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## **SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE WORKPLACE**

Timothy Patrick Appignani  
University of Illinois - Chicago

Steve Jones  
University of Illinois - Chicago

Mary Beth Watson-Manheim  
University of Illinois - Chicago

Eric Welch  
Arizona State University

Though social media usage crosses the spectrum of age, race, and occupation there are still prohibitions about its use in the workplace. Our research maps the relationship between workers and their use of social media, for work and personal purposes based on results from a completed survey of 3,000 non-faculty staff at a large Midwestern university.

Early research on the adoption of new media in organizations began in the 1990s with studies of email and other CMC finding that new media forms altered social dynamics within organizations (Schmitz & Fulk, 1991) particularly by affecting the social influence of strong users (Haythornwaite & Wellman, 1998). In the years that followed research focused on social media usage by organizations primarily dealing with external relations. The media usage under study was either for marketing (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011), constituent development and community usage (Lovejoy & Saxon, 2012; Thackeray, Neiger, Smith & VanWagenen, 2012), or customer relations (Singh Peszynski, 2013). When looking at how organizations use social media for internal organizational communication distinctions must be drawn between what Leonardi, Hyusman & Steinfeld designate public platforms of social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter) and the private platform social media that are designed specifically for a firm's employees to use for their workplace communication. These private social media are known as 'enterprise social media' and though they are meant to represent a professionalized version of popular social media, they tend to borrow popular social media's format and functionality (2013).

By examining the impact of social media use at the level of individual users engaged in

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a variety of job types across a university campus our research will help to expand the current research landscape on social media, which is dominated by literature focused on either organizational social media or enterprise social media. Organizational social media is the use of “public” social media sites for organizational purposes and enterprise social are in-house “private” social media that are designed and implemented by companies seeking to maximize productivity in a contained fashion. The samples researchers use to study these social media are largely comprised of IT professionals and key decision makers. While this scholarship is useful for organizations seeking to understand how to maximize productivity, or how new media technologies affect workplace dynamics, it neglects the habits of workers across the spectrum of the modern workplace, where social media may play different roles for workers with different job types, backgrounds and workplace roles. With this in mind we crafted a survey inclusive enough to capture a large data set allowing us to provide a descriptive analysis of the relationship between social media usage and contemporary workers of various types. We hope to refocus scholarship away from static comparisons of social media integration for specific worker types and towards more dynamic studies of how social media affects the workplaces of a broader population.

We collected quantitative survey data from individuals in different administrative positions at a large Midwestern U.S. university in 2014 about the use of social media technology in the workplace both for work and non-work purposes. The primary objectives were to understand: 1) the extent of social media use in the organization and the purpose of this use, 2) how employees use the tools to manage and integrate or separate work and non-work activities, 3) how social media networks coincide (or not) with an individual’s work network 4) what implications there are for collaboration and other work-related outcomes.

As shown in Figure 1, the orienting framework for our research recognizes that individuals utilize social media applications in many different social contexts. Our aim is to understand how the use of social media might be influencing work related outcomes such as access to information and network ties, as well as the impact on boundaries between professional and personal life.

Figure 1: Conceptual overview of study

The survey consisted of four major sections: work, professional social network, technology use, and outcomes. We first sought to understand the individual respondent’s work. What are the specific tasks and broader focus of the individual’s professional activities? Respondents were asked to characterize their work in terms of common university administrative activities, e.g., student support, budget management, and procurement. Further, the instrument sought to elicit the complexity of the work drew upon Morgeson & Humphrey (2006) to assess complexity, information processing, problem solving, etc. A key survey goal was to characterize the network of individuals that each respondent collaborates with and the characteristics of collaborators. For example, are network connections within the same or different college, organization, and/or profession? How does the respondent utilize social media to maintain or expand their professional and social networks?

Also of importance was the respondent usage of technology, specifically social media applications, as well as other collaboration technologies such as Google Docs. The survey queried participants on both personal and professional usage. Additionally, we assessed where usage occurs (home or work), with whom, and for what purpose (e.g. arranging meetings, or report writing). The survey also measured a variety of job satisfaction indicators. We use several established protocols, including but not limited to ones reported in Spector (1985).

Data analysis is currently underway but preliminary results indicate considerable use of social media for work purposes (40% of respondents) and, more so, for personal reasons (73%). Among people who use social media for work, there is significant use of Facebook (63%), with somewhat less use of Twitter (37%) and Google Plus (17%). A response rate of 24% implied a strong interest in this research topic and initial results indicate that those who utilize social media at work use a variety of collaboration applications. In our presentation we will discuss the results and the theoretical consequences of our findings, as well as plans to deploy the survey in other countries and organizational settings, and avenues for further research.

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