



The future of work will determine the success of social tools



The Xpragmatic View #128
 October 11, 2009
 by [Marc Buyens \(@mbuyens\)](#), Xpragma
marc.buyens@xpragma.com
 url: <http://www.xpragma.com/view128.php>

Change does not come because there is the option to change. Change comes when there is a need for doing things differently.

Last week, ReadWriteWeb had a post, titled [Real-Time Collaboration Has Stalled...For Now](#) that summarised the results of a recent Forrester study on the adoption of real-time collaboration tools by "information workers" at organisations with 100 or more employees.

For the collaboration and social enterprise fans, the results were disappointing. Real-time collaboration was not really on the agenda and good old e-mail was still king of the mountain.

In the comments, some of the enterprise 2.0 aficionados expressed their disbelief in these results since they could hardly imagine how they could do today without the use of the new generation of collaborative and social tools.

The post and the reactions reminded us of another post by Andrew McAfee, earlier that week, [How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Email](#) where he described how the use of collaborative tools within a large consulting organisation did not take off and people returned to their old habit of using e-mail as the primary tool for collaboration.

According to McAfee, it was essentially the combination of resistance to change of the old guard and broad acceptance and presence of e-mail that resulted in this ongoing stronghold. In a [later post](#), he added to that the advantage of using a single tool (e-mail) versus the complexity of handling the chaos of several social tools.

So, social tools adoption in the enterprise remains difficult.

According to Forrester, *"changes in real-time collaboration will occur when the social web becomes more fully a part of the work day"*.

That is correct. However, this quote suggests the wrong sequence of events. Adoption of new tools does not come because they provide a better or more interesting way of doing things. Adoption comes when the work that needs to be done allows exploiting the capabilities of better tools.

Therefore, real-time collaboration will be a consequence of changing needs in "the kind of work" we have to do. And the reason certain people commented on the RWW post that they could hardly imagine how they could live today without using such tools is because their "work package" is already fundamentally different.

McAfee's analysis of the stickiness of e-mail is valid. Still, when the content of the work that needs to be done requires it and the corporate structure allows it, collaborative tools will make inroads. Apparently, we are not yet there.

Last week, we did a consulting job for a customer. Not a single social tool that we are aware of could have helped us doing that job any faster or any better. Phone and e-mail did.

The job, of course, was extremely boring.


Hoping for more challenging days...

About the author



Marc Buyens is analyst, management consultant and owner of Xpragma. Marc started Xpragma in 1999 after a 20+ years career in the IT sector. Today, he provides advice, training and mentoring services focusing on the intersection of technological evolution, organisational change and business strategy: a messy world of unfulfilled promises.


 <http://www.facebook.com/marcb254>


 <http://www.linkedin.com/in/marcbuyens>

 <http://www.twitter.com/mbuyens>

© 1999-2010, Xpragma bvba. All Rights Reserved.

Xpragma bvba - Mechelsesteenweg 254 - 2820 Bonheiden - Belgium
Tel. +32-(0)15-340 845 - info@xpragma.com - www.xpragma.com

 RSS feed: <http://www.xpragma.com/english/rss/xpven.xml>

 RSS feed (full): http://www.xpragma.com/english/rss/xpv_full_en.xml