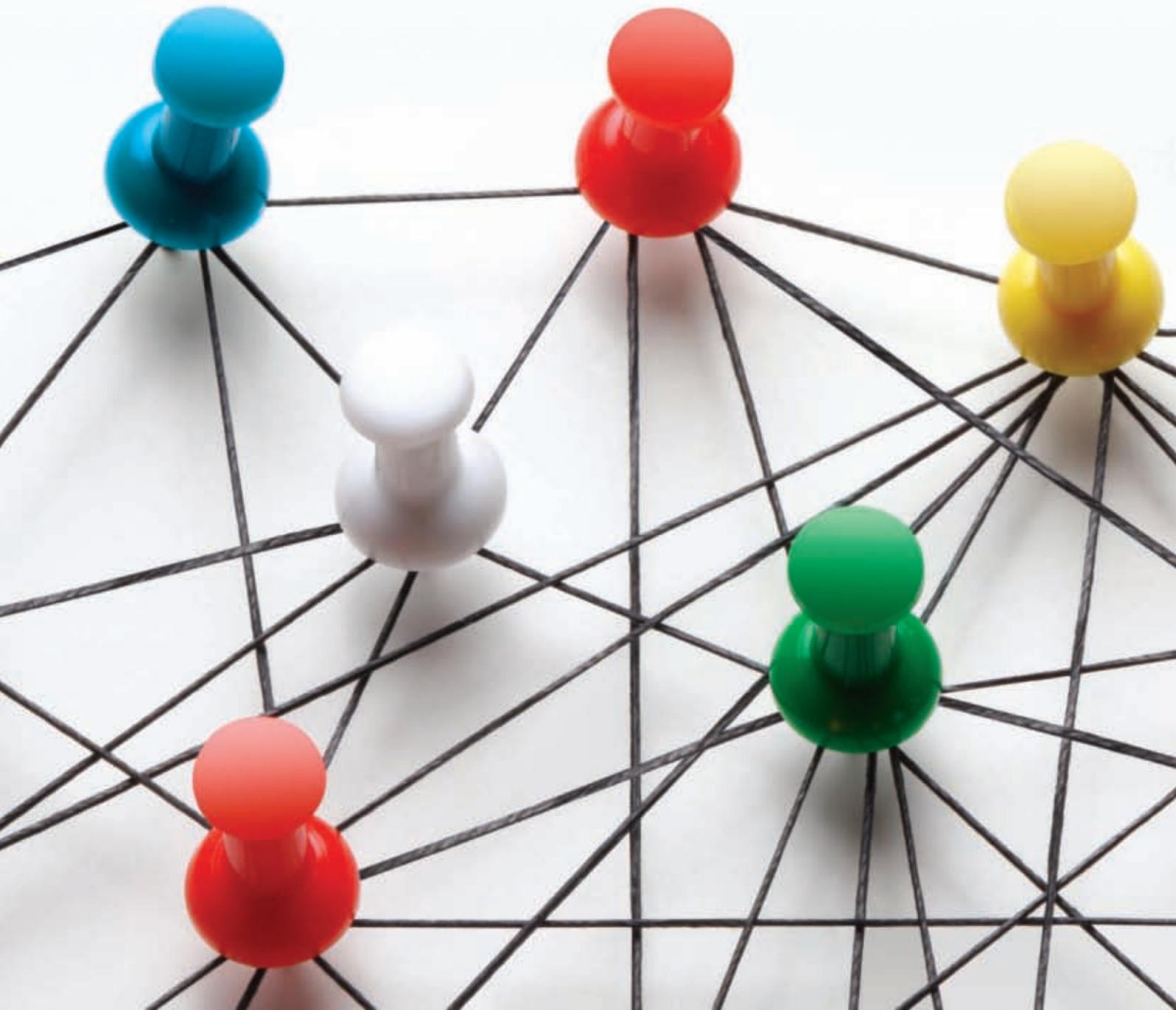
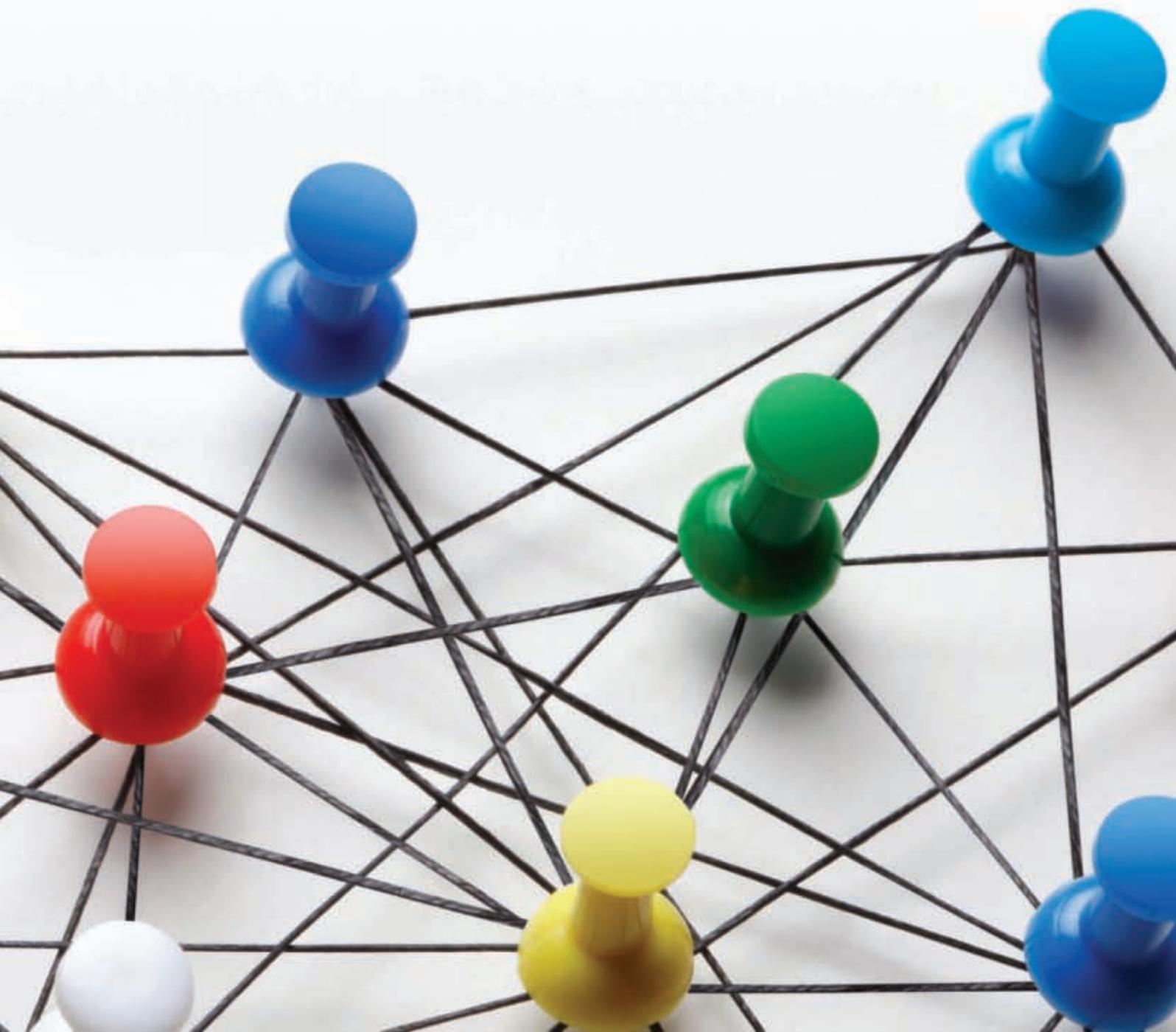


Like it or not, here I am

Social media and the workplace



The figure of 1 billion active users a day as at end-August of this year, i.e. 1 in 7 of the world's population now on Facebook may not be striking *per se*, except when compared to the figure of 1 in 9 of the world's population who don't even have access to clean water. We know that social media has changed the way that people think and operate, but what do they seek out of this daily engagement and how can companies harness that drive to their own advantage?



The changing world of “Social”

Social media has been changing the destiny of nations in the last decades, eradicating entire countries’ political systems, and creating the momentum for drastic changes in entire regions. A photo or video going viral can affect people’s perception of events, such as some photos that have ignited outrage over the deaths of thousands of desperate refugees and prompting hitherto blindsided countries to aid in what had proven to be one of the largest humanitarian crises of this century. Such stories of fundamental worldwide mobilization are a crystal clear revelation of the power of social media channels and their impact on changing the *status quo*.

Social media and enterprise social networks: identical or fraternal twins?

Figures on social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn are on an exponential rise, illustrating social media’s high penetration rate as it increasingly becomes part and parcel of people’s daily lives. But what is it that makes these platforms so successful and what are people seeking from such daily engagement? Is it the technology itself or the networking and relationship-building part? The knowledge-sharing one? Or is it the fear of missing out?

And do these same needs apply when it comes to having people use internal social media networks, referred to as Enterprise Social Networks (ESN), at the workplace? How long will it take ESN to potentially outshine their “public” twin and meet their objectives of fostering collaboration, communication and knowledge-sharing among employees? Are external social media platforms and enterprise social networks identical, or fraternal, twins?

Building the case for internal communications

Today’s business leaders seek a highly engaged workforce to support them in achieving their business growth strategies at a faster pace. Hence the need and call for action for a social media strategy that lays out platforms, known as ESN, targeted at the firm’s internal audiences as a primary communications tool for noting, deciding and acting on information relevant to carrying out the work and increase productivity.

Adopting ESN technologies in the workplace has been on the rise since 2011, according to Deloitte Telecommunications, Media and Technology yearly predictions. While many enterprises have already adopted ESN, many of these companies struggle to recruit users and advocates, or to engage with them. What is it that makes such companies struggle in building the case for proper internal communications and to what extent have businesses been going social in their strategies, shifting from a social media strategy to a social business strategy?

Defined as “the set of visions, goals, plans, and resources that align social media initiatives with business objectives,” a social media strategy lays out the channels, platforms, and tactics to support publishing, listening, and engagement. Such had been the hope of many a company that has sought to emulate, through its enterprise social network, the success that the external social media platforms are witnessing. With time, more emphasis has been placed on the business

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than on the media, changing the platform from “social media” to “social business.” Social business is more about the integration of social media and social methodologies and processes into the organization and its day-to-day practices to build relationships and spark conversations within and without the organization, to creating value and driving impact to clients, talent and the business alike.

Finding the ideal balance for social engagement

There is not one best way to engage employees socially, be it in the frequency of posts, or content, or driving conversations. What matters is finding the ideal balance for social engagement, taking into account that even if internal communications are addressed to internal audiences, they do not necessarily encompass everyone’s varying interests i.e. they are not a one-stop shop. Internal audiences’ interests vary widely in large organizations. These audiences are being spread in different geographies, are connected to different sets of clients, sometimes have different language preferences, and are of different leadership levels. Different audiences respond in different ways. What works for one category of talent may not work for another category of talent. And no, there are no magic buttons that internal communicators can click to secure social following and interaction, or to spark conversations and increase their social engagement rates.

If internal communicators never post, they will surely never get interactions per post. But what they do post also matters. Much depends on the quality of posts, how relevant the messaging is, how catchy the design is, the added-value that the conversation is bringing, how it is tied to people’s performance, and how it makes processes and procedures more efficient and streamlined.

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advocacy, in more agile companies, able to move fast to face the challenges of inevitable change. Leaders in these companies are required more and more, to better articulate a social business vision and strategy that goes beyond the scope and responsibility of brand, communication, marketing and, more specifically, internal communication experts’ field of expertise. It requires working in a hybrid matrix that is the organizational platform to support cross-functional collaboration and cooperation and bridge the gap between the client and talent experience, getting them closer towards reaching the company’s overarching business goals.

Strategy, not technology, drives digital transformation

Successful social business initiatives require leadership and behavioral changes. They hit at the core of companies’ cultures and require that enterprises embrace innovation and collaboration. Leaders of such enterprises are not necessarily tech savvy, but they are advocates of technology, with a clear understanding of the potential impact that adopting innovation and

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technology has on their businesses, as well as retaining and engaging talent. As such, social business and digital fluency do not demand mastery of the technology. Instead, they require the ability to articulate the value of social and digital technologies to the organization's future and scale it up for wider use among constituents.

A recent report conducted by Deloitte and MIT Sloan Management Review, entitled *Strategy, Not Technology, drives Digital Transformation* reveals that 80 percent of employees across all generations want to work for a digitally-enabled company or digital leader. In addition, more than 75 percent of respondents from digitally mature companies agree that their organizations provide the necessary skills to capitalize on digital trends. Among low maturity entities, the number drops to 19 percent.

Findings from Deloitte's fourth annual global survey of more than 4,800 business executives across 27 industries and 129 countries, reveal that the ability to digitally transform and reimagine a business is determined in large part by a clear digital strategy supported by leaders who foster a culture to change and reinvent their organizations. Accordingly, it is strategy, and not technology, that drives digital transformation in companies. It seems that many companies have been putting too much emphasis on the technology itself that they have missed the critical and most important factor behind successful behavioral change that is mainly driven by leadership commitment and the setting and implementation of a sound digital strategy.

Integrating social and digital strategies

The success of such a strategy as outlined above clearly requires an alignment between the strategic business goals of a company and its organizational arrangement i.e. the support that enables the execution of a social media strategy.

While the use of external social media platforms and social media strategies of companies have shown increasing success, with the ability to target clients based on their preferences and needs, the use of ESN in companies requires a wider look at the evolution of the firms into better social businesses, and the integration of the social aspect of the business with the digital one. Internal communicators need to shift their focus from working on social media platforms in silos to developing a consistent and integrated content strategy that supports a cohesive digital and social strategy. Social media platforms should enhance talent experience and knowledge-sharing, while driving more business integration of mobile applications and intranets as well as social media channels and platforms.

What happens in Rome goes on Facebook, what happens at work, stays at work!

Do employees post on internal social media platforms with the same frequency and enthusiasm that they post on Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter? In reality, people use external social media platforms differently than they use internal ones. With a socially extrovert generation Y so keen on taking everything in their social life out to the public out of peer and social pressure, it becomes more challenging to differentiate ways of interacting within external and internal social media platforms. This challenge requires companies to define the boundaries and draw the horizons of social media activity, laying out governance and risk structures that can alter as talent, as well as companies' social and digital maturity, increases.

Fraternal twins have, after all, many things in common, yet many differences still do set them apart. Whether external and internal social media platforms are identical or fraternal twins, is not in itself the question anymore. What matters is that they are surely twins, yet with different mindsets, and different expectations arise out of each one.

If what happens in Rome goes on Facebook, what happens at work, stays at work, even if it is bound to go "social." Business leaders should not necessarily ask "how social are my employees?" but "how social and digital is my business?"

by **Elissar Hajj**, Senior Manager, Brand and Communications, Deloitte Middle East

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