

Social Media in Project Management: Is it a waste of time?

Video transcript

Paul Naybour

Parallel Project Training: Can I just ask why APM is investing in a forum and Social Media?

Owain Wilson

APM: Sure, we see the model slightly changing from professional bodies, in terms of where information is, where it's coming from and how it's disseminated and really we need to provide a service to our members to get the up-to-date information to them in a reliable format, so we see the need to actually get on line where a lot of our members are already and to be talking to them.

Paul: So I thought it would be really interesting to start off by discussing what is social networking, because it's a widely used term and it could mean anything or different things to different people. Anyone got any views?

Elizabeth Harrin

The Otobos Group: I have a view.

Paul: Go on then.

Elizabeth: I think social networking, you are right, social media in a term does mean different things to different people and for me social networking is a subset of social media and the networking side of things is where you use on-line technology to connect with other people, so things like LinkedIn, things like the APM's communities, or in the more public sector where there is not so much use for business, Facebook. Whereas social media is a wider term that encompasses other types of tools, things like Twitter, blogs, wikis.

Paul: So you've got two definitions have you?

Elizabeth: Yes, I think social networking is a very specific thing.

Lindsay Scott

Arras People: It's interesting for me social media is – okay there's a number of different kind of tools of which you can use but I think the end game for me is that it's the tools that allow you to network, meet other project managers, but also

share knowledge and, you know, various links to bits of information that you wouldn't normally find, which in turn allows people to develop themselves and it also contributes to things like CPD.

Paul: I think that's clear though isn't it, because learning through social networking or blogs is very interesting because Elizabeth writes some really good interesting pieces that make you think about your project management, you know, and some good debates going on in the APM website around the cost of value of training and how do you control projects.

Elizabeth: I think when we've got a recession and people are cutting back on training then some of the things like podcasts and listening to things like this and some of the extra stuff that training providers, like you, are offering it's another way that people can get learning where they don't have to necessarily attend a five day PRINCE2 course.

Owain: I think what we're talking about here is online social media rather than social media as a whole. You've got lots of tools already that enable communication between groups of people, of teams, you've got the telephone, you've got meeting rooms, what we're really got with online social media is another tool to facilitate a discussion. So, today we're talking about online social media specifically but it's important to remember it as part of a toolbox, as it were. It's another tool that we can use.

Lindsay: I think it would be really good to understand what those tools are. For me the tools that I suppose I actively use are things like the blog, Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, those are the things that I use both personally and also for business reasons.

Elizabeth: Because people use wikis which is an online web page that anybody can edit for document sharing, document collaboration, updating pieces of information that everybody will want to have an input into, but also for things like lessons learned databases.

Lindsay: And so wikis can be made secure, they are not public?

Elizabeth: Yes. If you think about Wikipedia that's probably the most public example, the largest one I can think of, but you can have something just for your company, or just for your project team and you can really button down the security to make sure that if you are sharing information about your project and it's commercially sensitive that nobody else can see it.

Paul: So it's private to your business?

Elizabeth: Yes. And I think, to be honest, in a business environment most of these social media tools have to be adopted behind the firewall because so much of what we do with projects is commercially sensitive. And while learning and recruitment activity and sharing information and networking you can do in a public space, if you are using social media tools to help you manage a project or to communicate with your team you don't necessarily want the world and his wife overhearing that. And while we as project managers may have been doing paper documents and circulating them around the business and having people actually physically sign things off, not that long ago, now everything is on email and in five years time there will be a different way of working and this kind of networking and online communication that maybe the Millennial generation are bringing to the workplace is something that we either adopt at our own pace or it is going to be forced upon us later on. And I think the project manager should be at the forefront of adopting new techniques.

Paul: But we've also used shared document stores and things like that for managing documents.

Lindsay: That's for information sharing though.

Paul: Yes that's right.

Lindsay: What we're talking about here is-

Owain: Is the social part of it.

Lindsay: We always say and we all know that project management, the most important part is communication, so there are certain tools available and it's just another way to help you communicate in your project, because your project, for

example, is going to have different audiences. For example, if you have got a project that's a public sector and you're delivering a project to a community, the public, actually using things like blogs or Facebook pages or that kind of thing allows you to connect with some of your major stakeholders and the public.

Paul: OK, I can see that, I can see that. So as part of PR, a publicity campaign, consultation, then-

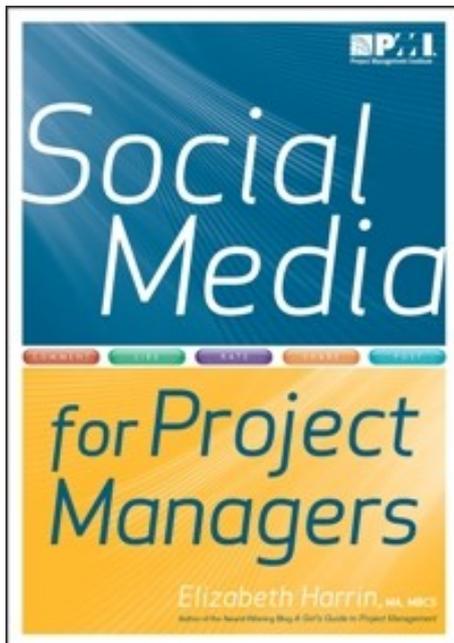
Lindsay: Then a blog could become a product or a deliverable, couldn't it as part of a project.

Paul: Yes.

Lindsay: It's another way to look at it.

Paul: A stakeholder management tool.

Lindsay: Yeah, so it's not just about communication between the PM and team, but between the project and its stakeholders.



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Dave Garrett, CEO, Gantthead.com

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