

# Social Media: In the Work Place and Patterns of Usage

Trevor Nesbit, University of Canterbury, Canterbury, New Zealand

*Abstract: As the adoption of social media increases, a number of important themes have emerged. The two main themes that are investigated in this study are the perceived benefits and risks of using social media in the work place; and the patterns of usage of social media. The theme of the perceived benefits and risks of using social media in the workplace is investigated through a literature review and a survey of third year commerce students about their perceptions. The pattern of usage theme is also explored through the same survey of a group of third year commerce students. The analysis and discussion of the results from the survey highlighted a number of interesting issues connected to the two themes. The two main issues relating to the perceived benefits and risks of using social media in the work place are firstly, that use of social media tools to enhance employee retention is not seen as being important by the group of respondents in this study in comparison with other benefits identified in the literature; and secondly, that the reduction of trust in an organisation and incompatibility with organisational culture are not seen as being amongst the significant risks and challenges when using social media in the work place by the group of respondents in the study. The three main issues relating to the patterns of usage theme include that Facebook is the most frequently used social media tool by the students surveyed who were under the age of 30; that there is potentially a difference between the genders in the frequency with which Wikis are used; and that defining what constitutes frequent use of one social media tool may be different to what constitutes frequent use of another social media tool. Other issues raised in this study include social media as an appropriate marketing tool to reach people under the age of 30 (and potentially other age groups), and has potential to be used as part of educational programmes, however some care would need to be taken over the choice of social media tool.*

Keywords: Social Media, Work Place

## Introduction

**T**HE PURPOSE OF this paper is to investigate the use of social media by exploring two themes. The first theme relates to the perceived benefits and risks of using social media in the workplace and is carried out by an investigation of the literature relating to the use of social media in the work place and through a survey of a group of third year commerce students at the University of Canterbury. The second theme relates to patterns of usage and is explored using the same survey of third year commerce students.

A number of pieces of literature are reviewed and concepts are identified which are then analysed and discussed to identify a number of benefits pertaining to the use of social media in the work place, as well as the risks and challenges of using social media in the work place. The results of the literature review were used as the basis for a survey that was completed by a group of third year commerce students with the aim of (a) identifying any trends and consistencies in their perceptions (when comparing them to the literature) relating to the use of social media in the work place and the risks and benefits inherent in its use and (b) exploring the students usage patterns of social media.

The paper provides a basis for further study into (a) the perceptions of the use of social media tools by those in the commerce profession, and (b) the use of social media tools in education.

**Research Method**

A brief literature review was conducted with the aim of identifying issues surrounding the use of social media in the work place.

Based on the results of this literature review, a survey was created with the aim of measuring the respondents’ use of social media, and the respondents’ perceptions of a range of issues identified in the literature review.

The survey was created using the online survey tool, Survey Monkey. Once the survey had been created it was tested by six different trial respondents in groups of three. The trial respondents were contacts the author had on Facebook. A brief outline of their background is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Background of Trial Respondents**

| Group | Trial Respondent | Gender | Age Range | Background      |
|-------|------------------|--------|-----------|-----------------|
| A     | 1                | Female | 30-40     | Teacher         |
|       | 2                | Male   | 40-50     | Teacher         |
|       | 3                | Female | 30-40     | Mature Student  |
| B     | 4                | Female | 40-50     | Mature Student  |
|       | 5                | Male   | 20-30     | Recent Graduate |
|       | 6                | Male   | 20-30     | Recent Graduate |

Group A were sent a link to the survey and were asked to complete the survey. Two of the trial respondents identified potential areas in the survey that could be misleading along with a mistake that resulted from copying and pasting sections of a table. Once these issues had been addressed, the link to the survey was sent to the members of Group B asking them to complete the survey. The feedback from one of these trial respondents highlighted one small grammatical error.

Once the survey had been finalised, the link to the survey was emailed to a class of third year commerce students at the University of Canterbury. After a week, a follow up email was sent to the class thanking those who had completed the survey, which resulted in the number of respondents almost doubling in size.

The final sample size of 79 has resulted in it not being possible to conduct a wide range of valid statistical tests to test the significance of differences in views between respondents of different age groups, particularly as the vast majority of respondents were from the under 30 year old age group. However, a smaller number of chi-squared tests were able to be conducted to measure the significance of differences in views between male and female respondents.

## **Literature Review**

The literature review of the use of social media in the work place highlighted a number of important concepts including the need to understand the benefits and risks of using social media in the work place; approaches to take in the adoption of social media in the work place; and that the use of social media should be seen as the “use of a communication tool” as opposed to being an end in itself. The literature review summarises a number of studies that have been conducted with the emerging concepts being highlighted on the section titled “Concepts Emerging from the Literature Review”.

### ***The Use of Blogging in the Work Place***

Lavenda (2008) cited a Forrester survey in which it was found that 78% of IT organisations are concerned about the risks of employee-driven, unsanctioned use of Web 2.0 tools and technologies. Lavenda (2008) goes on to state “how the social forces that are driving change in the consumer computing world are also impacting on the way business gets done”, and goes on to identify some additional forces and needs that are introduced by business. These included (a) the need for distributed and time-independent staff to communicate in a practical and reliable way; (b) the need to locate, access and share information quickly; (c) the desire to more effectively leverage contacts and content; (d) the need to improve employee satisfaction to retain the best employees; (e) the need to improve productivity in order to remain competitive; and (f) the need to reduce expenses.

It was also identified in Lavenda (2008) that employees having had good home experiences in the use of social media tools were also seeking:

- More interactive, intuitive and user-friendly tools for using applications and information systems
- Simpler communication and collaboration between employees, customers and business partners
- A customisable and personalisable user experience, with this being based on the prediction of a Gartner study that by 2015 users will be customising 90% of the tools that they use both at work, at home, for leisure, and entertainment

Lavenda (2008) also identifies some of the challenges facing managers who want to utilise some of the benefits of social networking with these including security, control, trust and the lack of integration with other tools used by employees. Lavenda (2008) concludes, by identifying four common approaches that are being taken by organisations to the use of social networking tools with these being to (a) raise the drawbridges and prohibit their use; (b) ignore the phenomenon; (c) provide enterprise “look-a-like” equivalents of consumer services; and (d) permit (and even encourage) limited use of consumer tools, subject to corporate policies. These are all aspects that would need to be considered to ensure that the potential benefits of using social media in the work place do eventuate.

### ***The Influence of Social Networks on Employee Turnover***

The influence of social networks and value congruence on turnover intention amongst employees in the public and not-for-profit sector was examined in a study by Moynihan and

Pandey (2008). They applied two approaches to turnover of staff that were seen as being absent from the previous literature in the public and not for profit sectors with the two approaches being person-organisation fit and social network theory. It was proposed that intra-organisational social networks reduce turnover by making it less desirable in contrast to inter-organisational social networks which make it easier for employees to find new jobs.

Some evidence was found to support the claim of Mossholder, Settoon and Henagan (2005) that “relational ties people form from working together may be the ties that bind”. In their sample, the aspects of social network theory that appear to be related to explaining employee turnover are the social relationships that employees have with co-workers and the sense of obligation that they have towards them.

The conclusions of Moynihan and Pandey (2008) went on to include support for the role of intra-organisational social networks in limiting or reducing turnover, but had little support for the notion of inter-organisational social networks in shaping employers intentions to move to another employer.

### ***Risks in a Web 2.0 World***

The risks to both employees and business in adopting Web 2.0 tools for business purposes were presented in a study by Short (2008) who identified as part of this study that regardless of the specific technologies that are used, it is the manner in which the new technologies are implemented, and how the associated risks are managed that will be most important. Short (2008) explains how in some cases the new technologies are being adopted and used by employees without the knowledge of the organisation.

The specific risks identified in this study are security, as well as social risks that can exist with the increased interactivity that can result in people divulging information (including proprietary organisational information) to people both outside the organisation and inside the organisation whom they might not have divulged the information to previously. Short (2008) goes on to conclude that the challenge for organisations in a Web 2.0 world is how to make best use of the technology without opening the organisation up to new threats that outweigh the benefits of the technology.

### ***Collaboration Changing Everything***

The potential of Web 2.0 and social media technologies, and in particular wikis, was focussed on Tapscott and Williams (2007) when they outlined the changes that these types of technologies can bring about to the business environment. The four important principles identified by Tapscott and Williams (2007) as being part of what they coined as being ‘wikinomics’ were openness, peering, sharing and acting globally. These four principles are important in this study because they relate to a number of the benefits and risks that result from using social media in the work place.

### ***Use of Social Media in the Enterprise***

In looking at how Web 2.0 tools could be used by an enterprise and the value that could be gained from doing so, McAfee (2006) identified a number of significant improvements that could be made in areas such as the generation, capturing and sharing of knowledge; letting

people find helpful colleagues; tapping into sources of innovation; and harnessing the ‘wisdom of crowds’.

### ***Use of Semantic Web Technologies to Enable Community***

The application of social networking tools to a semantic social network portal that is used to support enterprise training units in a company was the focus of a study conducted by Neumann et al (2005). While much of this study was an overview of other portal sites and their features, the authors did conclude with the comment that “the semantic web technologies can help to enable communities to evolve, use and manipulate more intuitively emerging content and knowledge structures”.

### ***Use of Twitter as a Form of CRM***

An article written by Bielski (2009) described how banks and other businesses in the United States are starting to use Twitter to communicate informal messages to their customers, and describes some of the benefits of the use of this type of technology to those businesses. Bielski (2009) described how a bank had used the technology to communicate not only internally to employees, but also to their customers. Other examples cited in the article included being able to notify customers of unusual occurrences with one of these examples being an airline notifying customers that a delay was due to staff helping some special needs customers, with the customers being pleased that they could be notified this simply. The article concludes with a quote that this type of technology has “the potential to be the new customer relationship management system”.

### ***Social Media as a Communication “Tool”***

In a short article written by Moorcroft (2008) about the public relations profession, it was highlighted that the use of social media by organisations needed a lot more thought than was being given. Moorcroft (2008) has a view that “communicators need to get a better grip on the advantages and disadvantages of social media and develop a plan that makes sense for their organisations”. He goes on to describe how blogs are a good way to engage stakeholders and how podcasting to stakeholders has its place, but also how these approaches can create risks that are regulatory, disclosure and legal related. Moorcroft (2008) concludes by stating that “social media is about giving, sharing and exchanging in a timely and thoughtful manner and not about taking, dictating and self-promoting in a reckless fashion”.

### ***Employees’ Readiness for Social Media***

The readiness of employees for the introduction of social media was briefly discussed in a short article by Sinickas (2008) who began with the comment that “some communicators who’ve already launched new media tools on their intranets are disappointed with their uptake amongst employees. A contributing factor to this is explained as being related to having realistic expectations for the use of the new tools. Sinickas (2008) goes on to identify a range of questions that should be considered in relation to the introduction of new media tools in an organisation including (a) how familiar are the employees with the new tools being intro-

duced; (b) how often do the employees use the new tools in their daily lives; (c) how likely are the employees to use a new tool that has yet to be launched in the organisation; and (d) The reasons why employees do not currently use the new tools, which may include lack of awareness of the tools, issues in the use of the tools themselves.

A number of reasons were also identified in this article as to why some employees do not adopt the use of social media tools as part of their work including (a) having less discretionary time at work than at home; (b) supervisors pressuring employees to be more productive; (c) lack of candor or openness in the blogs of those in leadership roles; (d) senior management not keeping their blogs updated or responding to comments in blogs; and (e) humour and controversy not being valued in communication within the organisation.

### ***Lessons Learned from the Implementation of Social Media***

The embracing of social media tools by an information provider in Australia was discussed in an article by Keisler (2008) along with some of the key advantages experienced and key lessons learned in their adoption. One of the key changes that resulted from the adoption of social media tools was that the “water cooler chat” became more public and more mobile, thereby enabling more people to take part. Keisler (2008) includes a definition of social media which includes “all avenues share common traits: they’re editable and participative, they allow audiences to add content and they connect people. Social media includes blogs, message boards, chatrooms, forums, social networks (such as MySpace and Facebook), video sharing (You Tube), picture sharing (photobucket, snapfish, flickr), podcasts, vodcasts, wikis, groups and virtual worlds or communities (Second Life)”.

The key lessons learned for managers in this study are reproduced in Table 2. The final comment in Keisler (2008) was that “good communication approaches are still relevant – this is just another place to have the conversation”.

**Table 2: Key Lessons Learned from the Use of Social Media in the Work Place (Keisler, 2008)**

|                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Discover what the employees are already doing with social media and harness that                                                          |
| Always be honest about the intentions of the use of social media as the participants are real people with real interest and real insights |
| Be prepared to listen and engage with using the social media                                                                              |
| Be prepared to learn from mistakes in the use of social media                                                                             |
| Social media is part of the overall communication mix for the organisation                                                                |
| Lead the way in the use of social media                                                                                                   |
| Be confident to embrace social media                                                                                                      |

### **Concepts Emerging from Literature Review**

A number of trends emerge from the literature that has been reviewed that relate to the first theme of this study (benefits and risks of using social media in the workplace). These trends are related to the benefits of the use of social media in the work place; the challenges and risks that exist in the use of social media in the work place; different approaches that can be

taken by management to the use of social media in the work place; and the concept that the social media tools are really just another toolset in the facilitation of communication that needs to be understood and managed, and as such are not an end in themselves.

### ***Benefits of the Use of Social Media in the Work Place***

The literature that was reviewed showed there were many benefits of using social media in the work place, with these being presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Benefits of Using Social Media in the Work Place**

|                                                                                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Increasing the engagement of staff                                                                                                     |
| Enhancing the effectiveness of communication                                                                                           |
| Enhancing the timeliness of communication                                                                                              |
| Increasing the number of people involved in information communication                                                                  |
| Enhancing employee retention (where the social networks are within an organisation)                                                    |
| The ease of use due to interactivity, user friendliness, and employees being familiar with the use of the tools in the personal lives. |

Increasing the engagement of staff and other stakeholders was identified by Moorcroft (2008), along with the enhancing of communication both in its effectiveness and timeliness being mentioned in Bielski (2009), Neumann et al (2005) and Lavenda (2008) being one of the more common concepts. The idea of increasing the number of people that took place in the informal chat around the water cooler was highlighted in Keisler (2008). This increased engagement is also very similar to the increased sharing that was identified in both Tapscott and Williams (2007) and McAfee (2006).

The concept of the use of social media potentially enhancing employee retention was explored by both Lavenda (2008) and Moynihan and Pandey (2008), with this latter piece of work providing some support for the idea of Mossholder et al (2005) that social networks within an organisation may enhance retention. The work of Mossholder et al (2005) also found little support for the notion of social networks between organisations increasing employee turnover.

That social media tools can result in increased productivity through being able to find information faster and being able to leverage existing contacts as was mentioned in Lavenda (2008). Both Sinickas (2008) and Lavenda (2008) comment on the importance of the interactivity, user friendliness and ease of use of the tools, particularly as employees of the organisation may have already become familiar with using the tools in their personal lives.

### ***Risks and Challenges from the Use of Social Media in the Work Place***

The literature that was reviewed showed there were many risks and challenges associated with using social media the work place, with these being presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Risks and Challenges Associated with Using Social Media in the Work Place**

|                                                                                         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Implementation is the key issue                                                         |
| Security, control and trust are significant issues                                      |
| The divulging of confidential information to the wrong people is a potential issue      |
| The inappropriate use of social media tools may put the organisation at legal risk      |
| The organisation being unaware of the use of social media tools within the organisation |
| The use of social media tools may not fit the organisational culture                    |
| The perceived time wasting of employees using social media within the organisation      |

While there are many risks and challenges in the use of social media in the work place, how social media is implemented in the work place is seen as being the key to success by Short (2008).

The issues of security, control and trust were highlighted in Lavenda (2008), with Moorcroft (2008) and Sinickas (2008) going on to point out the risk of confidential information being divulged to people in social networks outside the organisation through the use of social media, with this being connected to the potential legal risks that Lavenda (2008) also identified.

The risk of unsanctioned use of social media tools within an organisation was identified by both Lavenda (2008) and Short (2008), with the latter going on to point out that where unsanctioned use of social media tools is found in an organisation, attempts to shut it down can result in the employees continuing to use the tools in secret, which can result in the organisation not gaining the potential benefits from the use of the tools.

A further challenge identified by Sinickas (2008) is that the humour that typically exists in communities using social media tools may not be valued in the communication culture in some organisations, and the adoption of social media tools in such organisations may be disruptive to the organisational culture. Sinickas (2008) also identified time wasting as a risk of using social media in the workplace.

### ***Approaches to take in the Adoption of Social Media in the Work Place***

The four approaches that were identified by Lavenda (2008) of raising the drawbridge, ignoring, providing lookalikes, and permitting and encouraging are all on the surface valid responses to the possible adoption of the social media in an organisation, with some of these approaches being more risk averse to others that are more risk seeking.

To ignore the use of social media that is already going on in the organisation has the potential to ignore a benefit that exists so that no leverage can be gained from it. The view of Sinickas (2008) was that becoming aware of the existence of social media tools is an important first step as opposed to being unaware of or ignoring the potential benefits and associated risks of the adoption of social media.

Finding out what employees are already doing with social media tools was an approach identified by Keisler (2008) as well as the need for organisations to try and learn from their mistakes in the use of social media before abandoning their use. The concepts of raising the

drawbridge and ignoring social media put forward as approaches by Lavenda (2008) should only really be considered with full knowledge of the facts.

It may be that upon examining what employees are already doing (Keisler, 2008) a decision to raise the drawbridge may be appropriate as the risks identified earlier may be greater than the ensuing benefits. In the same way the use of social media tools in the organisation may have been analysed and found to be of little consequence in terms of risks and benefits, and as such it may be safe to pay little attention to them, but not to completely ignore them.

The issue of providing lookalike tools may serve some organisations reasonably well in that they can address some of the risks involved in the adoption of social media type tools while still gaining some of the benefits. The main issues with this approach is the cost of development with other tools in some cases being freely available; and also the employees familiarity with the widely available tools as identified in Lavenda (2008) and Sinickas (2008). The approach of using lookalike tools would also help address the issue of the integration of the social media tools with other tools in the organisation (Lavenda, 2008).

### ***Social Media Tools are Communication “Tools” and not the Goal***

When Bielski (2009) identified the use of Twitter as a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool, it was more a case of the adoption of a new “tool” for an existing process so as to enhance it, with an extension of this being that social media tools are “tools” and not the goal. In Bielski (2009) the goal was to enhance CRM and the use of Twitter was a means or a tool used to achieve the goal. The comment in the conclusion of Keisler (2008) that good communication approaches are still relevant and that the use of social media tools is just another place to have the conversation is also consistent with this idea that the use of social media tools is not the goal.

Moorcroft (2008) makes reference to social media tools needing to be understood better before launching in to their use, and the importance of having realistic expectations about the use of social media as identified in Sinickas (2008) is also pointing to the need for knowing what social media can do to help enhance the organisation.

### **Summary**

The issues identified in this section of the paper relate to the first theme of the study (benefits and risks from the use of social media in the workplace) and form some of the basis for the design of the survey that was used in this study. The design of the survey is covered in the next section of this paper.

### ***Design of Survey***

The survey was made up of four sections. The first two sections relate to the second theme of this study (patterns of usage of social media). In the first section respondents were asked to indicate their age, gender, and whether they had any familiarity with a list of social media tools, with the list being: Blogs, Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, LinkedIn, Bebo, Wikis and MySpace. Where the respondents indicated some familiarity with one of these tools they were able to carry on through the rest of the survey. The second section asked the respondents

to indicate how frequently they used each of the above social media tools and asked them to indicate other social media tools that they used.

The third and fourth sections relate to the first theme of this study (benefits and risks of the use of social media in the work place). The third section of the survey asked the respondents to indicate how strongly they believed that the benefits shown in Table 5 were arising from the use social media in the work place. The fourth section of the survey asked the respondents to indicate how strongly they believed that the risks shown in Table 6 were pertaining to the use of social media in the work place. Both of these were done using a five point likert scale from strongly agree through to strongly disagree and included a sixth option of “unsure”.

**Table 5: Benefits that Respondents Were asked to Rate Level of Agreement With**

|                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Increasing the engagement of staff                                    |
| Enhancing the effectiveness of communication                          |
| Enhancing the timeliness of communication                             |
| Increasing the number of people involved in information communication |
| Increase employee retention                                           |

**Table 6: Risks that Respondents Were asked to Rate Level of Agreement With**

|                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Breaches of security                                                     |
| Loss of control                                                          |
| Reducing trust                                                           |
| Divulging of confidential information outside the organisation           |
| The organisation itself being unaware of their use                       |
| Use of the tools being incompatible with the culture of the organisation |
| Wasting employee time                                                    |

## Results

The link to the Survey Monkey based survey was emailed to a group of third year commerce students that included 390 students in total. Of the 390 students, 79 students responded to the survey giving an overall response rate of 20.3%. This section of the paper presents the results of the demographic questions; followed by the results of the sections relating to the first theme of the study (benefits and risks of using social media in the work place); followed by the results of the sections relating to the second theme of the study (patterns of usage of social media).

### **General Demographic Questions**

The breakdown of age and gender of the respondents is shown in Table 7. This shows that the vast majority of the respondents were under the age of 30 ( $69/79 = 87.3\%$ ), with a reas-

onably even spread of female and male respondents. The very low numbers in the older age groups mean that it is not possible to make comparisons across the age groups. Most of the results that are present in these sections of the report are based on just this group of respondents who are under the age of 30.

**Table 7: Breakdown of Respondents by Age and Gender**

|             | <b>Gender</b> |             |              |
|-------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|
| <b>Age</b>  | <b>Female</b> | <b>Male</b> | <b>Total</b> |
| Under 30    | 33            | 36          | 69           |
| 30-39       | 4             | 2           | 6            |
| 40-49       | 2             | 2           | 4            |
| Grand Total | 39            | 40          | 79           |

The familiarity with the social media tools was very high across all of the respondents as shown in Table 8 with 94.9% of all respondents (75/79) indicating that they were familiar with the social media tools listed in the question. In the under 30 group 66 of the 69 respondents (95.7%) indicated that they were familiar with the social media tools. The breakdown of familiarity by Gender is shown in Table 9 which indicates a very high level of familiarity with the social media tools across both female and male respondents.

**Table 8: Breakdown by Age and Familiarity with Social Media Tools**

|             | <b>Familiarity</b> |           |              |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------|
| <b>Age</b>  | <b>Yes</b>         | <b>No</b> | <b>Total</b> |
| Under 30    | 66                 | 3         | 69           |
| 30-39       | 6                  | -         | 6            |
| 40-49       | 3                  | 1         | 4            |
| Grand Total | 75                 | 4         | 79           |

**Table 9: Breakdown by Gender and Familiarity with Social Media Tools**

|            | <b>Familiarity</b> |           |              |
|------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------|
| <b>Age</b> | <b>Yes</b>         | <b>No</b> | <b>Total</b> |
| Female     | 38                 | 1         | 39           |
| Male       | 37                 | 3         | 40           |
| Total      | 75                 | 4         | 79           |

### ***Benefits, Risks and Challenges from Using Social Media Tools in the Work Place***

The level of agreement of all respondents familiar with social media with the different perceived benefits of using social media tools in the work place is shown in Table 10. At least 40 of the 66 (60.6%) respondents agree or strongly agree with the first four perceived benefits in the table. However, the last benefit shown in the table (increasing employee retention) only had 20 of the 66 (30.3%) respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that it was a benefit. This particular benefit did not have a high level of disagreement, but had 38 of the 66 (57.6%) respondents responding as being unsure, or they neither agreed nor disagreed.

**Table 10: Benefits of Using Social Media Tools in the Work Place – All Respondents Familiar with Social Media**

|                                                                            | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Neither Agree or Disagree</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Unsure</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| Increase the engagement of staff                                           | 8                     | 34           | 10                               | 8               | 2                        | 4             |
| Increase the effectiveness of communication                                | 9                     | 32           | 8                                | 11              | 1                        | 5             |
| Increase the timeliness of communication                                   | 12                    | 30           | 10                               | 9               | 1                        | 4             |
| Increase the number of people involved in the communication of information | 14                    | 36           | 4                                | 6               | 1                        | 5             |
| Increase employee retention                                                | 9                     | 11           | 26                               | 9               | 3                        | 12            |

The level of agreement of all respondents familiar with social media with the different perceived risks and challenges of using social media tools in the work place is shown in Table 11. The only two risks and challenges that had less than 30 of the 66 (45%) respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing were the reducing of trust and the use of tools not being compatible with the culture of the organisation. It should however be noted that both of these risks were the only ones where more than 40% (27 or more of the 66) of respondents were neutral in that they neither agreed nor disagreed or indicated that they were unsure. The other risks and challenges all had at least 60% agreeing or strongly agreeing, with less than 30% being neutral.

The risks and challenges of breaches of security and the divulging of confidential information outside the organisation were the only two risks where more than 50 of the 66 (75%) respondents agreed or strongly agreed.

**Table 11: Risks and Challenges Associated with Using Social Media in the Work Place – All Respondents Familiar with Social Media**

|                                                                          | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Neither Agree or Dis-agree</b> | <b>Dis-agree</b> | <b>Strongly Dis-agree</b> | <b>Unsure</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| Divulging of confidential information outside the organisation           | 18                    | 33           | 4                                 | 3                | 0                         | 8             |
| Breaches of security                                                     | 16                    | 35           | 4                                 | 3                | 0                         | 8             |
| The organisation itself being unaware of their use                       | 10                    | 30           | 10                                | 5                | 0                         | 11            |
| Wasting employee time                                                    | 26                    | 20           | 5                                 | 7                | 1                         | 7             |
| Loss of control                                                          | 11                    | 30           | 11                                | 7                | 0                         | 7             |
| Reducing trust                                                           | 7                     | 21           | 18                                | 10               | 1                         | 9             |
| Use of the tools being incompatible with the culture of the organisation | 9                     | 18           | 21                                | 7                | 0                         | 11            |

### ***Use of Social Media Tools***

The frequency with which any social media tools are used is broken down by gender across all respondents who have some familiarity with social media, with this being shown in Table 12. This was determined by identifying how frequently the respondents used their most preferred social media tool, and shows little difference in how frequently social media tools are used across the genders.

**Table 12: Frequency of Use of Any Social Media Tool by Gender**

| <b>Gender</b> | <b>Daily</b> | <b>Weekly</b> | <b>Monthly</b> | <b>Never</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| Female        | 26           | 6             | 6              | 1            | 39           |
| Male          | 24           | 5             | 5              | 2            | 36           |
| Total         | 50           | 11            | 11             | 3            | 75           |

The frequency with which any social media tool is used by those respondents under the age of 30 is shown in Table 13. This shows that 48 of the 66 (72.7%) respondents under the age of 30 who had some familiarity with social media tools used at least one on a daily basis, with 58 of the 66 (87.9%) using social media tools on at least a weekly basis. The numbers of respondents in the other age groups are not sufficient to make any meaningful observations.

**Table 13: Frequency of Use of Any Social Media Tool by the Under 30 Age Group**

| Gender | Daily | Weekly | Monthly | Never | Total |
|--------|-------|--------|---------|-------|-------|
| Female | 24    | 6      | 2       | 1     | 33    |
| Male   | 24    | 4      | 3       | 2     | 33    |
| Total  | 48    | 10     | 5       | 3     | 66    |

The frequency with which particular social media tools are used by those respondents under the age of 30 who have some familiarity with social media is shown in Table 14. This shows considerable variation in how frequently some of the different tools are used by these respondents.

**Table 14: Frequency of Use of Social Media Tools by the Under 30 Age Group**

|         | Any | Blogs | Twitter | Face-book | Flickr | Linked-In | Bebo | Wikis | MySpace |
|---------|-----|-------|---------|-----------|--------|-----------|------|-------|---------|
| Daily   | 48  | 8     | 1       | 47        | 0      | 0         | 0    | 6     | 1       |
| Weekly  | 10  | 3     | 4       | 11        | 1      | 0         | 2    | 14    | 2       |
| Monthly | 5   | 10    | 6       | 4         | 7      | 1         | 7    | 11    | 3       |
| Never   | 3   | 45    | 55      | 4         | 58     | 65        | 57   | 35    | 60      |
| Total   | 66  | 66    | 66      | 66        | 66     | 66        | 66   | 66    | 66      |

Table 15 shows the number of respondents in this group who use each social media tool on a daily basis, with this showing Facebook as being the most used, and five of the eight tools covered by the questions in the survey being used by one or zero people in this group (Twitter, MySpace, Flickr, LinkedIn, Bebo).

**Table 15: Daily Use of Social Media Tools by Under 30s**

|          | Daily | Percentage |
|----------|-------|------------|
| Facebook | 47    | 71.2%      |
| Blogs    | 8     | 12.1%      |
| Wikis    | 6     | 9.1%       |
| Twitter  | 1     | 1.5%       |
| MySpace  | 1     | 1.5%       |
| Flickr   | 0     | 0.0%       |
| LinkedIn | 0     | 0.0%       |
| Bebo     | 0     | 0.0%       |

Table 16 shows the number of respondents in this group who use each social media tool on at least a weekly basis, with this also showing that Facebook is the most widely used across this group (in excess of 80%), and with wikis being used by just over one third of these re-

spondents on at least a weekly basis. As with the use of social media tools on a daily basis Twitter, MySpace, Flickr, LinkedIn, Bebo have very low level of usage (all under 10%) amongst this group of respondents.

**Table 16: At Least Weekly Use of Social Media Tools by Under 30s**

|          | Daily | Weekly | At least Weekly | Percentage |
|----------|-------|--------|-----------------|------------|
| Facebook | 47    | 11     | 58              | 87.9%      |
| Wikis    | 8     | 14     | 22              | 33.3%      |
| Blogs    | 6     | 3      | 9               | 13.6%      |
| Twitter  | 1     | 4      | 5               | 7.6%       |
| MySpace  | 1     | 2      | 3               | 4.5%       |
| Bebo     | 0     | 2      | 2               | 3.0%       |
| Flickr   | 0     | 1      | 1               | 1.5%       |
| LinkedIn | 0     | 0      | 0               | 0.0%       |

The frequency of use of the different social media tools for the Under 30 Year Old respondents broken down by gender is shown in Table 17. The result for the use of Wikis is shaded as on inspection it appears as if there may be a difference in how frequently the two genders use Wikis that doesn't appear to exist with the other social media tools.

**Table 17: Frequency of use of Different Social Media Tools by Under 30s Grouped by Gender**

|          | Female |        |         |       |       | Male  |        |         |       |       |
|----------|--------|--------|---------|-------|-------|-------|--------|---------|-------|-------|
|          | Daily  | Weekly | Monthly | Never | Total | Daily | Weekly | Monthly | Never | Total |
| Facebook | 24     | 6      | 2       | 1     | 33    | 23    | 5      | 2       | 3     | 33    |
| Wikis    | 0      | 5      | 4       | 24    | 33    | 6     | 9      | 7       | 11    | 33    |
| Blogs    | 5      | 1      | 3       | 24    | 33    | 3     | 2      | 7       | 21    | 33    |
| Twitter  | 0      | 3      | 1       | 29    | 33    | 1     | 1      | 5       | 26    | 33    |
| Flickr   | 0      | 1      | 2       | 30    | 33    | 0     | 0      | 5       | 28    | 33    |
| LinkedIn | 0      | 0      | 0       | 33    | 33    | 0     | 0      | 1       | 32    | 33    |
| Bebo     | 0      | 2      | 2       | 29    | 33    | 0     | 0      | 5       | 28    | 33    |
| MySpace  | 0      | 1      | 2       | 30    | 33    | 1     | 1      | 1       | 30    | 33    |

## Analysis and Discussion

This section of the paper presents an analysis and discussion of the results, commencing with the first theme of the study (benefits and risks of using social media in the work place); followed by the second theme of the study (patterns of usage of social media).

### ***Benefits, Risks and Challenges from Using Social Media Tools in the Work Place***

When it comes to the benefits of using social media tools in the work place, there was a reasonably high level of agreement with most of the benefits that were identified in the literature review, with the one area that had an overall agreement level of less than 33% (see Table 10) being that of increasing employee retention. The reasons for this being at a much lower level than the other benefits may be due to the respondents being students with little experience of the work place. It could also be due to this particular area being one in which more research is needed to back up the work that has already been carried out by Lavenda (2008), Moynihan and Pandey (2008) and Mossholder et al (2005).

The data presented in Table 11 shows the responses pertaining to the risks and challenges brought about by the use of social media tools in the work place. The risks and challenges are displayed in three groups. The data in Table 18 has combined the responses for the three groups of risks and combined the data for (a) the neither agree nor disagree and unsure responses and (b) the disagree and strongly disagree responses. This data tested for significance using a chi-squared test.

**Table 18: Risks and Challenges Related to the Use of Social Media in the Work Place–Version 2**

| Group | Risks and Challenges                                                                          | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree or Disagree or Unsure | Disagree or Strongly Disagree | Total |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| A     | Divulging of confidential information outside the organisation and breaches of security       | 34             | 68    | 24                                  | 6                             | 132   |
| B     | The organisation itself being unaware of their use, wasting employee time and loss of control | 47             | 80    | 51                                  | 20                            | 198   |
| C     | Reducing trust and use of the tools being incompatible with the culture of the organisation   | 16             | 39    | 59                                  | 18                            | 132   |
|       | Total                                                                                         | 97             | 187   | 134                                 | 44                            | 462   |

The result of the chi-squared test with 6 degrees of freedom yielded a chi-test value of less than 0.01 which indicates that there is a significant difference between the responses relating to the three groups of risks and challenges. This suggests that the respondents have a significantly higher level of agreement with the risks and challenges in Group A than in Group B, and also have a significantly higher level of agreement with the risks and challenges in Group B than in Group C.

The seven risks have been separated into the three groups shown in Table 18, and have been categorised as external threats, internal process threats and internal cultural threats with these being shown in Table 19. The respondents to the survey are indicating that the external threats are the most significant, followed by the internal process threats, with the internal cultural threats being seen as being the least significant group.

| <b>Nature of Threat</b>   | <b>Risks Identified in Literature</b>                                                                                                                              | <b>Summary</b>                                                                                            |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| External Threats          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Divulging of confidential information outside the organisation</li> <li>• Breaches of security</li> </ul>                 | High level of agreement (77.3%) and very low level of disagreement (4.5%)                                 |
| Internal Process Threats  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The organisation itself being unaware of their use</li> <li>• Wasting employee time</li> <li>• Loss of control</li> </ul> | Slightly lower level of agreement (64.1%), but growing level of neither agreeing nor being unsure (25.8%) |
| Internal Cultural Threats | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing trust</li> <li>• Use of the tools being incompatible with the culture of the organisation</li> </ul>             | Lowest level of agreement (41.7%) and highest level of neither agreeing nor being unsure (44.7%)          |

It is of interest that the internal cultural threats appear to have more attention paid to them in the literature than the group of respondents in this study. However, it should be noted that the respondents have little experience of the work place, and that if such as study was to be replicated with a group of experienced professionals, the internal cultural threats may be seen as being of higher significance.

### ***Use of Social Media Tools***

There is a high level of familiarity with social media tools amongst the under 30 year old respondents, and this high level of familiarity appears reasonably consistent across both the male and female respondents as shown in Table 8 and Table 9. This extends to the frequency of use of the social media tools with 72.7% of the under 30 age group indicating that they use social media tools on a daily basis and that 87.9% of this age group used social media tools on either a weekly or daily basis as shown in Table 13.

The data in Table 20 has combined the 'monthly' and 'never' columns of Table 12 into one column so that it could be used as the basis for a chi-squared test.

**Table 20: Frequency of Use of Any Social Media Tool by Gender Version 2**

| Gender | Daily | Weekly | Monthly Or Never | Total |
|--------|-------|--------|------------------|-------|
| Female | 26    | 6      | 7                | 39    |
| Male   | 24    | 5      | 7                | 36    |
| Total  | 50    | 11     | 14               | 75    |

The result of the chi-squared test with 2 degrees of freedom yielded a chi-test value of 0.97 which indicates that there is little difference between the responses of the female and male respondents.

The use of particular social media tools is quite varied amongst the under 30 year old respondents as was shown in Table 14 and Table 15 with Facebook being by far the most used. Twitter, MySpace, Flickr, LinkedIn and Bebo have very little use amongst this particular age group. Of interest was the frequency of use of Wikis and Blogs in this age group, with Table 15 showing that 12.1% of this age group used Blogs on a daily basis and that 9.1% used Wikis on a daily basis. However, when this is looked at on a weekly and daily basis, the usage of Wikis is at 33.3% and the usage of Blogs is at 13.6% as shown in Table 16.

This suggests that what constitutes frequent use of one social media tool may not constitute frequent use of another tool, with this data potentially indicating that a frequent user of a Wiki may use a Wiki less frequently than a frequent user of a Blog uses a Blog. This is an area that could be explored in a further study with the aim of what constitutes frequent use of a particular type of social media tool.

Very low usage of Twitter was of interest amongst this group of third year commerce students, particularly when a number of recent New Zealand studies including Verhaart (2010) and MacCullum (2010) have started to focus on the use of Twitter as an eLearning tool. Looking at this in the light of an earlier study by Nesbit (2008) that indicated students were more likely to participate electronically if the tools being used were those that they commonly use for social interaction. Given that the studies of Verhaart (2010) and MacCullum (2010) mainly involved students studying information technology, it could be that these students are more likely to experiment with technology in a way that other students (including the commerce students that are the focus of this paper) might not be.

When it came to the use of different social media tools by gender in the under 30 year age group it appeared from the data in Table 17 that the biggest difference between the genders was in the frequency of the use of Wikis. The data in Table 21 was constructed by combining the data relating to monthly and no use of Wikis across the genders in Table 17 into one column, with this data being tested for significance using a chi-squared test.

**Table 21: Frequency of Use of Wikis amongst Under 30 Year Olds by Gender**

| Gender | Daily | Weekly | Monthly Or Never | Total |
|--------|-------|--------|------------------|-------|
| Female | 0     | 5      | 28               | 33    |
| Male   | 6     | 9      | 18               | 33    |
| Total  | 6     | 14     | 46               | 66    |

The result of the chi-squared test with 2 degrees of freedom yielded a chi-test value of 0.01 which indicates that there is a significant difference between the responses of the female and male respondents, which indicates that the males within the sample group are much more frequent users of wikis than females.

## Conclusions

Conclusions relating to the first theme of the study (benefits and risks of using social media in the work place) are that when it comes to looking at the perceived benefits of using social media in the work place and the risks and challenges associated with the use of social media in the work place the issues where the respondents did not have a high level agreement with the literature were:

- The use of social media tools enhancing employee retention
- The use of social media tools reducing trust within an organisation
- The use of social media tools not being compatible with the culture of the organisation

It may be that there is a higher level of agreement with these issues amongst respondents who are already in the work place, and as such this would form part of the basis of a further study exploring their perceptions, and comparing these with the perceptions of the third year commerce students in this study.

Conclusions relating to the second theme of the study (patterns of usage of social media) are that amongst the group of students who were surveyed there appears to be widespread use of social media tools, and reasonably good understanding of most issues surrounding the use of social media in the work place. Across the group of under 30 year olds who were surveyed Facebook was the most frequently used social media tool, with Twitter, MySpace, Flickr, LinkedIn and Bebo being used very infrequently by this group, suggesting that these would not be good social media tools to use in marketing campaigns aimed at this group and as part of programmes of study for this group. Across all of the social media tools surveyed, Wikis were the only tool where there appeared to be a significant difference in the frequency of their use between female and male respondents.

An aspect to emerge from exploring the frequency of use of the social media tools is that what constitutes frequent use of one social media tool may be different to what constitutes frequent use of another social media tool, with this being an aspect that could be used as the basis for further research in the future.

Some areas identified for further study are the appropriateness of the use of social media in higher education, and in particular the choice of social media tool; and the apparent difference in frequency of the use of wikis across the genders and the reasons why this is the case.

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## About the Author

### *Trevor Nesbit*

Main teaching areas include eBusiness and computer programming. Has completed two double major bachelor degrees majoring in computer science, mathematics, accountancy and operations research, and has completed a masters degree in management. A member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of New Zealand; the New Zealand Computer Society; the New Zealand Knowledge Management Network and the Accounting and Finance Association of Australia and New Zealand. Recent research interests include communities of practice and the use of technology in higher education.