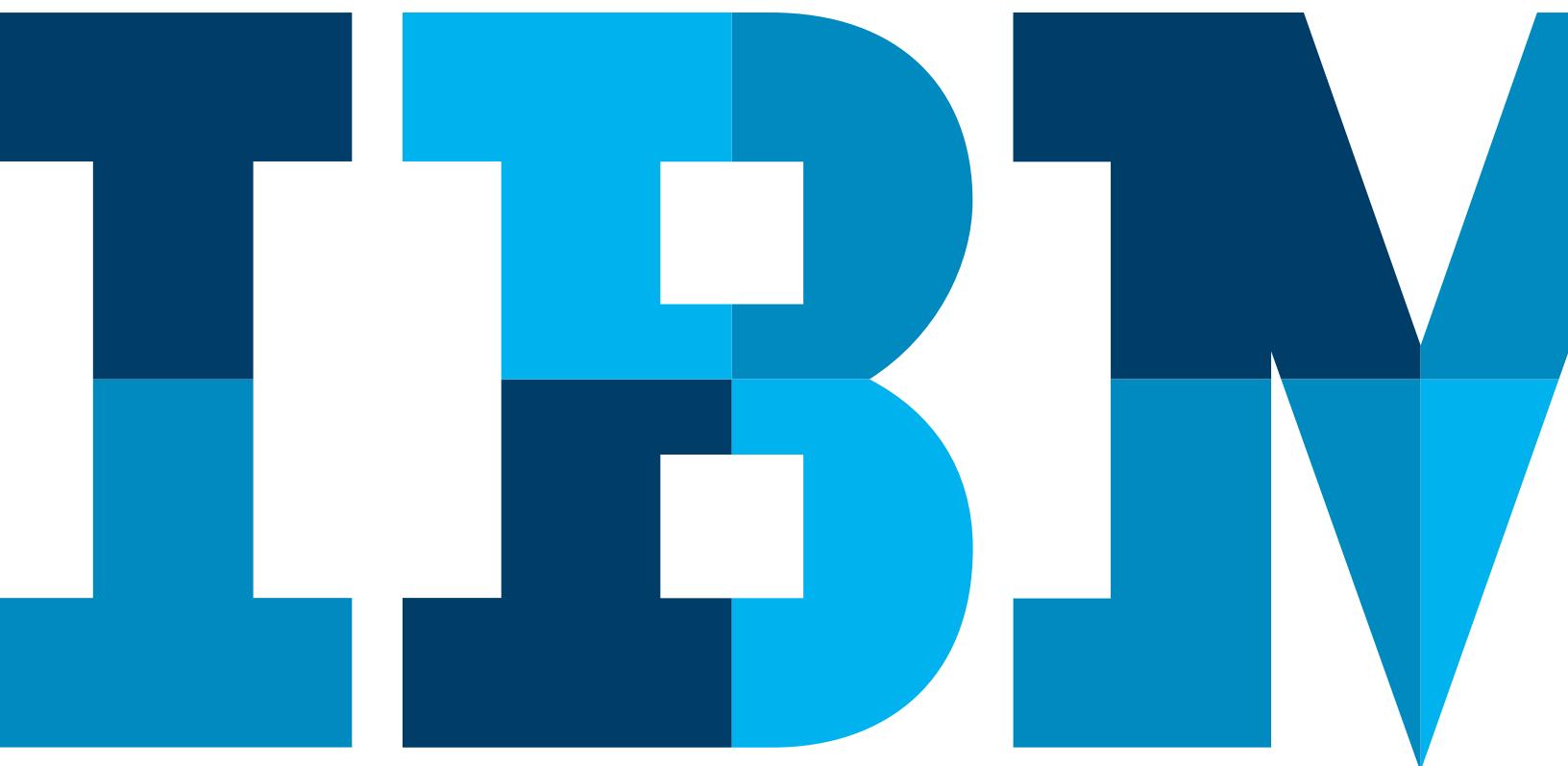


The only constant is change: Considerations for implementing IBM Connections in your organization



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Executive summary

This white paper is one of two white papers on the topic of organizing and executing a successful implementation of the IBM® Connections™ collaboration platform in your enterprise. Both white papers are intended for those of you who have seen the need for your organization to change and want to learn how to make it happen. This paper focuses on the benefits of IBM Connections for both organizations and employees and the principles for planning and timing. The second paper addresses practical initiatives to use, in a mix suitable to the context and culture of your organization. This is your fast track to IBM Connections adoption in your organization so you can turn collaboration into a new way to work.

The only constant is change

You might have come across this expression before but it's never been as valid as it is today for anyone currently engaged in work or business life. The speed of change in technology, in business models, in consumer trends and in working conditions is frantic. Employees and customers are overwhelmed by a tidal wave of information. Too often increasing efficiency has come at the cost of dissatisfaction from employees and once loyal customers. Social business software has the capacity to increase innovation and shorten time to market but unfortunately the ROI of social software doesn't come automatically when you log in or nor does it appear like magic. It comes with use.

What is the point of having an account on a public social network if you never use it? What would the stock market valuation of Facebook be without the users? Or Twitter, LinkedIn and WeChat or even Uber and AirBnB for that matter? Similarly the value of IBM Connections for your organization comes from its being used. As an IBM Connections business network grows, information and ideas are captured and the value is generated automatically as employees can help customers, solve problems or discover opportunities more easily. You can capture innovation, harness it and move it forward. The business value also comes from the ability to quickly search and find expertise from all your knowledgeable colleagues or to receive suggestions based on your past history. And, you can attract and retain the most talented employees as they find your organization fun and modern to work for.

Business value also comes from:

- Employee inspiration and energy created by increased transparency and the easy access to important people and knowledge
- More efficient processes created by inclusive synchronous and asynchronous work spaces, reduction of latency and re-work
- Boosted innovation and quality by means of accidental discovery of ideas
- Improved understanding of customer preferences, needs and challenges

A true digital transformation gains momentum over time as the life blood of your organization starts pumping faster and more freely than previously possible.

The benefits of a successful adoption of IBM Connections can be summarized as:

- Improved **agility**, which helps you succeed in a business and technology environment that changes more rapidly than you have ever experienced
- Better **resilience**, which makes you less dependent on individual employees
- Greater **efficiency**, which comes from the ease of access to expertise—live or shared
- Boosted **effectiveness**, which is enabled by shorter communication channels with less risk of distortion
- A surge in **employee engagement, inspiration** and **innovation**, which could be the greatest long term value because your customers will be offered improved and more differentiated products and services, not to mention engaging experiences

Trying to change work habits by force is like holding a ball under water

“Force” can be in the form of managerial dictate or an intensive communications campaign. However, whichever one is used makes no difference. As soon as the downward pressure is released, old work habits bounce back. Think of how a ball shoots up through the surface of the water as soon as you stop holding it down.

The key to a self-sustaining change in how work gets done lies in the realization of the benefits for the individual employee or manager and, to some extent, in the changing of the definition of “work.” A formula, $M^2E^2ME = A$ (adoption), can be applied to enable this change:

- M^2 = Motivate Management
- E = Easy
- E = Embed
- ME = Motivate Employees

The second paper goes into the details of each of the components of the formula.

If management, up and down the ranks, does not see the benefits or results for the business, they will not:

- Provide or continue to provide the budget needed.
- Provide the essential visible endorsement of the new ways of working.
- Enable a change in the way work is supposed to get done.

If employees don’t see the benefits of collaborating and sharing their experiences or if management indicates that those activities are a waste of time, the ball will bounce back as soon as you let go.

The table that follows translates the list of benefits mentioned previously as motivation for management (top management especially) and to employees in general:

Management		Employees
Faster identification of opportunities and threats and faster execution of response	Agility	Increased transparency empowers faster decisions, better informed and with less dependency on formal structures
Reduced reliance on knowledge hoarded by a few experts, kept only in heads, stored on hard drives or contained in mail files that disappear when employees leave the company	Resilience	Being able to do your job better by learning from others and finding information faster
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced duplication of efforts and mistakes • Faster onboarding and shorter runway for new initiatives • Improved employee retention 	Efficiency	Saving the time spent in resolving challenges and in onboarding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More direct communication channels with reduced risk of distortion • Clarity of direction • Improved talent attraction 	Effectiveness	Improved job performance and productivity that comes from learning from others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased occurrence of chance meetings between people, ideas or knowledge • More engaged employees 	Inspiration and Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chance meetings with inspirational colleagues and knowledge • Better understanding of the organization and specific roles

Grass root initiatives can get the ball rolling, but engaged executives who see solutions to business challenges are what move it across the finish line

Enthusiastic evangelists and early adopters are essential for kicking off the use of social and collaborative software. However, if you want to fundamentally transform the way your organization works, you need full involvement and engagement by top management. Enthusiastic early adopters are also critical, but it is just as important that you consciously work with a more comprehensive set of target audiences.

Executives

Executives set the tone for the entire organization: values, priorities, goals, style of working, leading and communicating. They approve budgets, follow up on results and decide the balance when resources are scarce. They work for the good of the entire organization for the long term. Today, a successful executive is a social executive. Executives are expected to be more transparent and in tune with their organization. If executives do not lead the collaboration effort, employees will abandon the new, more efficient way of working.

You need the executives to:

- Provide the initial and ongoing budget for the transformation program.
- Endorse the culture change.
- Visibly practice the new ways to work.
- Encourage and recognize those who embrace the new ways to work.
- Sponsor and endorse the operational changes to embed the new ways to work in the standard ways to operate.

Expert tip

As you work with executives, keep in mind that their support staff has privileged access to their calendar. Therefore, you should involve them front and center in your training efforts. They will be the first people the executives reach out to for help.

Managers

Managers are another key group. If not provided with adequate support, middle managers can sometimes become road blocks to adoption. They are usually tasked to manage towards tangible and defined goals for their area of responsibility and their performance is measured by the quarter. Although the increased efficiency that results from collaboration might improve those results, the wider benefits of transparency and networking to the entire organization might not be realized in their specific area of responsibility or their targets in the current quarter. Usually they are also pressed for time and the sudden ease of availability of information and increased conversation that crosses traditional hierarchical and organizational paths can appear to be disruptive or seen as reducing reliance on them by their teams. Transparency can scare some people at first, and managers are no exception.

Champions

Initial adopters and champions are invaluable for initial adoption. They are the curious, visionary risk takers with a positive attitude. Although early adopters in general can be driven primarily by curiosity or a desire to use new tools to overcome their specific challenges, champions have the added desire to help others and the organization (and sometimes to boost their own reputations). Champions can be found anywhere in the organization and are essential in driving adoption virally. When well-supported, they can extend the reach and capacity of the transformation team.

A topic of special interest for champions is how to motivate and train others. Champions are also a good talent pool for your transformation team and new collaborative job roles.

Expert tip

Don't waste time by telling early adopters about the advantages of adoption. Save that for all the others. Early adopters already see them. Instead, listen to them. Listen to how they translate the advantages into practical examples, adapted to day-to-day realities in a way that you never will be able to imagine in a central team. Collect, encourage and reward such stories and use them for other audiences in your transformation work.

Community owners and managers

Proactive, but not overbearing, community management is a crucial aspect of social business transformation and therefore warrants your close attention.

Although similar to—and sometimes overlapping—champions, community owners and managers also have these characteristics:

- They might not have volunteered to be early adopters. Management might have nominated them for the role of managing a community.
- Not only do they need to understand how to use the capabilities of IBM Connections in general, but they also need to understand how to create, boost and maintain community member engagement.
- Although the role of champion is usually extracurricular, some community managers can have formal objectives to meet.

Transformation team

Your own team is key to your success. If social business is new, an obvious, single source of talent from which to build your team might not have been identified.

In your team, but not necessarily in each person, you will need:

- Strong communication—spoken, written, graphical and online—and listening skills
- Strong learning development and delivery skills, including live and self-paced online
- Consultative and process redesign skills (for integration into existing work processes)
- Strong project management, stakeholder management and internal networking skills
- An influential sponsor, who provides you with a clear mandate, resources and opening internal doors
- Curiosity, imagination and the courage needed to convince higher ranking colleagues
- Allies in the business, human resources, IT, internal communications and among executives

Also think of and prepare possible career paths for your team members. If joining your team looks like a dead end for careers, you will turn off everyone, especially ambitious and high-energy talent.

Most importantly, all those who are change agents and executive sponsors need to visibly and stubbornly walk the talk. They need to use the tools and practices they want others to adopt. If they do not, the credibility of the entire project is likely to quickly erode.

Internal communications

Internal communications are essential for your success, not only because you will need to get your transformation communications across, but also because the transformation itself will significantly affect their work. Your efforts will:

- Cause communications to flow across traditional channels
- Enable employees to communicate widely and become “autonomous publishers” in a way never before seen
- Create new needs due to the possibility of direct communication with leaders.

These factors will transform the role and work of internal communications. From owning the communication channels, using them mainly to spread news and to be the “voice of the company and the leadership,” they will increasingly need to coach and support leaders and managers in their communications instead of communicating “on their behalf.” The content communicated will change, with company values making up a much greater proportion, in order to guide employees to communicate and represent the company well.

Role models

Good examples of how something has benefited others, what they did and how it worked well for them are among the best ways to help people see the benefits. The benefits of transparency and collaboration often are especially difficult to grasp. Therefore, highlighting role models and publishing their success stories are powerful tools for you in your change communications. Champions and community managers are likely candidates or sources for stories, which also serve as an opportunity to boost their motivation.

“Tipper’s”

Strategic roles can tip the scale. Examples of people in these roles could be event organizers, support teams and functions, planners or those with key logistical functions. They differ, depending on industry and individual organization. Typically, their activities touch many other employees or very influential employees. They warrant special attention and more consultative support by identifying how to make their work easier with new ways of working. The focus is often on reducing the need to answer the same questions repeatedly.

First things first, but what you do is more important than when you do it

A successful IBM Connections implementation hinges on planning. A detailed plan for your Connections adoption work is beyond the scope of this paper because one size does not fit all. However, the process of setting up your own plan can benefit from some overall guidance.

Find a sponsor

You will get nowhere without a sponsor who is high enough in your organization to fund your team and the investments needed and engaged enough to back you up with other executives, functions and managers. Ideally, your sponsor should be from the parts of your organization that will benefit the most from new ways of working such as the business, human resources or communications, because that is where a broad vision of organizational benefits lies. You must earn that sponsorship by clearly driving home the business benefits to be reaped by working in new ways.

Make change easy and embed new ways of working right from the start

The easier you make change and the more you manage to embed new ways of working, the less effort you will have to put into training and motivating employees and the rest of the management ranks. Therefore, invest time and effort initially to explore how to simplify and support the new ways of working while making them part of everyday work.

Provide all the support you possibly can

When you launch IBM Connections, make sure to provide plenty of easy-to access functional support. You should also include “what’s in it for you” motivation. Encourage champions and community managers to support each other. They extend the reach of your team.

Find leaders who “walk the talk”

Having leadership set an example is essential to your success. Leaders who express their support are good, but that is only a start. Unless they walk the talk—for example, by using blogs instead of email newsletters, by building networks, by responding to blog comments and by providing feedback on posts and contributions by others—their words of support will be seen only as lip service. Therefore, you should invest significantly in not only showing executives and other leaders the business benefits of IBM Connections but also in coaching and supporting them as they change their own ways of working and communicating.

Plan for and demonstrate early results

Showing results quickly is imperative. Therefore, be sure to include some low hanging fruit in your portfolio of initiatives. When you are able to demonstrate positive business results, gaining interest and support elsewhere is much easier.

Keep track of your successes from day 1

From the start, you should be collecting success stories and identifying role models to use in your communication efforts. Little beats the motivational power of seeing your peers succeed. Their example also makes it easier to see how your own ways of working can be changed for your own good.

Combine broad availability and support with iterative rollouts focused at consecutive target audiences

Now that you have basic guidelines to help you plan your adoption, how can you make sure these needs are met? Iterative rollout is a very successful method for demonstrating success and gaining broader buy-in.

Iterative rollout (Figure 1) offers the deployment of IBM Connections to a discrete group of people as a complete project. You promote, engage, deploy and support the rollout to that group as if they were the entire scope of your project. You then collect lessons learned and feedback and tweak your approach. The tweaking could include adjusting your upcoming target audiences based on experience gained.

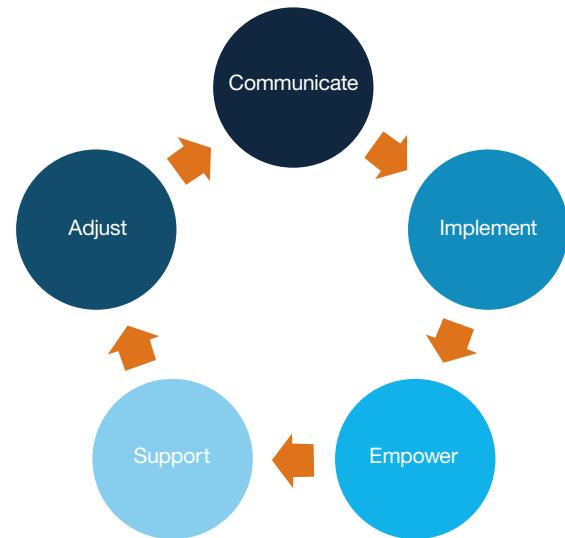


Figure 1: The components of iterative rollout

Iterative rollout can enable you to:

- Rapidly demonstrate success.
- Identify and enable early adopters and champions.
- Collect success stories about the implementation you can reuse with steadily larger and, maybe, more challenging groups of users.

Rolling out iteratively doesn't mean, however, that you're done with those target audiences after you have completed the roll out. Rather, you should think of the rollouts as consecutive launches. They should be followed by continued support, maintenance communications and intermittent "booster" campaigns.

Other aspects of your transformation activities should be continuous, or constantly developed. Management motivation must constantly be managed and maintained. Champions, community managers and others have to be supported. You need to constantly look for new ways to make it easier to collaborate and identify processes that could be improved by the infusion of new ways to work.

Don't confuse the iterative rollout with staged availability. If you limit availability only to your target audiences, you miss out on the added power from spontaneous adoption in general and your champions in particular. Limiting availability hinders viral adoption.

Expert tip

Combine communities aimed at employees in general with communities for targeted audiences from day 1. An example would be a blog and forum for supply chain optimization.

A special case: Introducing IBM Connections to support transformation programs

Another way to introduce and embed IBM Connections and new ways to work throughout an organization is not to do it as a standalone effort. For example, what if another major transformation program, perhaps a merger or divestment, a new or changed core system (for example, ERP, logistics, communication or similar) is in the works? That project is likely to raise the concerns of employees. They will need help in understanding the novelties. They will be insecure about how their work will be impacted. They will be full of questions.

You have the tool to help them and to do it in a more efficient way than traditional change communications. You have IBM Connections.

Use forums for support teams to handle questions from users so their answers can be re-used by others, thereby reducing the volume of repeat questions. Encourage them to use wikis to create FAQs to provide answers to the most common questions so they can easily maintain and update them as transformation continues. Use blogs to communicate progress and plans.

Most people find change stressful. A big transformation project might be your chance to introduce IBM Connections as a means to reduce such stress, not as a potential stress-creating change in itself. Introducing IBM Connections in this manner can help employees see how new ways of working smoothly can overcome uncertainty created by a big transformation project.

Conclusion

To summarize, for a few organizations, implementing IBM Connections might be as simple as simply switching it on and letting people get on with using it to find new ways to be more productive. In most organizations, however, more planning and thought needs to go into how to roll it out so people understand how to get the most from it and how to get help.

The guidelines and best practices described in this paper should be used to inspire you and provide you with concepts you can use and adapt to your organization's needs as you plan for an IBM Connections implementation. These are based on IBM's own experiences with multitudes of clients and of some of the human factors associated with the deployment of new enterprise software and are likely to be useful to your organization.

For more information

To learn more about IBM Connections and the new way to work, contact your IBM representative or Business Partner or visit: www.ibmcloud.com/social

To learn more about the potential ROI of IBM Connections for your organization, read the study "[The Total Economic™ of IBM Connections](#)," a July 2015 commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of IBM.

For more details on the best practices for implementing IBM Connections, read the other paper in this series: "[Best practices for establishing a new way to work: Implementing IBM Connections](#)."



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