Enterprise 2.0 and the Seven Stages of Growth

From "Islands of Me" to "Islands of We"

Over the last year, AILM has analyzed the evolution of the workplace and summarized the findings in a new document called the "AILM Worker Model." This post describes the evolutionary phases organizations go through from "Islands of Me"—focused on individual productivity—to "Extended We"—focused on enterprise collaboration and innovation using Enterprise 2.0 technologies.

According to AILM research on over 400 businesses, 44 percent of respondents said that Enterprise Web 2.0 or Enterprise 2.0 technologies are "imperative" or of "significant importance" for their organization. Another 27 percent positioned Enterprise 2.0 technologies such as RSS, blogs, and wikis to have an average impact on business goals and success. Exposure to technology and tools such as Facebook, iTunes, YouTube, Google, and Wikipedia are raising the bar on user expectations concerning interfaces, collaboration, and content access not only on the Web but on the intranet as well.

The new AILM Worker Model is part of a new series of training programs on Enterprise 2.0, and the graphic at right illustrates the evolutionary phases organizations go through:

1. ISLANDS OF ME: We begin at the beginning of the organizational use of computers and, specifically, personal computers. This is an era where culture is typically about total protectionism. It's all about me (and my department, if expanded); therefore functionally is siloed as well.

2. INFORMATION IN THE ONE-WAY ME/ENTERPRISE 1.0 ERA is still fairly siloed. Co-workers are curious enough to ask who has information, and where that information might live. But information is on a "need to know" basis, with independent libraries typically built into proprietary and "fat-client" oriented systems.

3. TEAM ME is the beginning of knowledge management, and became the state of the art in the 1990s. The "power" of "ME" is based on who I am within a community, and as an individual. Awareness of my skills, projects worked on, people I've interacted with—all are being captured and re-used to some degree. Although in all but the most extreme cases, this is within fairly contained and closed communities.

4. PROACTIVE ME, OR ENTERPRISE 1.5, is the beginning of the ability to always be connected, and a 24/7 working mindset—workers may be spread around the globe, and the systems they depend on should be available at any time. Web-based access to these systems is a major enabler, helping to drive this desire to compete at any time, all the time. Individuals are further empowered to reach out to others in their organization via their information systems to collaborate on projects, but also to find "human resources" within the organization via knowledge management-oriented capabilities.

5. IN THE TWO-WAY ME model, communities don't just exist—they are explicitly and purposefully created. Communities of Practice (COPs) and Communities of Interest (COIs) are mainstays of knowledge-driven and knowledge-management-oriented companies. "Collective Intelligence" is beginning to surface, although not in an automatic way, but rather from a proactive hunt to poll or otherwise ask communities to weigh in on discussions, or by doing very intensive, manual analysis of social networking activity such as in email traffic to understand how work is actually being done, rather than what the organizational chart might say.

Technology provides the "Single Point of Access" (SPOA) in a more personalized way, honing portals/dashboards to focus more on the ability of an individual to create their own workspace, than imposing a "corporate only" view as in earlier portal deployments. Underlying systems that are being unified into the portal interface remain siloed to a certain extent, although workflow capabilities and the rise of Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) are making it easier than ever before to integrate systems and provide contextual information sharing between systems, rather than requiring people to connect the dots between repositories through entirely manual efforts.

6. ISLANDS OF WE begin to bump the level of focus up into a larger team level and explicitly look at how fostering networking, and the ability to identify and wield networks (or communities) can drive significant benefits to the organization. The ability and desire to "Profile" or identify "core competencies" of individuals is far more prevalent than ever before.

The information systems of the organization are being built to house/maintain at least static profiles, skills inventories, and resumes, if not moving into a dynamically-generated and updated living "expertise system." Outsourcing continues to be rapidly adopted for lower level "knowledge work" as falling telecom prices and bandwidth to move work around the globe increase the ability to do outsourcing more or less seamlessly.
This is purely driven from a cost/expense standpoint, rather than leveraging expertise and the ability to have continuous work done 24/7 to speed Time to Market (TTM), although there are edge cases where that is true. Software systems and physical goods are beginning to be oriented towards customization for individual customers, although for physical goods, the tenets of Lean Thinking in manufacturing is still largely focused on cleaning up lazy, or at least sub-optimized processes, rather than being able to produce exactly what customers want at the time they want it.

The beginnings of strategic use of software that would surface and make social interactions transparent and result in emergent “wisdom” or intelligence rising to the surface is happening primarily in the outside or Business-to-Consumer (B2C) world, through the rapid adoption of blogs and public discussion forums. 2.0 (Web or Enterprise), is not yet strategically deployed, particularly in both worlds of the inward-facing and outward-facing, or extended enterprise, scenario. Marketing or customer service departments may be pulling the company from an engagement to the world perspective, and “professional services”-oriented teams inside the organization are the likely candidates for early adoption and success here.

7. EXTENDED ME, OR ENTERPRISE 2.0, is the current state of the art, and as we’ve seen in our research, it is most definitely in the early days of adoption. As we hope you have seen in the progression from the beginning of the use of personal computers through the stages outlined, there has been a fairly clear desire and ability to basically mix and match the capabilities of information systems to match the wide variety of business models that now exist.

While we are highlighting here that Enterprise 2.0 does have cultural components such as transparency, a participative and engaged community (workforce, customers, etc.), and the agility to quickly adapt to changing environments (in the economy and otherwise)—it should be noted that we don’t believe that Enterprise 2.0 means that all communication, collaboration, and interaction is always transparent, with all potential voices being heard and acknowledged, and that only “wisdom” springs forth from the collective actions of all participants.

The potential to run to that extreme is, however, fully available in the Enterprise 2.0 world now, and whether your organization sees value in running completely to that edge, or in a more moderate case, is up to you.

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