



The remainders of the day - 2 | The Xpragmatic View



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The use of enterprise social tools can improve the operational efficiency and effectiveness of an organisation. Unfortunately, it will not cure the real diseases of today's organisations.

Yesterday, we received a message on Twitter stating that CSC was awarded Jive's Community Adoption award for their successful Enterprise 2.0 implementation. You can read Jive's press release [here](#). As you will see, CSC was only one of the companies receiving such award, so we assume the sender of the message has/had some personal relationship with the company. Other nominees included United Business Media (UBM), NIKE Inc., National Journal Group, Kaiser Permanente and Swiss Re.

According to Jive, *"CSC was selected for the launch of its internal community "C3: Connect. Communicate. Collaborate." Through the tenacity, credibility and trustworthiness of those involved, the CSC team secured a phenomenal level of executive endorsement from the onset and established a clear linkage between its "enterprise 2.0" initiatives to the company's core business strategic objectives. Through enabling a strong global advocate network and allowing collaboration patterns to emerge, C3 enjoyed viral success in only 20 weeks, achieving 25,000 registered users, over 2000 new groups and generating over 1 million page views a month."*

The message got our attention since, also for us, CSC is a bit of a "special" company. Indeed, the Belgian branch of CSC was more or less established following the acquisition of the CIG-Intersys Group in 1989. CIG was the company where we started our career. We left the company in 1987, less than two years before the acquisition by CSC.

Today, CSC still is the employer of several of our ex-colleagues and news items about the company always get our attention.

This time, the context was even a bit special since, a week earlier, we had participated in a reunion of the ex-CIG employees, celebrating the 40th anniversary of the start of the company. Several of our ex-colleagues were present, many of them still working for CSC.

To be honest, we do not really fancy this type of coming-together-again events. In general, they are essentially showcases of "how we all are getting older". In this case, things were not really different.

Even worse. While talking to some of the old friends, we got the impression that today's CSC did not really generate "exciting enterprise 2.0 feelings" for them. The overall sentiment was more one of burnout, acceptance, no further ambition, waiting for the final signoff.

Of course, this is the biased view of a small group of older employees and we are not in a position to really assess the validity of some of the things that were said. Perhaps this was just a bunch of losers.

Still, this might also give a rather realistic view on certain aspects of today's larger organisations. Even in organisations like CSC that are praised for their successful enterprise 2.0 initiative, some groups of employees are likely to remain completely disconnected.

And that is not really a surprise. While searching for my ex-colleagues on the web, very few of them show present. Even in very common business networks such as LinkedIn, their presence is limited; their activity none.

OK, we are no specialists in these matters, but perhaps this is not completely unexpected. We are talking here about a group of people who did not grow up with the craziness of what we now call Web 2.0, so the use of Web 2.0-style social or collaborative tools is not their default behaviour.

In addition, when spending the whole of your career within the same company, very likely there was little need to walk the networking path or to extend your view beyond the corporate walls. When finally this new generation of social tools reached the enterprise, most of these employees were already in "established" positions (read: at the end of their career with little or no visibility on further progress).

And then, the unavoidable questions come: Why should I bother? What's in it for me?

For the company, the promises of Enterprise 2.0 are very nice: finding and retaining the tacit knowledge of knowledge workers, finding the right specialists, fostering collaboration... but where does this improve the personal life of the individual? Apparently, for this older generation of employees, there is little or no answer.

So, while talking about "Enterprise 2.0", the part of the enterprise that we can really reach might be quite a bit smaller than hoped for. Perhaps, it is unrealistic to hope that we can successfully roll out the same new approaches across multiple generations of employees. Perhaps that in today's larger organisations, business transformation simply rolls like waves over the older workforce, drowning them instead of engaging them.

At lunch, we were sitting next to an old colleague that we knew quite well. We have the same age, have the same degree and started more or less at the same day our career at CIG. In the past, we had quite a few drinks and a lot of fun together.

May 2010, he is retiring.

The remainders of a career.

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.


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