



White Paper

IT Spring

So this application is your friend?

Some provocative thoughts about the democratization of the user community and innovative use of social media. If you're in a position of providing value to users and if some of our ideas resonate with you, then we can only suggest you take the plunge and put some of them into action. Like us, you'll benefit from being early adopters. Join the revolution on Twitter at #ITSpring !

Rick Mans and Mark Smalley, 4 August 2011



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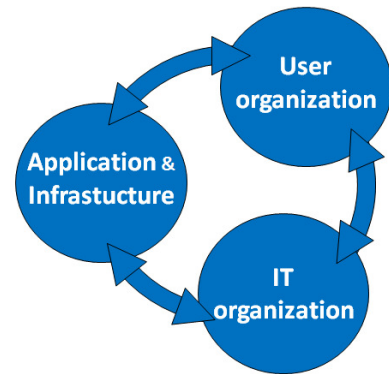
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Introduction

After having written "IT is from Flatland, Business is from Spaceland", a paper that explored the troubled relationship between business people and IT people, Mark Smalley's gaze has wandered off in the direction of the relationship between users (What a strange word, 'users'. What other kind of users are there? Only drug addicts?) and applications. From a cool analytical perspective the relationship is just about input and output but step back a bit and take another look from an emotional viewpoint. What do you see? A relationship that varies from hate and loathing to love and addiction. That's right: users. Now add the social media dimension. Rick Mans has co-authored this paper from his point of view as social media evangelist, contributing innovative ways of engaging users. This paper shares some stimulating new insights into the relationship between users and IT and how judicious use of social media could take it to a higher level.



In the beginning there was IT...

IT users have had a rough ride. Ever since the introduction of IT sixties odd years ago, IT departments have been acting like divine beings, telling the users what was good for them. For the first twenty years or so, IT boffins were treated as incomprehensible but brilliant scientists who were treated with the same deference as doctors used to be. Yes doctor, no doctor. But then the inevitable happened and cracks started to appear. Projects failed to deliver. Costs rocketed. Functionality didn't function. IT fell from its pedestal and became a fallen angel, retreating into a "Just tell us what you want" position, with the implicit message "and then it's your fault when it goes wrong".



Stockholm syndrome

Users (unlike IT) are regular people and regular people tend to adapt to uncomfortable situations. People need defense mechanisms in order to survive. Ever felt happy with an application when you've completed a longish transaction without it having crashed and losing your data? Yep, that's the Stockholm syndrome: "a paradoxical psychological phenomenon wherein hostages express adulation and have positive feelings towards their captors that appear irrational in light of the danger or risk endured by the victims, essentially mistaking a lack of abuse from their captors as an act of kindness". I think of some applications as benevolent dictators. You're obliged to use them and they direct your actions in a polite but firm way: "Please re-enter your data". Including the data that it could have but hasn't bothered to save for you.

Going steady

Another human trait is to give things human attributes. So let's anthropomorphize a bit. Can applications be happy, grumpy, authoritative, lazy, reliable, fickle, cruel, stupid, intuitive, responsive, sexy? Sure they can. Think about it. Now we've elevated applications to a near human level, let's develop a relationship with them. Your relationship with an application will probably go through a lifecycle something like this.

- Anticipation – you're looking forward to getting the app or being authorized to use it
- Disappointment – Too high expectations
- Resignation – Guess you'd better get used to it
- Acclimatization – It's not that bad after all
- Frustration – It's habits are annoying me more and more
- Alienation – The thrill has gone

Seeing as all relationships seem to come with a 'best before date', it'll probably end up ugly.

So now we've established that users have a relationship with apps, why not formalize it by liking and friending the app? Or disliking or unfriending? And why not tweet your app? Post cool pics on your app's wall.

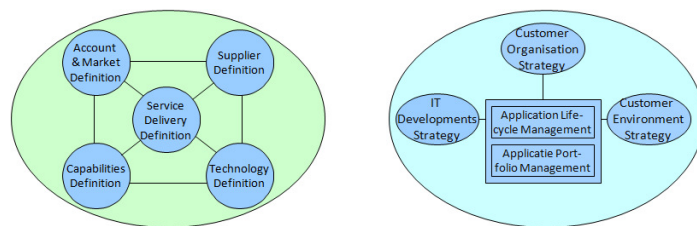


Are all applications created equal?

Whereas all men are created equal, some applications are more equal than others. A useful way of looking at applications is using a transport metaphor. Trains, Buses, Cars and Scooters. Trains are for mass transport. They only go from A to B and the timetables don't change that often. You wouldn't think of customizing them to individual need. And they're there for years. Buses are also for mass transport but are more flexible. Cars are in a different ball park altogether. I doubt whether you've felt much attachment for a train or a bus but for a car it's a personal statement. And you're willing to spend an irrational amount of money for a status symbol. Finally, the Scooter. A cheap 'throwaway' item for short distances. You can categorize your own applications pretty easily. SAP surely can't anything other than a train, whereas the apps on your smartphone are probably scooters. An infrastructural 'hub' to connect all of these kinds of applications together completes the metaphor. Looking at apps this way make it easier to clarify and justify different behavior and relationships people have with respect to their applications.

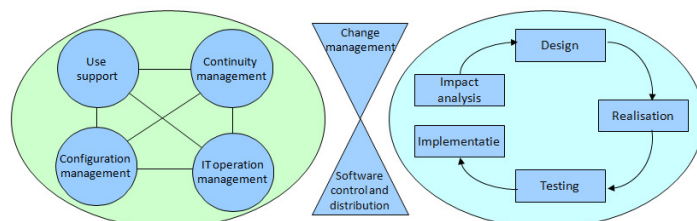
Referring to the ASL Process Framework for Application Management, the transport metaphor can be used during Application Portfolio Management (top right of the model).

Looking at applications from these perspectives make it easier to determine appropriate and policies for release calendars, change management etc.



Contract management	Planning and control	Quality management	Financial management	Supplier management
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These differing perspectives also justify why a policy for a train application differs from the policy for a scooter app.





Application emotional development

Something that most people have forgotten, of never knew is that 'computer' used to be a job description, not a collection of wires and disks. You could ask these people to compute things for you, which they did, in a very human way. However the human part was lost in translation when things got automated.

Traditional application development tends to be very functional. Like seats in German cars. You can almost hear them saying "Sit upright on this firm seat, it is good for your back". It maybe be functional but it's not the experience I'm looking for. I don't feel engaged. The next step in application development is that applications move on from aloof and unresponsive beings to becoming more social apps. Apps that friend you, send you tweets, tweet about you. And unfriend you – Outlook: "I feel abused". Or a printer driver that unfriends you because you ignore the ink replenishment warning. Apps will be on Facebook and Twitter. The more traditional business apps will probably just want to be on LinkedIn. So when are IT folk going to get around to building apps that appeal to the emotional side of people?

The users are revolting

Back to the users. There's something in the air. The younger generations of users have completely different and irreverent opinions about IT. "IT's just there to be used." Smartphones, iPads and apps are just expected to work within the corporate IT environment. "You don't dictate which pen I use to write a note, so why are you taking such an interest in my apps?" 'Bring your own IT' is quick becoming the norm. Not for 'public transport' train and bus applications of course. Back to the users. There's an undercurrent of discontent about the current IT regime and social media has made this painfully transparent. Even if a dictator's benevolent, he's still a dictator. Users want to be recognized as somebody who's in a relationship with an application, either out of their free volition or because their organizations require them to use it. And they want a say in the relationship. So give them the vote. And don't fiddle with the ballot boxes – they want transparency. Just like we had the Prague Spring in 1968 and the Arab Spring in 2011, 2012 well could see the IT Spring. Liberate the users! Topple the IT dictators! Banish them to Silicon Valley (where they'll probably try to govern in exile).



Information management

Managing information from a business perspective has always been a challenge. How do you help people to get as much out of information systems as they're supposed to? How do you ensure data quality? How do you discover what improvements will make a bottom-line difference to the business? How do you manage change and transition? How can information help innovate your business strategy? And how on earth are you going to do this with democratized users?

Now the user is used to create his own information stream either by connecting with his peers online, or by subscribing on information streams from organizations or systems. For example, you can follow the Tower Bridge in London online to see which boats are causing the bridge to open. Or you can monitor somebody's washing machine that tweets when it is starting and finishing a load.

One of the problems with traditional information management was that undoubtedly clever but splendidly isolated business analysts and information managers tended to think up what was good for business departments.

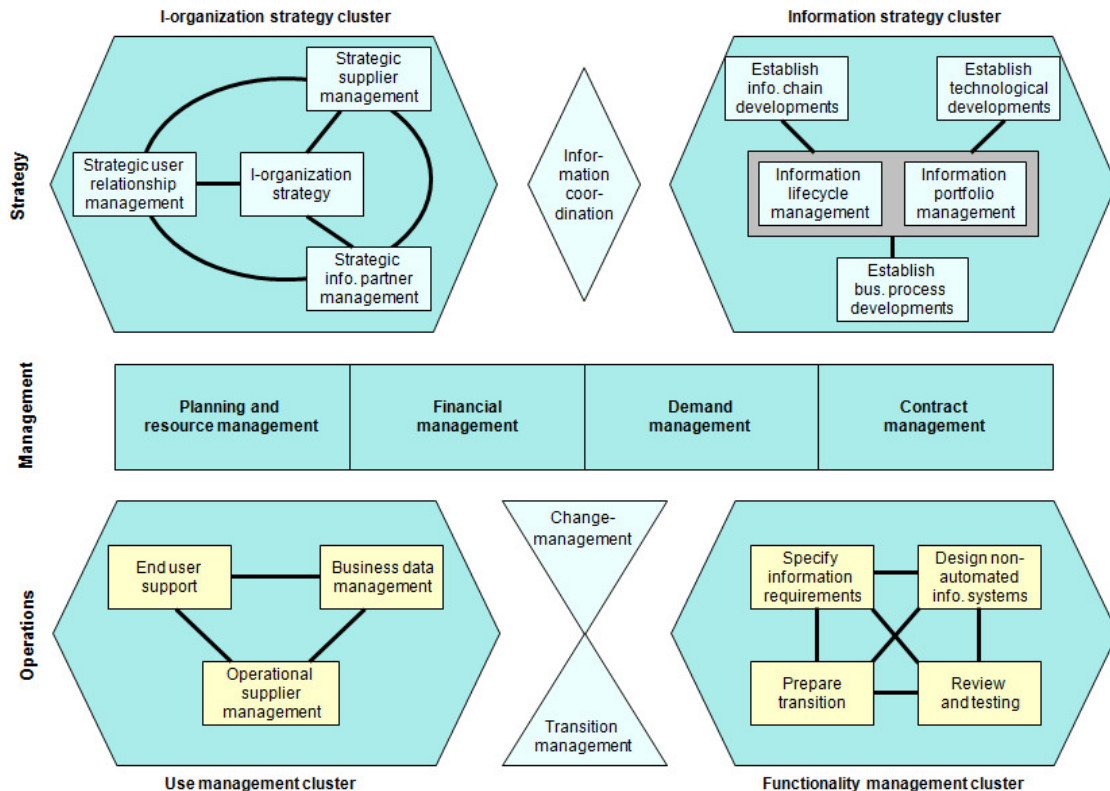
Reminiscent of the old dictatorial IT attitude, but now from within the business itself. Just as democracy isn't the best way of governing for a very immature population, maybe this used to be the least bad way of getting things done. But now the user community is increasingly IT savvy and connected, it's no longer acceptable. The users simply have to be strongly involved in the decision making.

How could using social media help you improve the way you execute Information Management? A few goals to start focusing on:

- Engaging your users
- Getting raw feedback (be prepared for a shock)
- Informing users when there are incidents or outages
- Generating ideas for improvement
- Improving relationship with clients who use your apps
- Increase the productivity and happiness of the users by letting them the apps use that are best for them.



The BiSL Process Framework describes the responsibilities that user organizations have with respect to managing information and IT services from a demand perspective. The following paragraphs denote the main areas in BiSL to which social media can contribute.



In addition to using traditional channels, social media can be used to engage users and gather input for various processes, including Demand management, Specify information requirements, Review and testing, Business data management.

Another important aspect of user engagement is keeping the users informed about the progress of calls, changes, releases, outages etc. This will mainly affect the way the processes Change management, Transition management and End user support are implemented.

We note the emergence of a new process design principle: include use of social media.



'Social' as design principle

Open architectures, service orientation and cloud are things you keep in mind while designing your solution and or your applications. However the social dimension is almost always forgotten and at best is added as an afterthought or introduced as a separate silo.

Treating it as a design principle will help you in designing a different kind of solution. Providing you with the advantage that the social transformation is coming from the start of the design, instead of after the introduction. This helps you and your organization to move the traditional enterprise to a more social business.

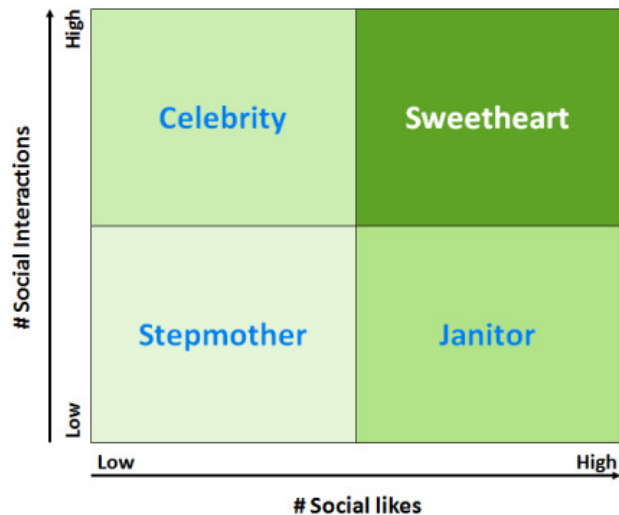
Applying social as a design principle is going beyond 'being great' on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. It is a fundamental change in how businesses are organized and interact with their stakeholders. Shifting from thinking about social as an add-on towards seeing social as the starting point for every design will lead to considerable benefits.

If you start designing your processes and application as 'social by default' you'll see that solutions are likely to become more flexible and connected. It will create more value than in the traditional silo approach and it will connect the dots between people, processes and systems. Social is not only about human interaction but also about the interaction between humans and systems. Friending your ERP system and get status updates on your social platform has already become reality.



Application socialization

Earlier on in this paper we took a look at applications using a transport metaphor. Let's take another view, also using four viewpoints. First the Sweetheart applications. Like Gmail. Very popular. Lots of updates. Removing this app would cause a revolution. Next the Janitor. Word is a good example. Some people like it but most are indifferent. Sure, it would be inconvenient if it



was replaced by something else but most users wouldn't bother protesting. Third the Celebrity. Google+ is an excellent example of a celebrity app. People follow it with great interest but aren't quite sure what its actual value is. If it disappears off the horizon people won't worry, there'll be another sexy star rising before long. Finally the Stepmother app. That old legacy green screen application. Nobody likes using it but they have to. Replacing this app would make people's business lives a lot easier. Of course there's a price tag on decommissioning or replacing applications but how often is the social value taken into consideration?

Just like with the transport metaphor, these perspectives can provide valuable insights to be taken into consideration during Application Portfolio Management.

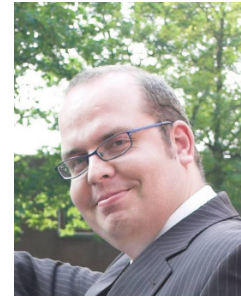
So...

What's next? Well, our main goal was to share our thoughts about the democratization of the user community and innovative use of social media. If you're in a position of providing value to users and if some of our ideas resonate with you, then we can only suggest you take the plunge and put some of them into action. Like us, you'll benefit from being early adopters. Join the revolution on Twitter at #ITSpring !



Authors

Rick Mans is Capgemini's Social Media Strategist, working on the social media strategy for the Capgemini Group and working for national and international cases for many (Fortune 500) clients. Nowadays he lives and loves social media, helping people and enterprises in using social media in a way that adds value for them. He also gives guest lectures at several universities to make students aware of the impact social media will have on their life in general and on enterprises in particular in the near and not so near future. He mostly blogs about social media and the way people and enterprises could interact and collaborate, and has great interest in anything digital, especially when it impact behavior. Is he a geek? Well... yes. A geek with a social life though. Even one with a wife and a young son, who's first English words were 'Social media'.



Contact: rick.mans@capgemini.com



Mark Smalley is employed as an IT Management Consultant by Capgemini in the Netherlands and also works for the not-for-profit ASL BiSL Foundation, where he is Director of International Affairs, promoting best practices in management of information systems around the globe. He writes and speaks on application management and related topics (ASL, BiSL, IT Governance, Business IT Alignment) on a regular basis and has reached out to several thousand people in more than ten countries in four continents. He lectures in Brussels, Hangzhou and Rotterdam and contributes to EXIN certification material. Mark's other persona's include Blind Monk, CYO, IT Paradigmologist, IT Management Philosopher and Stand-up IT Consultant.

Contact: mark.smalley@aslbisfoundation.org