



and evangelists believe that it will blur the boundaries of corporations themselves as well as work and home, transform the design of offices, and even kill off 'the office' altogether.

However, in some organisations digital work is so controversial that managers are reluctant to even consider it in the first place. John Baptista, Associate Professor of Information Systems at Warwick Business School, is "not surprised" that the speed of adoption of social media in business has been much slower than among consumers.

"Social media is not just a case of plug and play," says Baptista. "It can be disruptive to the established patterns of communications, silo thinking, and hierarchies. It can even challenge policies, strategies, and governance much more than many people realise. It can take years for companies to adapt."

Baptista, who ran an internet café before working on IT projects at the World Expo in Lisbon in 1998, and for the Conservative Party in the UK, has seen too many technology projects fail to deliver what they were supposed to because of the politics of the organisation. Now he explores what creates the attrition in the first place, even if senior management really want the project, and then consider the technical solutions.

For Jimmy Huang, Associate Professor of Information Systems at Warwick Business School, the poor use of social media is very common in the UK, with CEOs in some companies having bi-weekly blogs and podcasts without inviting any kind of response. Huang asks: "So what's the difference from what we had before?"

Then there is the opposite danger, he believes. "Social media lets the workers feel they are taking part by letting them share and even co-produce, but by giving the appearance of power it raises questions on how much they can really be involved," says Huang.

For Baptista, a successful campaign to embed social media in a company comes down to approaching it as you would do a consumer product that you want to market, in particular by using the persuasive language of the campaign.

It is then about empowering the

'super connectors', those influential people who set the tone and drive adoption of social networks. As his research at the French multinational IT services corporation ATOS showed, successfully introducing social media involved changing the culture of the whole company so that workers understood that they were part of a 'bigger thing'. At ATOS this involved a three-year global campaign known as 'Zero Email'.

Huang argues that the wider culture within which the organisation is located is critical. As he says: "In some countries like China you wouldn't dare say anything in front of your leaders even if you were told that you could."

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Huang adds that Chinese staff working for UK companies in China will "always say nice things" on social media because they don't want to appear to be negative.

Culture shapes attitudes to privacy as well. So stricter privacy laws in different countries may make it harder to identify who are the great connectors in a company's social network, compromising speed and a more managed approach to adoption.

According to Baptista, employees will not flock to social media because they are told it will save costs or for fame and glory, the success of social media adoption often requires senior management to lead by example.

Baptista and Huang argue that digital working may redefine how and where work happens, including "reconfiguring physical spaces to complement and support digital

activities, and not the other way around as it has been in the last century".

Modern organisations have revamped office space to be more collaborative and creative, because people are questioning the need to come to an office now that they can work from anywhere. "If they have to commute hours it better be worth it," Baptista says.

Virgin Media is a case in point. Three years ago Leon Benjamin was asked to lead an adoption project at Virgin Media to introduce flexible working practices to its 20,000 staff.

His success was based on making social media fun and useful to every day activities of employees, not senior management. Benjamin, who now runs his own social business consulting firm Sei Mani, approaches social media adoption in the workplace similarly to how he has seen it working with consumers.

According to Benjamin, a successful adoption campaign "shouldn't be rocket science, but it is if one expects it to work without effort and dedication". He compares the methodology he uses to the rider and the elephant. The rider is the logical left side of the brain; the elephant is the emotional right side.

"So huge programmes of change in large organisations only tend to speak to the rider not to the elephant, instead we want to speak to the elephant," says Benjamin.

In the case of Virgin Media, rather than writing an email to staff saying "please use WebEx to save time and money", Benjamin wrote one targeted at the elephant. Its first line was: "Imagine that you could put two more hours back in the day and you could do whatever you want with those hours, even go home for dinner with the family."

Then he 'ripped up' the usual terms and conditions staff had to sign before they could go on the company intranet and replaced the legalese with a set of simple, very light, rules for people to follow when they collaborated. He considers this is the key to making any kind of collective intelligence work. The first rule? "Be nice."

After which, it was all about persuading senior leaders to give their

staff the time to be social, since the initial effort to build up communities can be very great; and even to give people credit for sharing on the social networks like they do on Facebook at home. "It was as simple as that, as everyone wants praise," says Benjamin.

In February 2011 ATOS announced it was going to go for zero internal email in an attempt to make staff more efficient and comfortable by reducing time wasted dealing with emails.

However Jean Corbel, Group Chief Change Officer at ATOS, says "it was never really about getting rid of emails" it was more about "the way we work together", turning managers into both leaders and collaborators. Email use was merely the "vector of behavioural change".

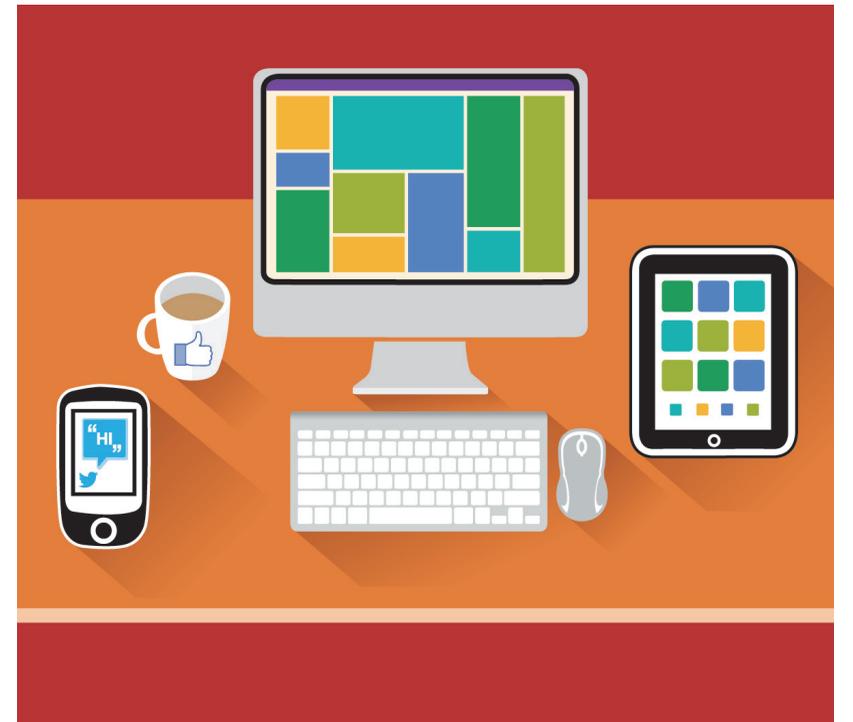
Nearly 350 digital ambassadors were used to sell the dream to the other employees. ATOS used its own blueKiwi and Lync from Microsoft, which together, says Corbel, had "a huge impact" and decreased significantly the amount of emails. The company went from 70 emails a day per person in 2011, to 20 to 30 a week now.

Corbel believes the first driver of cultural change was the desire for a better way of working together. This was supported by "redesigning the leadership development programme", to identify five roles that an ATOS manager would need in the future: community leader, coach, entrepreneur, deliverer and visionary.

The result at ATOS was 7,000 mostly open peer-to-peer communities in a collaborative digital environment; including one called 'The Watercooler' that anyone could join and is only lightly moderated.

ATOS is, Corbel believes, moving from 'push' communication, where it is the person who sends out the information who decides who sees it (not always correctly), to 'pull', where information is posted into the community for everyone to see and colleagues are trusted to give it value. "I think this is really beautiful," says Corbel.

He thinks ATOS is at the beginning of a journey on which they will increasingly see themselves as collaborators, even to the extent of collaborative relationships with



clients to create innovation.

Paul Miller, founder and CEO of the Digital Workplace Group (DWG), has been a driving force in helping many large global companies transition from managing intranets to embrace the wider needs of a digital workplace.

Miller ended all physical offices in his organisation, and instead DWG uses virtual tools to keep the business going. He understands the need for staying in touch face-to-face though, and believes that time spent in person is now more special than ever. It is "sacred" he says.

The next step, says Miller, is to extend this beyond the firewall. Embracing social media will make it an "antiquated idea" that an organisation ends with its employees, as there will be collaboration and innovation with the supply chain and customers.

Ultimately, like Baptista and Huang, Miller sees it as the beginning of the end of "the office paradigm" as workers will have "physical freedom", no longer needing to go to work in a centralised office.

"Where you do your work will be your choice," says Miller.

However to reap the benefits of this new world of work individuals and organisations need to respond to changes that go deep to the functioning

of organisations. For example, Baptista and Huang argue that expanding volume of feedback and "multi-voice" in organisations challenges established patterns of communication and may subvert hierarchies.

This is worrying many senior leaders who don't know how to manage open disagreement and conflicting perspectives with their staff online about, for example, a restructuring programme or a takeover target.

Baptista thinks that leading by influence and persuasion, and not hierarchical authority, is a new skill that requires a new mindset for effective leadership in organisations.

Another worry is the fear that increasing digitisation of formal and informal communication may contribute to employees leaking sensitive data like Snowden.

However Baptista believes if the company doesn't adapt and provide the tools itself, employees will use external services, so exposing the company to even higher risks.

"It is not an option for modern organisations whether to go digital or not... the issue is how they create the right environment to appropriate the benefits and minimise the new risks of this new digital way of working." ■