a common language which could be easily shared by the community members. Though actual participation in a social network becomes important when making a business social, different organizations operate on different cultures which means that they are either too collaborative when it comes to communicating with different groups or they hoard knowledge inside secretively refusing to share information. This tendency to keep information from sharing leads to conflicts among people which can develop into a nasty challenge (Armano, 2009). In a research study based on social networks and support, it is proposed that inattention to relationships among participating members can give birth to many challenges for the organizations. It is implied that due to most immigrants being marginal to the American society, “ social networks will function either to hasten or impede their adjustment to the new environment” (Portes and Bach, cited in Kim and Mckenry, 1998). Many intergroup conflicts may arise when organizations participate in social networks. Nelson (2001)

investigated relationship between social networks and conflict in 20  
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organizations and concluded that low-conflict organization had increased numbers of intergroup strong ties compared to high-conflict organizations. Absence of cross-cutting strong ties leads to increased conflicts among participants of a social network (Nelson, 2001, p. 380).

Concluding, this much becomes clear from the above discussion that though communities of practice is an effective strategy to transfer best practices and retain the best talent from around the globe, it still remains a hard strategy to practice because many conflicts may arise which if not handled appropriately, can cause many problems for organizations.

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