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Rise of the Social Business Architect

The world is changing and needs Social Business Architects. Gone is the epoch of the passive consumer, now customers want a say. At the same time, the quest for survival and growth is causing companies to stop looking at suppliers as someone to squeeze on price and instead as partners in innovation. And, employers are realizing that to maximize their success they need to attract and engage the best talent not just into internal talent pools, but external ones as well.
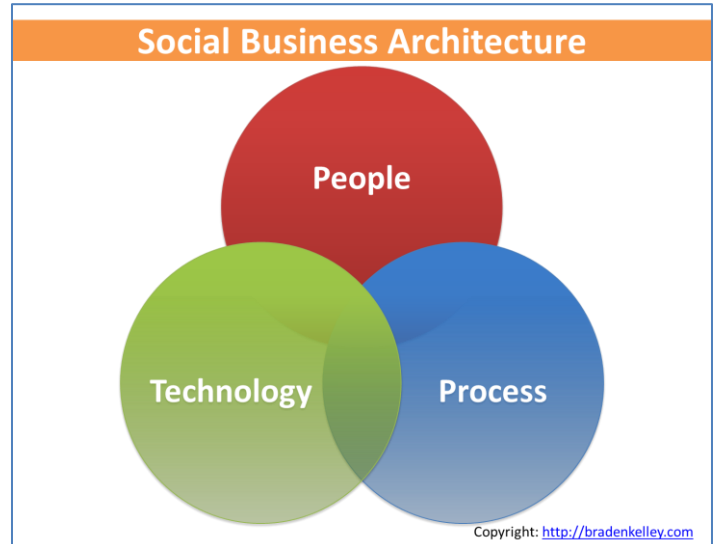
It feels like you can't go a day without hearing someone or some publication mention Facebook, Twitter or some other component of the social media universe. The fact is that social media has invaded the public consciousness and

Social Business Architecture

People

Technology

Process

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people are now more suspicious of someone who doesn't have a social media presence than someone who does. People are starting to judge others based on their Facebook or LinkedIn profile they ever meet them, and expecting companies to answer the tweet they've sent them or the question they've posted on their Facebook wall within the day, the hour, the minute (believe me the expected pace of response is accelerating).

Social media has become so important and pervasive that it is beginning to co-opt the term 'social business' into its lexicon to describe an organization's engagement with people outside of its borders across a variety of channels and for a variety of purposes. Social media is stealing the term 'social business' away from the social enterprise folks, and that's okay – they can't possibly use 'social business' and 'social enterprise' at the same time anyways.

The importance of 'social business' and social business design has grown as our technologies have matured from contact management to customer relationship management (CRM) systems, from bulletin boards to discussion forums, from static to dynamic html, from social networks to social media, and from media consumer to media producer. Ultimately 'social business' is **the science of optimizing the intersection of people, process, and technology**. If we look at 'social business' as the discipline managing that intersection and helping an organization focusing on how it engages with others and maximizes the value of its relationships, I've been working in social business for more than 15 years as what I like to call a **Social Business Architect**.

In addition to facilitating and optimizing the group dynamics and interactions inside the organization, a **Social Business Architect** specializes in identifying the different parts of an organization that need to interact with groups of people outside the organization, how those parts of the organization should work together to communicate with people outside the organization, and helps to identify and implement communications solutions that connect the organization with the target groups so that a meaningful connection and conversation can be built, and then helps to manage the conversations and the information and learnings from their outcomes for the benefit of the organization.
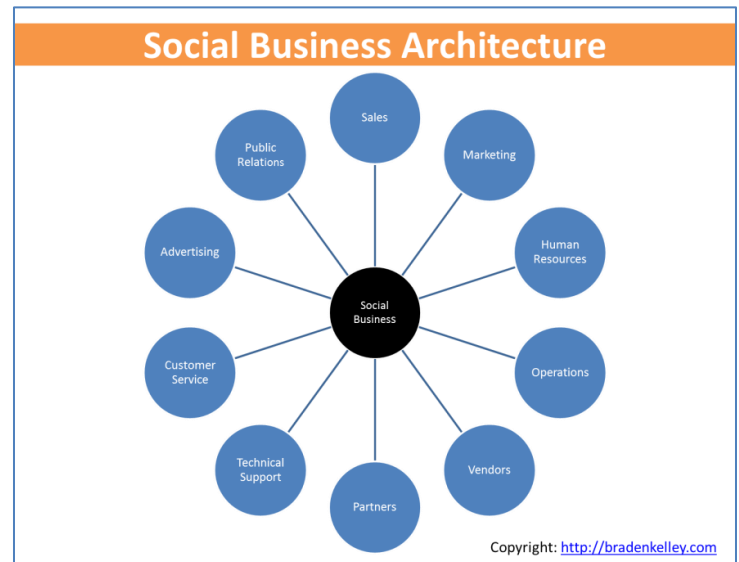
A Social Business Architect keeps the organizations focused on the goals of its relationships with the outside, works with the organization's technologists and other specialists in other departments to enable the necessary conversations to take place for the benefit of the organization.

From building Symantec's first web-based multi-lingual technical support and customer service capabilities to working with the Windows Live team at Microsoft to building the world's most popular innovation community centered around http://innovationexcellence.com, I've seen the importance of finding the right intersection between primary connection points and sources of value for the community to establish itself, grow and thrive.

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To build a successful community and attract talent to your organization you must try to identify as an organization what resources you already have (or could create) that will have some value to the community that you are trying to build. These sources of value to the community could be:

1. Financial
2. Informational
3. Educational
4. Social
5. Or come from another store of value

You must give people a reason to want to connect with you and to stay close – and yes, hopefully contribute over time.

In addition to identifying the value that you can bring to the community you must also identify which connection points will multiply the attractive power of the sources of value you choose to focus on. There are three primary connection points to consider:

1. **Passion –** One of the ways that you can attract people to your community is to leverage the power of passion. Seek to identify what people are passionate about when it comes to your company or your products. Passion can be extremely contagious. Is there a way that you can inject the passion that people may have for your company or products into your community?

2. **Purpose –** Another connection point to consider is to tap into the power of purpose. Not all organizations are committed to serving a larger social purpose, but all can consider introducing elements of public outreach or philanthropy that the community can engage with and feel good about contributing to. Are you building walls to keep people out? Or are you creating something that people can feel a part of?
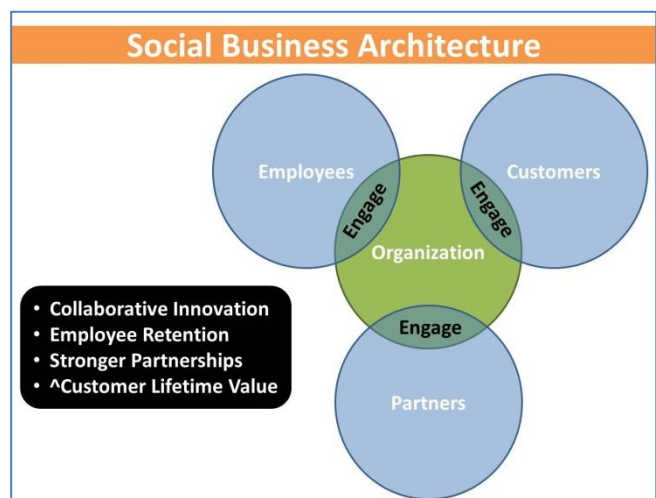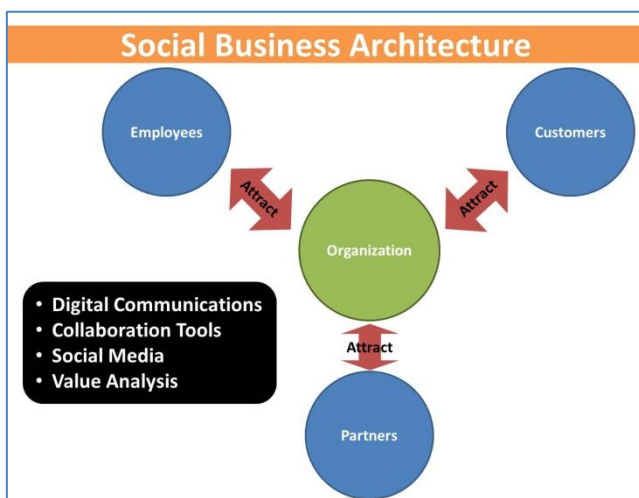
3. **Fun –** And don't forget the power of fun. One of the ways of connecting people to your community is to have something fun for people to do. Recognize people for their participation in your community in fun and different ways to keep them interested and engaged, and have some fun reinforcing the ethos of the community.

And when you bring the right sources of value together with the right connection points that is when the magic of attraction and engagement happens and a community starts to grow its membership and participation. But we are not just seeking to build a community; we are looking to activate it as well (to get people engaged, contributing, discussing, connecting, etc.).

This is where Social Business Architects prove their worth to the organization. They can use social media, digital communications, value analysis, and other collaborative tools to help organizations attract and engage customers, partners and employees to help the organization achieve its commercial goals. Whether the future direction of your social business architecture includes beginning collaborative innovation, increasing employee retention, building stronger partnerships, growing customer lifetime value, or another effort, be sure that you are involving the **Social Business Architects** in your organization to help set the right goals and find the right tools to ensure the effort's success. Only then will you put your organization on the path it needs to be to transform itself from an internally focused product and service factory to a truly internally and externally focused and integrated social business capable of sustainable innovation, retention of the growing millennial work force, long-term customer relationships and loyalty, and true partnerships with its vendors and suppliers for mutual benefit.

Are you ready to architect a social business foundation under your organization?

Braden Kelley is as Social Business Architect and the author of Stoking Your Innovation Bonfire. He has been advising companies on how to build online communities, engage external talent, and improve their innovation success since 1996. Braden writes frequently about innovation and social media. He has maximized profits for companies while living and working in England, Germany, and the United States. Braden earned his MBA from top-rated London Business School and is an Innovation Excellence co-founder.