



EL
27,6

The impact of Social Networking 2.0 on organisations

Anria Sophia van Zyl

*Department of Accountancy, University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch,
South Africa*

906

Received 22 September 2008
Revised 28 November 2008
Accepted 11 December 2008

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to increase the understanding of what electronic social networking encompasses. It also aims to educate IT, business decision makers, knowledge workers and librarians about the various applications, benefits and risks associated with social networking.

Design/methodology/approach – After a literature review of the available resources (academic literature, journal articles, white papers, popular media and books) the benefits and perceived risks associated with electronic social networking on organisations are investigated.

Findings – An individual's success in society depends on the shape and size of his/her social network and ability to network and form connections with other social groups. Organisations which can harness this innate human ability to manage knowledge will be able to lower transactions costs and become more profitable.

Originality/value – The paper increases the understanding of what electronic social networking encompasses and how it can be utilised for business purposes. The ideas and discussion put forth are equally applicable to libraries and may give them new insights into the provision of social networking applications as part of their services to users.

Keywords Social networks, Knowledge management, Communication technologies, Computer applications, Electronic media, Risk management

Paper type Literature review

Introduction

With the advent of Web 2.0 technologies the younger generation of internet users is rewriting the rules of social interaction, and the way business is conducted. By utilising electronic media and Web 2.0 tools such as Wiki's, blogs, tagging and social book-marking, new and ingenious methods of social interaction across geographic borders and industry silos are being created (Fu *et al.*, 2007; IBM, 2007).

In as little as five years this innovative electronic social application has crept into the business domain. Many reasons have been cited for the popularity of electronic social networking amongst office workers, with the most notable being the availability of laptops, low cost internet access, working from home, and the increasing erosion of traditional concepts of office hours (Shirky, 2008; Tapscott and Williams, 2006). During 2007 ClearSwift commissioned research to determine the extent to which social media sites are being used (ClearSwift, 2007a). They found:

- 83 per cent of US office workers used office resources to access social media;
- 30 per cent of office workers in the USA and 42 per cent of UK office workers admitted to discussing work-related issues via social media applications;



-
- 40.8 per cent of IT and business decision-makers indicated that they believed that social media is relevant in today's corporate environment; and
 - only 11.1 per cent of IT and business leaders were already making use of social media in their businesses.

A review of academic peer-reviewed research conducted since the emergence of social networking using Web 2.0 technologies has revealed that current research is mainly focusing on what social networking is, how social networks are structured and distributed and why social networks exist. The majority of research performed to address the associated risks and organisational value of Web 2.0 technologies has been conducted by private organisations such as *inter alia* Clearswift, Gardner, IBM, KPMG and MessageLabs.

The aim of this research study is to identify the benefits and associated risks of social networking in organisations, which will allow organisational leaders and IT decision-makers to understand the scope and impact of social networking.

Objective and research methodology

Social Networking, incorporating Web 2.0 technologies, has been credited with the ability to expand social contacts, accelerate business processes, the improvement of customer relations, cost-effective recruitment of high-calibre staff, and the improvement of morale, motivation and job satisfaction among staff. On the negative side this form of social networking has gained the reputation of negatively effecting staff productivity, and with many companies fearing damage to productivity and reputation (MessageLabs, 2007a).

Gourville's rule of thumb states that the advantages of a new technology will be underestimated by a factor of three, while the disadvantages of giving up old technology will be overestimated by a factor of three (Ariyur, 2008). The reason for this is that new ideas do not have a proven track record, as opposed to old ideas (Brown and Duguid, 2000, p. 154). This means that unless Social Networking 2.0 is ten times more effective than the old way of conducting business, it is unlikely to be widely accepted.

This article aims to educate organisational leaders, IT decision-makers, librarians and knowledge workers about the benefits and disadvantages associated with the implementation of Social Networking 2.0 in their organisations. In order to achieve this aim the author undertook a study of available resources, which included academic literature, journal articles, white papers, popular media and books.

Although the purpose of the study is to develop a methodology to evaluate the risks and benefits associated with electronic social networking, this research is not intended to be a document in which the technical issues regarding the functioning of Web 2.0 technologies will be addressed.

In the following section, the current literature available will be utilised to create a definition for Social Networking 2.0. The definition will then be used to create a set of criteria to determine whether a social networking application complies with the definition and falls within the scope of this research. The perceived advantages of utilising electronic social networking will be discussed next, followed by a focus on the reasons against the implementation of electronic social networking and an identification of the key risks.

Defining the next generation of web-based electronic social networking

Human interaction and collaboration usually takes place within groups. These groups are formed around a shared relationship, goal or project. Groups require the ability to interact with other groups to share their knowledge and expertise in order for the group to be successful and innovative. The advent of computer networks and the internet has made it possible for group interaction to take place regardless of geographic location or time zone, and the subsequent incorporation of Web 2.0 technologies has made this interaction and co-operation more fluid, cost effective and easily maintained.

The term widely used to describe the new form of internet usage is Web 2.0. Although interested parties have not been able to reach an agreement regarding the definition of Web 2.0, it can loosely be defined as the perceived second generation of Web-based platforms. These platforms consist out of applications specifically designed to aid online collaboration and user-generated content sharing (ClearSwift, 2007a; Matuszak, 2007; O'Reilly, 2005).

Table I summarises the more popular technologies which are relevant to social networking.

Although Table I cannot be seen as an exhaustive list of all Web 2.0 technologies currently available, it emphasises the nature of Web 2.0 technologies with its focus on online collaboration and sharing of mainly user-generated content (ClearSwift, 2007a, 2007b; O'Reilly, 2005). Due to the nature of Web 2.0 technologies it is easily adopted by users as a tool to aid social networking in the virtual world.

Technology	Description
Blogging (web blog)	Blogs are a self-publishing tool that resembles online journals where an owner can periodically post messages. Readers can subscribe to a blog, link to it, share links, post comments in an interactive format and indicate their social relationship to other bloggers who read the particular blog
Wikis	A wiki is a web site that allows online collaboration by allowing multiple users to add, remove or edit content and change content. It also allows linking among any number of pages
Social bookmarking	Social book-marking allows users to post their lists of bookmarks or favourite web sites for other users to search and view
Tagging	Tagging is the use of key words to track content on web sites. It can be used as a form of social bookmarking, where a user can gain access to all the content identified by other users and linked to the specific key word
Really simple syndication (RSS)	A web feed format used to publish frequently updated content. It lets users subscribe to their favourite "feeds" receiving automatic updates
Collaborative real time editor	An application that allows simultaneous editing of a text or media file by different participants on a network

Table I.
Web 2.0 technologies

Sources: ClearSwift (2007a, b); Godwin-Jones (2006); Matuszak (2007)

There are many terms used by the public and academics to describe this new wave of Web experiences and social networking. These terms include, but are not limited to: Social Networking, Web 2.0, Virtual Communities, E-communities, Online Communities, Social Networking Software, Collaborative Software and Social Network Services (Boyd and Ellison, 2007; Rosen, 2007; Shirky *et al.*, 2008). When these new technologies and applications find their way into the business domain, they are often referred to as Enterprise 2.0, Enterprise Web 2.0 or Enterprise Social Software (Matuszak, 2007; McAfee, 2006a, 2006b). In a library context they are known as Library 2.0.

The problem with these terms is that they are not properly defined and therefore can mean different things in different contexts and for different users (Boyd and Ellison, 2007; ClearSwift, 2007b). For example electronic social networking can incorporate Web 2.0 technologies or it can be seen as a form of Web 2.0 technology (ClearSwift, 2007b; Matuszak, 2007; O'Reilly, 2005).

For the purposes of this research this syndication of electronic social networking and Web 2.0 technologies will be referred to as Social Networking 2.0, in order to differentiate it from more traditional social networking and the earlier forms of web-based electronic social networking.

Social Networking 2.0 applications should create and manage a digital expression of people's personal relationships or links, by offering automatic address book updates and viewable profiles. These applications should also aid in the identification and conversion of potential ties into weak or strong ties by providing "introduction services" and allowing users to display their knowledge, experience and expertise in a searchable format (Boyd, 2006; ClearSwift, 2007a).

The components that should be present to comply with these criteria can be summarised as follows:

- The application must build a digital expression of personal relationships and links (Boyd, 2006);
- It must aid in the discovery of potential ties (Granovetter, 1973); and
- It should aid in the conversion of potential ties into weak and strong ties (Granovetter, 1983).

Social Networking 2.0 can therefore be defined as applications or web sites that support the maintenance of personal relationships, the discovery of potential relationships and should aid in the conversion of potential ties into weak and strong ties, by utilising emergent Web 2.0 technologies.

In order for an individual to determine whether he/she wishes to create a connection with another person he/she will require some form of social feedback. Social feedback is essential in the formation of a digital reputation (also known as karma or whuffie) and it allows other users to rate the contributions of others (Boyd, 2006; Brown and Duguid, 2000). Digital reputation assists users to determine if a person possess over the knowledge, experience and expertise he claims to have, and whether the creation of a weak or a strong tie with that individual would be advantageous.

Traditional communication methods employed on the internet utilised communication channels where information are communicated top-down or in one direction. The emphasis of Social Networking 2.0 applications and web sites lies with

two-way conversations where all participants have the opportunity to participate and share opinions and knowledge (MessageLabs, 2007a).

In order to qualify as Social Networking 2.0, two or more of the following modes of computer-mediated communication should be used according to Boyd and Ellison (2007):

- (1) one-on-one (e.g. e-mail or instant messaging for private and confidential communications);
- (2) one-to-many or one-to-few (e.g. Web pages and blogs); and
- (3) many-to-many or few-to-few (e.g. wikis and whiteboards).

The definition and components of Social Networking 2.0 can be summarised in Table II.

Benefits associated with Social Networking 2.0

“It’s not who you know, it’s what who you know knows” (Noshir Contractor) According to John Brown and Paul Duguid knowledge can be defined by three criteria, namely: knowledge is associated with a knower, knowledge is embedded in the knower, and to become a knower a person needs to be committed to understanding the information presented to him (Brown and Duguid, 2000, pp. 119-120). In organisations this knowledge comprises experience, specialist skills and the practical knowledge of how the organisational processes operate (Orlikowski, 2002).

Social Networking 2.0 provides users with the ability to create a global list of contact details (either in a graphical or text-based format) of people with whom they have strong professional ties, co-workers, colleagues and people they do business with, who they trust enough to be associated with and even recommend to others (Gorge, 2007). This contact list is different from other electronic directories in that the information is linked directly to the profiles created and maintained by the contact himself, allowing for automatic updates of changes to contact details, current activities, interest and specialist skills and expertise, in a searchable format (Boyd, 2006; ClearSwift, 2007a).

These graphical expressions of personal relationships which can be acquired over the span of an entire career, allow users to identify mutual relationships which can be exploited for introductions or recommendations (Boyd, 2006; Gorge, 2007; Granovetter, 2004).

Criteria	Component
Support social networking (must contain all three components)	Build a digital expression of people’s personal relationships and links Aid in the discovery of potential ties Aid in conversion of potential ties into weak or strong ties
Support two or more modes of computer-mediated communication (must contain at least two components)	One-on-one One-to-many/one-to-few Many-to-many/few-to-few
Allow social feedback	Contributions by a member are rated by other users

Table II.
Social Networking 2.0 requirements

An important function of the office social system is the provision of a collaborative learning environment, in which problems encountered are collectively solved and solutions are shared among peers, bridging the gap between procedures and practise (Boshoff and du Plessis, 2008; Brown and Duguid, 2000; Cairncross, 2001, p. 132; Davenport, 2001, Orlikowski, 2002).

This natural flow of knowledge is severely disrupted in distributed organisations, spanning across various service lines, departments, geographical regions and time zones (Brown and Duguid, 2000, p. 78). Don Tapscott and Anthony Williams noted that knowledge is increasingly being viewed as a product of networked people and organisations that are looking for new solutions to specific problems (Tapscott and Williams, 2006, p. 153).

In hierarchical organisations, where knowledge workers are grouped together in specialist lines of service or processes, weak ties becomes more important, in order to be able to gain access to specialist knowledge and information present in other social networks (lines of services) (Granovetter, 1973, 1983, 2004). Organisational resources are often wasted when employees have to reinvent fixes or solutions to problems, which have already been created by someone else within the organisation (Brown and Duguid, 2000, p. 112; IBM, 2007). In a perfect knowledge management system, all knowledge is non-rival and it should only be produced once. Any additional resources incurred should increase its value and accuracy to eliminate mistakes and deficiencies encountered in the past (Benkler, 2006, pp. 36, 37, 373).

Knowledge and information typically span across many types of communication tools, document formats, desktop applications, and sources within and outside the firewall, and can include e-mail, faxes, instant messages, manuals, spreadsheets, and presentations. The integration of different modes of computer mediated communications into one application allows knowledge workers to aggregate information in an efficient manner, by allowing users to add labels (through links, tags and social bookmarks) to make material more persistent for easy retrieval and sharing (Brown and Duguid, 2000, p. 200; Cairncross, 2001, p. 132; IBM, 2007).

Productivity and workflow are often hampered by the use of e-mail, instant messages and telephone calls. Synchronous or real time communication (such as telephone calls and meetings) can be time consuming, interruptive and cause decreased productivity, while asynchronous or delayed communications (such as e-mail) are often misused and overused (Burger and Rensleigh, 2007; Richtel, 2008).

Social Networking 2.0 can assist organisations to create an online resource containing the accumulated wisdom of the organisation, by allowing knowledge to be codified, searched and shared (Cairncross, 2001, pp. 131, 134; IBM, 2007). By decreasing the use of e-mails and other disruptive communication methods, the use of asynchronous communication methods, such as blogs and wikis, can increase productivity and work flow efficiency.

Other examples include:

- Tagging and social book-marking allow colleagues to search for and locate experts and “look over their shoulders” at the industry articles, blogs, manuals, wiki’s and other information that the expert finds useful, and so discover answers and solutions without interrupting them with e-mail, instant messages or telephone calls (Godwin-Jones, 2006; IBM, 2007).

- Allowing users to contribute to discussions, planning and decision making, when they have the time to do it, in an open forum, without the need to send and resend e-mails to all participants (Ariyur, 2008).
- Allowing users to always have access to the latest version of a document and to contribute to the understanding thereof by adding annotations and links to external sources (Godwin-Jones, 2006).

The following list illustrates examples of what would constitute effective and appropriate use of some of the computer mediated communication tools included in Social Networking 2.0:

- (1) *Computer-mediated communication tools: one-on-one (example: E-mail):*
 - Time critical communications (Andreson *et al.*, 2006);
 - Private and personal communications (Andreson *et al.*, 2006); and
 - Confidential or sensitive information (Andreson *et al.*, 2006).
- (2) *Computer-mediated communication tools: one-to-many (example: Blogs):*
 - “Push” ideas to a broad audience and share knowledge in a narrative format (Brown and Duguid, 2000, p. 106; IBM, 2007);
 - Traditional communications, such as newsletters (ClearSwift, 2007b);
 - Informal forums for discussing issues with staff, customers and partners (ClearSwift, 2007b; Godwin-Jones, 2006); and
 - Answering questions (Godwin-Jones, 2006).
- (3) *Computer-mediated communication tools: Many-to-many (example: Wikis):*
 - Questions and answers (Matuszak, 2007);
 - Collaborative planning, joint decision making (Ariyur, 2008); and
 - Knowledge capture and classification (ClearSwift, 2007b).

Maintaining staff morale and job satisfaction, while maintaining discipline and productivity has become one of the biggest challenges to managers. Advocates of Social Networking 2.0 and collaboration tools argue that these open platforms can take the friction out of collaboration (Tapscott and Williams, 2006, pp. 94-6), create a culture of sharing (IBM, 2007) and increase job satisfaction and in so doing increase productivity.

Peter Kollock argued that there are four motivations for people to contribute knowledge, expertise and time without the expectation of receiving a direct benefit (monitory or otherwise) in return (Smith and Kollock, 1999, pp. 227-9). These findings can be summarised as follows: A person can be motivated to contribute valuable information to the group, by expecting to receive useful help and information in return (Graham and Hall, 2004; Smith and Kollock, 1999, p. 227). This can lead to a culture of sharing knowledge and expertise (IBM, 2007).

Social Networking 2.0 rewards contributions through ratings, feedback, and the creation of a following (people who link to, or subscribe to your work). This digital reputation serves to recognise a person’s contributions to and beyond the immediate group, and places a value on the individual’s knowledge and knowledge creation abilities (Brown and Duguid, 2000, p. 112; IBM, 2007; Smith and Kollock, 1999, p. 228).

This increased visibility satisfies most individual's desire for prestige and recognition and increases their job satisfaction (IBM, 2007; Smith and Kollock, 1999, p. 228).

People can be motivated to share in groups due to a desire to have an effect on their environment by doing good things (Shirky, 2008, pp. 131-133; Smith and Kollock, 1999, p. 228). Clay Shirky (2008) noted that more people are motivated to contribute to bad contributions (which they desire to make better), than by the desire to start a new article from scratch. Individuals can also be motivated to share an innovation in the hope that the community will improve it and therefore the innovation would be more useful to themselves. This is often seen in the open source movement (Benkler, 2006, p. 42; Smith and Kollock, 1999, p. 228)

These transparent processes (where all contributions are seen and responded to by the community) can assist communities in the co-creation of solutions where no "buy-in" are necessary, because teams are emotionally committed to an agreed upon solution or plan (Ariyur, 2008).

One of the areas where Social Networking 2.0 will have the biggest impact on organisations is in the continual communication with costumers and the public, advocated by Social Networking 2.0. This open communication can have an impact on the organisations' perceived image or brand and their image of being innovative and market leaders, by aiding in the following.

Customer relations are improved by allowing customers direct access to information, for which they would previously have had to telephone, or e-mail. This eliminates frustration caused by delays (Brown and Duguid, 2000, p. 77; Cairncross, 2001, p. 132; ClearSwift, 2007b). It is estimated that three-quarters of UK Social Networkers have already visited profiles set up by companies, on sites such as MySpace and Facebook, to promote particular brands (IBM, 2007; MessageLabs, 2007a).

Social Networking 2.0 can also be used as a viral marketing tool, where people are encouraged to voluntarily pass marketing messages on through word-of-mouth (IBM, 2007). Viral promotions may include video clips, Flash games, e-books, free software, images and text messages.

Innovation can be encouraged by monitoring customer communications, feedback and opinions (Matuszak, 2007; Tapscott and Williams, 2006, pp. 93-94). This continuous communication with customers can be used for solution development by utilising customer opinions in making key product decisions (IBM, 2007).

The negative impact and risks associated with Social Networking 2.0

Many organisations already utilise some form of electronic directory containing contact information of staff, clients, suppliers and other role players, and it could be argued that another directory is not necessary (Cairncross, 2001, p. 133). These lists can either be maintained in the Contacts application in Microsoft Outlook, or similar e-mail applications, or maintained as a spreadsheet by a responsible staff member, and have to be continuously updated when contacts move offices, change telephone numbers, e-mail addresses and employers; and some degree of link rotting (when contact information are not up-to-date) may take place (Brown and Duguid, 2000, p. 201).

The new open directory services utilised by Social Networking 2.0 allows people to gain access to a large volume of information, which can then be used in a social engineering attack (KasperskyLab, 2008; Leitch and Warren, 2006). Spammers and virus-writers can set up false profiles and trawl through Social Networking Sites

(including Blogs) gathering information about job titles, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, etc. (MessageLabs, 2007a).

Fake profiles, blogs and other networking tools, can contain links to other web sites that download unwanted spyware or adware, or the posting itself can contain a flash file with an embedded virus or worm (ClearSwift, 2007d; MessageLabs, 2007a). The goal of the majority of malware is to cause data leakage.

One of the biggest concerns regarding social networking platforms is that productivity will be effected negatively because employees may spend too much time networking and posting entries on blogs and wikis. There is also a risk that employees will utilise it for more social purposes and not on work related postings (Ariyur, 2008; ClearSwift, 2007b; MessageLabs, 2007a; Shirky, 2008, pp. 120-1). This can have serious implications with regards to the capacity and utilisation of servers and networks, with bandwidth being congested with multimedia contents which are often not work related (ClearSwift, 2007d; MessageLabs, 2007a).

In typical organisations knowledge is usually managed by grouping knowledge workers (knowers) into processes or lines of service, in which processes and requirements are communicated downwards by management, thus providing clear lines of responsibility and communication channels. In this hierarchical structure new employees need only one connection, which is their manager, to obtain the relevant knowledge he/she will require to perform their work, either through one-on-one communication, training programs, training manuals, or procedure manuals (Benkler, 2006, p. 314; Cairncross, 2001, p. 133; Coase, 1937; Shirky, 2008, p. 29). New knowledge is also produced within these closed, hierarchical groups (Tapscott and Williams, 2006, p. 153).

In Social Networking 2.0 applications knowledge is no longer created in controlled hierarchical groups. User generated information created using collaboration tools, such as blogs and wiki's, allow anybody to add and edit content, including unanticipated players who are not subject matter experts (Ariyur, 2008; ClearSwift, 2007b). This peer produced knowledge may not be as reliable as procedures and manuals generated by specialist staff and communicated down the chain of command. Vandalism and misinformation caused by employees can leave employers open to legal action (under the principle of vicarious liability), whereby employers are responsible for negligent acts or omissions by their employees in the course of their work, even if those acts are accidental (ClearSwift, 2007c).

The ability to link, tag and social bookmark are some of the key features of Social Networking 2.0, making it easy to share, label, and find information. Many employers are concerned about the potential loss of confidential information by an unguarded (or malicious) comment or link created by an employee, which could then result in company embarrassment, financial damage, legal liability or possible security risks (ClearSwift, 2007b; MessageLabs, 2007a; NETconsent Limited, 2004).

Damage to organisational reputation can also be caused by articles appearing in the press about employees being dismissed by an organisation for inappropriate use of office resources (NETconsent Limited, 2004). Staff posting negative comments about their organisation, clients and colleagues online can become easy to find via an online search and may be available for an unlimited time (ClearSwift, 2007b; MessageLabs, 2007a, 2007b). Another serious concern is the forum social tools create in which former and dissatisfied customers can criticise and complain about the organisation creating a

public image of the organisation which are outside the organisation's control (Shirky, 2008, p. 179).

The impact (both negative and positive) of Social Networking 2.0 can be summarised in Table III.

Conclusion

The aim of this research study was to identify the benefits and associated risks of social networking on organisations, which will allow organisational leaders, IT decision-makers and knowledge workers to understand the scope and impact of Social Networking 2.0 on their organisations. Although not specifically discussing the context of libraries, it is evident that all the points discussed herein are as equally applicable to the library domain as they are to the business or academic domain.

Social Networking 2.0 can be defined as the utilisation of Web 2.0 technologies by applications or web sites to support the maintenance of personal relationships, the discovery of potential relationships and to aid in the conversion of potential ties into weak and strong ties.

The reasons for and against the implementation of electronic social networking as a knowledge management tool, were identified. Reasons for the implementation of Social Networking 2.0 showed that social networking platforms increase productivity, workflow efficiency, staff motivation and innovation by allowing:

- users to use computer mediated communication technologies more effectively and appropriately to collaborate with co-workers;
- the identification of experts, opportunities and potential collaborators outside the knowledge workers traditional organisational channel; and

Perceived positive	Perceived negative
1 Up to date contact information linked to user maintained profiles	Potential source of information which can be used in social engineering attacks
2 Identification of experts, opportunities and potential business partners	Spammers and virus-writers can set up false profiles
3 Increased productivity and workflow efficiency	
4 Increased staff motivation and sense of community through the accumulation of a digital reputation	Decreased productivity caused by employees spending too much time networking and posting entries on blogs and Wikis
4 Retention of cumulative organisational knowledge and experience in a fully searchable format	User generated content can be unreliable Potential loss of confidential or sensitive information
5 More effective, appropriate and efficient use of computer-mediated communication technologies	Resource waste with regard to bandwidth, server and network utilisation
6 The ability to influence the perception of the organisation and/or brands through improved customer relations, viral marketing and innovation	Damage to organisational reputation either through intentional acts of vandalism and misinformation or through negligent acts or omissions

Table III.
Impact of Social
Networking 2.0 on
organisations

- the retention of cumulative organisational knowledge and experience in a searchable format.

Some of the key reasons against the implementation of Social Networking 2.0 are:

- the perceived advantages of the existing hierarchical organisational structure where knowledge workers are grouped into channels and information are communicated in one direction as opposed to the open platform approach advocated by emergent web-based platforms;
- there is a fear that social networking platforms will have a negative effect on productivity; and
- the potential loss of confidential or sensitive data through negligent or malicious acts by employees or through social engineering or malware attacks.

This research focused on the impact of Social Networking 2.0 on organisations with specific emphasis on the perceived benefits and negative effects on business. There exists a need for future research regarding the risks and methods to mitigate the impact of these risks. It can only be hypothesised whether the identification and implementation of risk mitigation procedures will lead to the benefits of allowing social networking in organisations to out way the negative perceptions organisational leaders currently have.

References

- Andresen, E., Bergman, A. and Hallen, L. (2006), "The role of e-mail communication in strategic networks: patterns observed over time", *22nd IMP Conference, Milan*, available at: <http://impgroup.org/uploads/papers/5611.pdf> (accessed 27 November 2008).
- Ariyur, K. (2008), "The Wikinomics playbook: mass collaboration in action", available at: www.wikinomics.com/the_wikinomics_playbook_2008.pdf (accessed 19 March 2008).
- Benkler, Y. (2006), *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*, Yale University Press, London.
- Boshoff, M. and du Plessis, T. (2008), "Preferred communication methods and technologies for organisational knowledge sharing and decision making", *South African Journal of Information Management*, Vol. 10 No. 2, available at: www.sajim.co.za (accessed 15 August 2008).
- Boyd, D.M. and Ellison, N.N. (2007), "Social network sites: definition, history, and scholarship", *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, Vol. 13 No. 1, available at: <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol/issue1/boyd.ellison.html> (accessed 11 June 2008).
- Boyd, S. (2006), "Are you ready for social software?", available at: www.stoweboyd.com/message/2006/10/are_your_ready_f.html (accessed 11 June 2008).
- Brown, J.S. and Duguid, P. (2000), *The Social Life of Information*, HBS Press, Boston, MA.
- Burger, E. and Rensleigh, C. (2007), "Investigating e-mail overload in the South African banking industry", *South African Journal of Information Management*, Vol. 9 No. 2, available at: www.sajim.co.za (accessed 11 June 2008).
- Cairncross, F. (2001), *The Death of Distance 2.0: How the Communications Revolution Will Change Our Lives*, Texere, London.

- ClearSwift (2007a), "15 Common mistakes in web security: enterprise vulnerabilities that invite attack", available at: www.newbase.com.au/15%20Common%20Mistakes%20in%20Web%20Security.pdf (accessed 25 March 2008).
- ClearSwift (2007b), *Content Security 2.0: The Impact of Web 2.0 on Corporate Security*, available at: www.computerworlduk.com/cmsdata/whitepapers/5450/clearswift_surveyreport_us_07.pdf (accessed 25 March 2008).
- ClearSwift (2007c), "Data leakage: the stealth threat to business", available at: http://i.i.com.com/cnwk.id/html/itp/clearswift_data_leakage.pdf (accessed 25 March 2008).
- ClearSwift (2007d), "Demystifying Web 2.0: opportunities, threats, defences", available at: [http://resources.clearswift.com/ExternalContent/C12CUST/Clearswift/9514/200707_DemystifyingWeb2\[1\].0_US_1062190.pdf](http://resources.clearswift.com/ExternalContent/C12CUST/Clearswift/9514/200707_DemystifyingWeb2[1].0_US_1062190.pdf) (accessed 25 March 2008).
- Coase, R.H. (1937), "The nature of the firm", *Economica*, Vol. 4 No. 16, pp. 386-405.
- Davenport, E. (2001), "Knowledge management issues for online organisations: 'Communities of Practise' as an exploratory framework", *Journal of Documentation*, Vol. 57 No. 1, pp. 66-75.
- Fu, F., Liu, L. and Wang, L. (2007), "Empirical analysis of online social networks in the age of the Web 2.0", *Physica A*, Vol. 378 Nos 2/3, pp. 678-85.
- Godwin-Jones, R. (2006), "Emerging technologies: tag clouds in the blogosphere: electronic literacy and social networking", *Language, Learning & Technology*, Vol. 10 No. 2, p. 8.
- Gorge, M. (2007), "Security for third level education organisations and other educational bodies", *Computer Fraud & Security*, Vol. 2007 No. 7, pp. 6-9.
- Graham, D. and Hall, H. (2004), "Creation and recreation: motivating collaboration to generate knowledge capital in online communities", *International Journal of Information Management*, Vol. 105 No. 2/4, pp. 235-46.
- Granovetter, M. (1983), "The strength of weak ties: a network theory revisited", *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 201-33.
- Granovetter, M. (2004), "The impact of social structure on economic outcomes", *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 19 No. 1, pp. 33-50.
- Granovetter, M.S. (1973), "The strength of weak ties", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 78 No. 6, pp. 1360-80.
- IBM (2007), "Achieving tangible business benefits with social computing", available at: www.2dnet.co.uk/i/25/ads/whitepapers/IBM/yellow_fewer_new/socialnetworking.pdf (accessed 25 March 2008).
- Kasperskylab (2008), *Security Trends 2008*, available at: <http://viewer.bitpipe.com/viewer/viewDocument.do?accessId=7319425> (accessed 17 March 2008).
- Leitch, S. and Warren, M. (2006), "Social engineering and its impact via the internet", in Valli, C. and Woodward, A. (Eds), *Proceedings of the 4th Australian Information Security Management Conference, Western Australia: Edith Cowan University, Perth*, pp. 184-9.
- McAfee, A. (2006a), *Enterprise 2.0, Version 2.0*, available at: http://blog.hbs.edu/faculty/amcafee/index.php/faculty_amcafee_v3/enterprise_20_version_20/ (accessed 26 June 2008).
- McAfee, A. (2006b), "Enterprise 2.0: the dawn of emergent collaboration", *MIT Sloan Management Review*, Vol. 47 No. 3, pp. 21-8.
- Matuszak, G. (2007), *Enterprise 2.0: Fad or Future? The Business Role for Social Software Platforms*, KPMG, available at: www.kpmg.ca/en/industries/ice/documents/thebusinessroleforsocialsoftwareplatforms.pdf (accessed 17 June 2008).

- MessageLabs (2007a), "Online social networking: the employer's dilemma", available at: http://downloads.messagelabs.com/silikonuk/wss_whitepaper_socialnetworking_legal_a4_final.pdf (accessed 25 March 2008).
- MessageLabs (2007b), "Social networking: a brave new world or revolution from hell?", available at: http://i.i.com.com/cnwk.id/html/iop/messagelabs_socialnetworking.pdf (accessed 27 February 2008).
- NETconsent Limited (2004), *Employee Internet Access: Effective Management of the Organisational Risk*, available at: www.netconsent.com/Resources/-+Whitepapers/-+Whitepapers.htm (accessed 27 February 2008).
- O'Reilly, T. (2005), "What is Web 2.0? Design patterns and business models for the next generation of software", available at: www.oreillynet.com/lpt/a/6228 (accessed 27 February, 2008).
- Orlikowski, W.J. (2002), "Knowing in practice: enacting a collective capability in distributed organizing", *Organizational Science*, Vol. 13 No. 3, pp. 249-73.
- Richtel, M. (2008), "Lost in e-mail, tech firms face self-made beast", *New York Times*, 14 June.
- Rosen, C. (2007), "Virtual friendship and the new narcissism", *The New Atlantis*, Vol. 17, Summer, pp. 15-31.
- Shirky, C. (2008), *Here Comes Everybody. The Power of Organising without Organisations*, Penguin Books, New York, NY.
- Smith, M. and Kollock, P. (1999), *Communities in Cyberspace*, Routledge, London.
- Tapscott, D. and Williams, A.D. (2006), *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*, Portfolio, New York, NY.

About the author

Anria van Zyl obtained a BAcc (Hons) degree, as well as a Certificate in the Theory of Accounting, at the University of the Free State, South Africa in 2001. After completing her training contract at PricewaterhouseCoopers, she qualified as a Chartered Accountant (CA(SA)). She started lecturing at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa in 2006, and obtained her Master's degree in Computer Auditing from the University of Stellenbosch in 2008. She is currently a lecturer in Information Systems at undergraduate level. Anria van Zyl can be contacted at: avanzy1@sun.ac.za