

How social technologies drive business success

EUROPEAN SURVEY RESULTS
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Foreword

Sharing opinions and experiences online is second nature for many people, but until recently this bore little resemblance to the way we work. Traditionally, businesses operated in silos, with little done to encourage collaboration or the sharing of ideas and information, not just across countries, but even within individual departments.

Today, however, the tools that make it easy to connect and work together online are starting to disrupt traditional working practices in ways that we are only just beginning to realise. There is a growing recognition that rather than being a distraction or a time drain, social tools could actually hold the key to a more productive way of doing business.

To find out more about the potential of social tools in the world of business, we commissioned Millward Brown to gather opinions from 2,700 professionals across France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the UK. We wanted to see if social tools are already helping businesses to grow faster, whether and how they can help your career, and which countries are at the forefront of this social revolution.

The results, as you will see in the rest of this report, were fascinating and clearly show that not only are social tools being used widely within business today, but that those who are using them are already reaping the benefits.

While there is a wealth of data to pore over, three findings really peaked my interest. The first is that, contrary to what we're often told about the younger generation of workers driving the

adoption of social tools, those in senior roles actually use them far more regularly than their more junior colleagues. The second is that a huge proportion (81%) of high growth businesses are using social tools to facilitate expansion and improve the ways in which teams collaborate and share knowledge. And finally, we found that successful workers are more than twice as likely to be active users of social tools in the workplace than their less successful colleagues.

With a trend towards more remote working and more companies spread across different territories, the need for cross-border collaboration and information sharing has never been greater. Having the ability to bring together thoughts and ideas from team members scattered across a country, or even across the globe, and being able to find information, people and expertise faster can only help businesses grow and remain competitive.

Of course social tools are not a panacea for all business challenges, and in themselves cannot transform business performance – but, when used appropriately, their potential should not be underestimated. With this in mind, it is perhaps unsurprising that nearly a half of professionals surveyed across Europe said that businesses that do not embrace social media will not survive. Eventually, organisations that adopt social tools to break down barriers will benefit versus those that stay stuck in silos.

Sebastien Marotte

VP of Google Enterprise, EMEA

Executive summary

Timewasting, a distraction and a drain on resources are all accusations that have been levelled at the use of social tools in business – but as the digital revolution gathers apace, are these still valid?

To find out, we commissioned this comprehensive European study with Millward Brown, gathering opinions from 2,700 professionals across France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the UK.

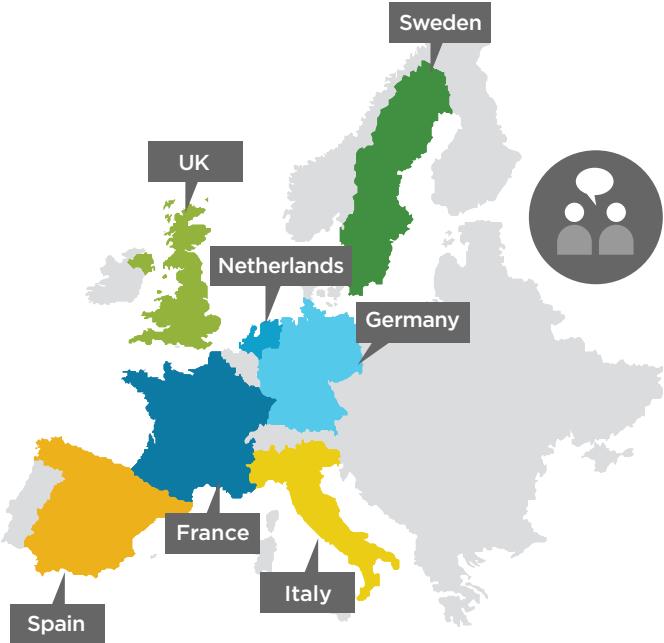
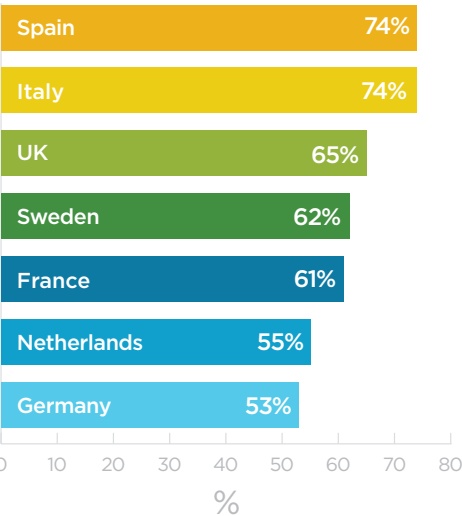
We wanted to understand how social tools are being used in business; who is using them and what for, their benefits and challenges and how they are affecting people’s work and careers. We spoke with people who need to collaborate with colleagues to achieve their objectives and here’s what we found out – these findings, and more, are explored throughout the report.

Almost a half (46%) of professionals want to make greater use of social tools:

- A third (32%) are using external social media, such as Google+, Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn, for work related purposes every day
- A quarter (23%) are using in-house social tools (set up for use by people within the business) daily, over a half (57%) use them at least once a week
- Only a quarter never use in-house social tools

Who is using social tools?

Which countries are the most enthusiastic users of social tools?



Most professionals are enthusiastic about the potential social tools have to improve the way they work, the most enthusiastic found in/ among:

- Spain and Italy
- Senior managers
- High growth companies
- Retail, Consumer/FMCG and Creative industries
- SMEs with an international reach

Today professionals are using social tools for:

- Finding people, information or expertise more quickly (41%)
- Collaboration and knowledge sharing (37%)
- Widening personal networks, building professional relationships, raising profile and creating communities (34%)
- Reducing the volume and length of emails (31%)

Social Tools are expected to be a powerful ingredient within successful businesses:

- 70% of professionals believe social tools will change business strategy
- 69% think businesses that embrace them will grow faster than those that don't
- 68% believe businesses that embrace social tools will find it easier to attract and keep the best people
- Professionals estimate that productivity could be increased by nearly 20% through the use of social tools

Senior managers are enthusiastic about the potential social tools have to boost business performance:

- Nearly three-quarters (71%) are using them at least once a week, compared to 49% of those in more junior roles
- Three quarters say:
 - They will change the way businesses operate in the future
 - They have, where used, enabled them to be more productive
 - Businesses that embrace them will grow faster than those that don't

High growth companies are more likely to be using social tools to fuel success:

- 59% of professionals in high growth organisations are using social tools to improve business outcomes such as increasing sales and attracting and retaining clients
- 81% of these 'dynamic' businesses that are using social tools report a significant impact on growth/expansion
- 80% of high growth companies are using social tools to improve 'connectivity' (such as collaboration and knowledge sharing)

High flyers are twice as likely to be using social tools

- 86% of frequent users have recently been promoted, and 72% say they are likely to be promoted, compared to 61% and 39% of non-users
- Over a third (38%) are very satisfied with their jobs – compared to 18% of non-users
- 64% are very likely to recommend their workplace – compared to 42% of non-users

Frequent users of social tools are more optimistic

- 59% expect the performance of their organisation to improve over the next year, compared to just 38% of those that never use them

Universal agreement that social tools can save time on common tasks

- Professionals think that two hours a week could be saved on common tasks such as dealing with emails, travelling to meetings and searching for the most relevant person for a task

How are social tools being used today?

Improving how information flows

Professionals are using social tools to achieve numerous tasks and objectives. Far from being a time-drain, those using them agree that they enable better communication with their colleagues, leading to improved cooperation – particularly for those that work with people in other locations.

“They greatly improve the contribution and development of ideas. In my case, as an architect and section manager, they help me and my group to put ideas forward and brainstorm at any time and in any place.”

– Team Leader, Creative/Design, Spain

“I can communicate quickly with colleagues in other countries and get immediate answers.”

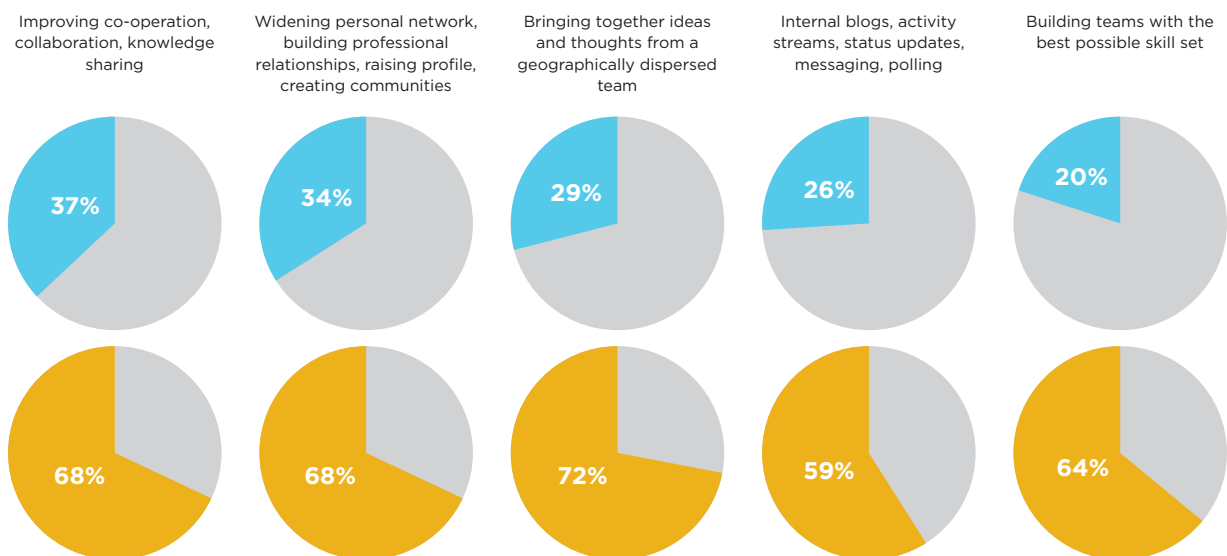
– Junior Executive, Content Management, UK

In fact, people are primarily using social tools to find information, people, or expertise more quickly (41%), followed by improving co-operation, collaboration and knowledge sharing (37%), widening personal networks, building professional relationships, raising profiles and creating communities (34%) and bringing together ideas and thoughts from a geographically dispersed team.

The majority of those using social tools think they have had a big impact on different aspects of their work - nearly three-quarters (72%) say that they have significantly improved bringing together ideas and thoughts from a geographically dispersed team and over two-thirds (68%) think collaboration and knowledge sharing, and building professional relationships have been substantially enhanced.

Chart 1: Use and impact of social tools to connect people and share ideas (connections)

● Used for
● Significant impact



Driving business success

Two-thirds (67%) of professionals using them believe that social tools have had a significant impact on the growth of their organisation. 63% say they have enabled their businesses to be more competitive and 60% believe they have allowed them to increase sales and to attract and retain the best talent (59%). The lowest figures for a perceived impact on attracting talent were seen in Germany (27%).

Among those using social tools it is professionals in Spain and Italy who have the most positive perceptions of their impact. In Spain, for example, 89% of professionals believe social tools have significantly improved innovation (compared to the European average of 64%). Those in Sweden and The Netherlands are more doubtful of the impact. The respective figures for perceived reduction in volume of emails is 26% and 22%, compared to the 57% European average.

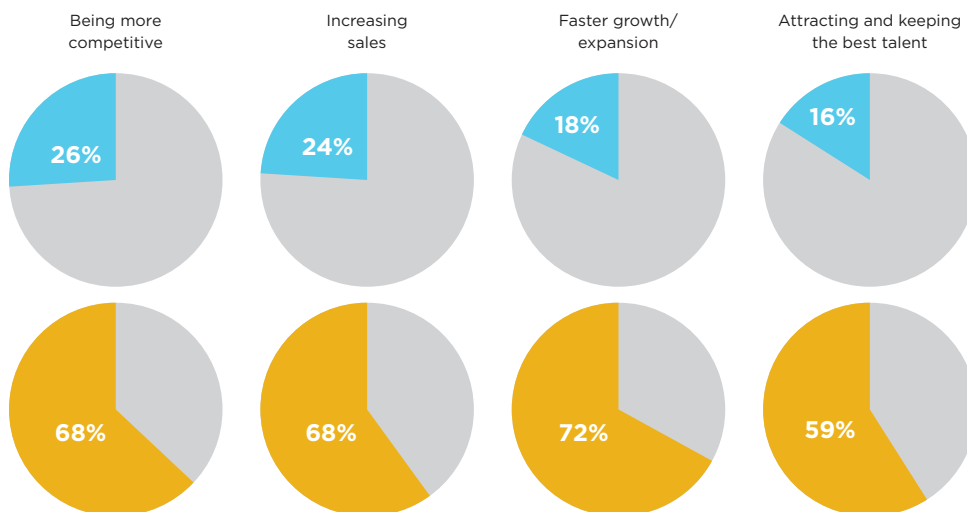
Adoption in industry

Which industries are the most enthusiastic users of social tools and business networking applications?



Chart 2: Use and impact of social tools to achieve business goals (outcomes)

● Used for
● Significant impact



How will social tools be used tomorrow?

Business growth

Three-quarters (76%) of senior managers believe businesses that embrace social tools will grow faster than those who 'ignore' the technology. Meanwhile, 53% believe that businesses will not survive unless they embrace social. Nearly three-quarters (71%) say that businesses that embrace the use of social tools in the workplace will find it easier to attract and keep the best talent.

Increased productivity

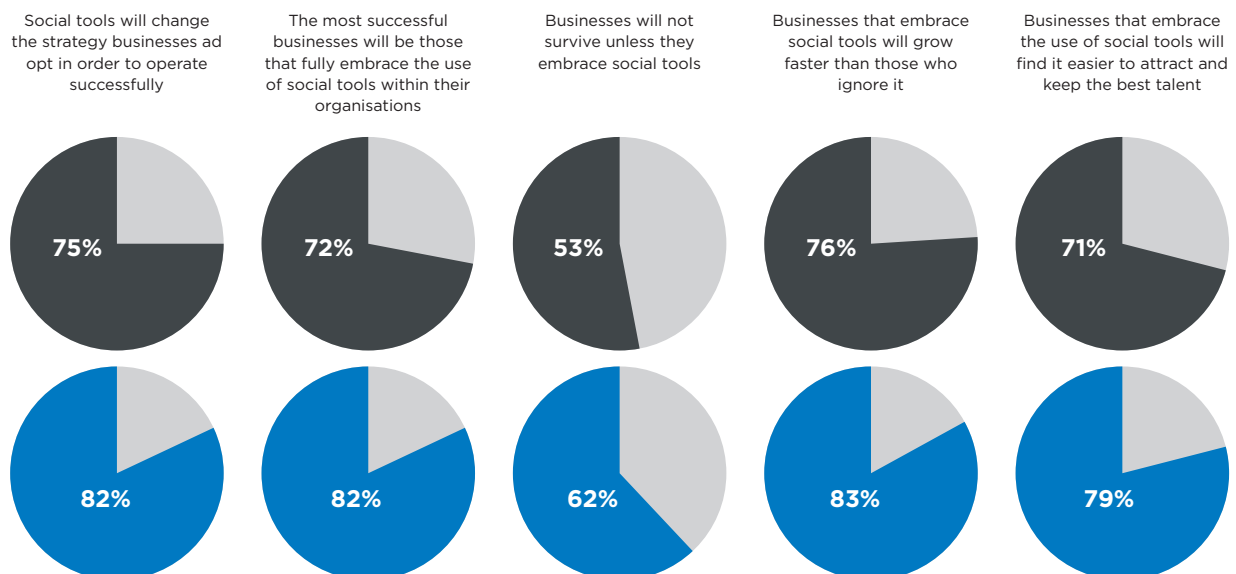
Many professionals think that using social tools will increase productivity – by an average of 20% across Europe in fact – with the biggest potential for time saving on everyday tasks. For example, they think social tools could:

- Reduce the volume of emails by 25%
- Reduce the number of meetings and conference calls by 23%

Frequent users estimate a total of three hours a week could be saved on each of these tasks. They also believe speed of service delivery will increase by 27% and financial performance improve by 24%.

Chart 3: Perceptions of social tools' impact on business 'success' (% agree)

● Senior managers
● Frequent users



Professionals in Germany, Sweden and The Netherlands are less likely to recognise the tangible benefits social tools might bring. Estimates of improvements in productivity in these countries are at least 5% lower than the European average. In contrast professionals in Spain were by far the most positive, with an estimated 31% increase in productivity and a 28% increase in financial performance being attributed to the power of social tools.

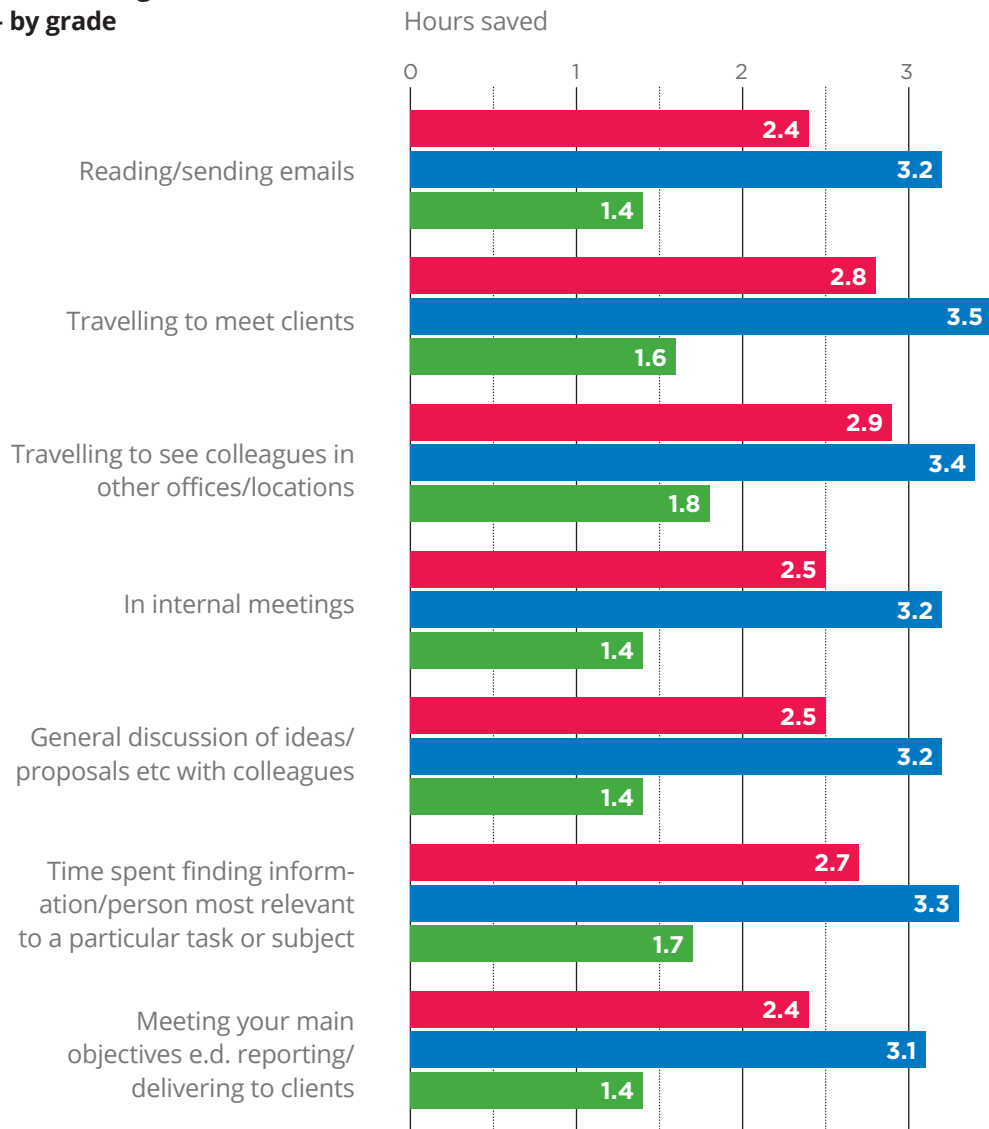
“Those who use information in faster and broader ways will grow stronger and will be more competitive. Those who do not will (depending on what they do) be marginalised and eventually will become insignificant or extinct.”

– Junior Executive, IT/Systems, the UK

The greatest time saving is thought to be through reduction in travel to meet clients and colleagues in other offices (2.8 hours per week estimated saving on client visits rising to 3.5 among frequent users).

Chart 4: Estimated time saving (hours) from using social tools – by grade

- Total
- Frequent users
- Never used



Senior managers lead by example

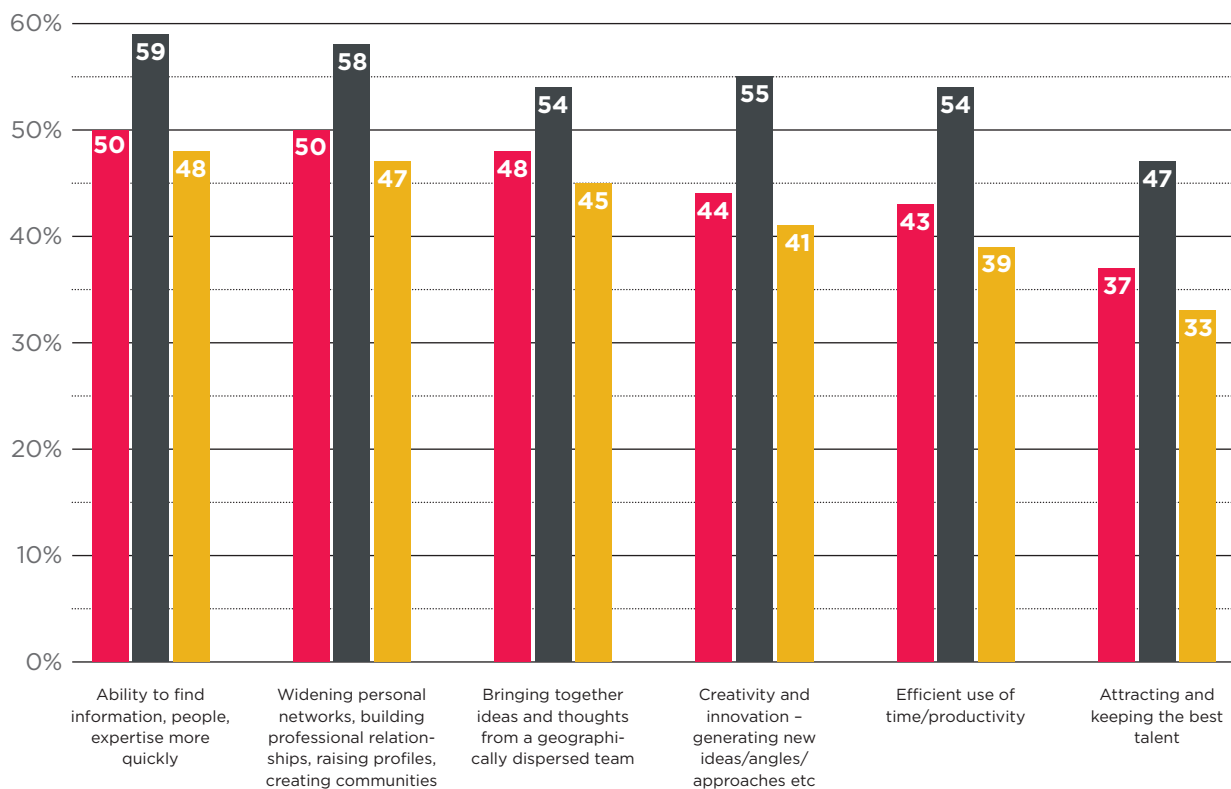
Senior managers strongly endorse the use of social tools for business purposes, and are enthusiastic about their role in the workplace. Contrary to popular belief that the use of social tools in business will be driven by the younger generation, senior executives use social tools more frequently – with nearly three-quarters (71%) of those surveyed using them at least once a week compared to a half (49%) of those in more junior roles. Over a half (54%) expect social tools to help productivity, compared to just 39% of those in a junior role.

Three-quarters (75%) of those senior executives surveyed using them said that social tools will change business strategy, stating that they had already been able to improve the following aspects of their business:

- Bringing together ideas and thoughts from a geographically dispersed team (79%)
- Productivity (76%)
- Ability to find information, people and expertise more quickly (72%)

Chart 5: Perceived impact of social tools on business activity over next two years – by grade (% saying significant impact)

- All
- Senior managers
- Junior role



When asked to take a two-year view, senior managers' demonstrated the strength of their conviction. They, more than others, expect social tools to facilitate creativity and innovation as well as attract the best talent. Again, we see the strongest passion in Italy, with professionals in The Netherlands and Sweden less convinced.

"The current generation is growing up with social media; if you do not use it at all you are virtually untraceable as a company."

- Senior Management, HR/Personnel, Netherlands

Senior managers believe that the use of social tools within their organisation could, on average, reduce the time spent on common tasks such as emailing and attending meetings by more than 25%. However, they think the biggest saving (29%) could come from reducing the time spent finding the most relevant information or people for a particular task. Speed of decision making is also seen as an area that can be improved by the use of social tools - by 26%.

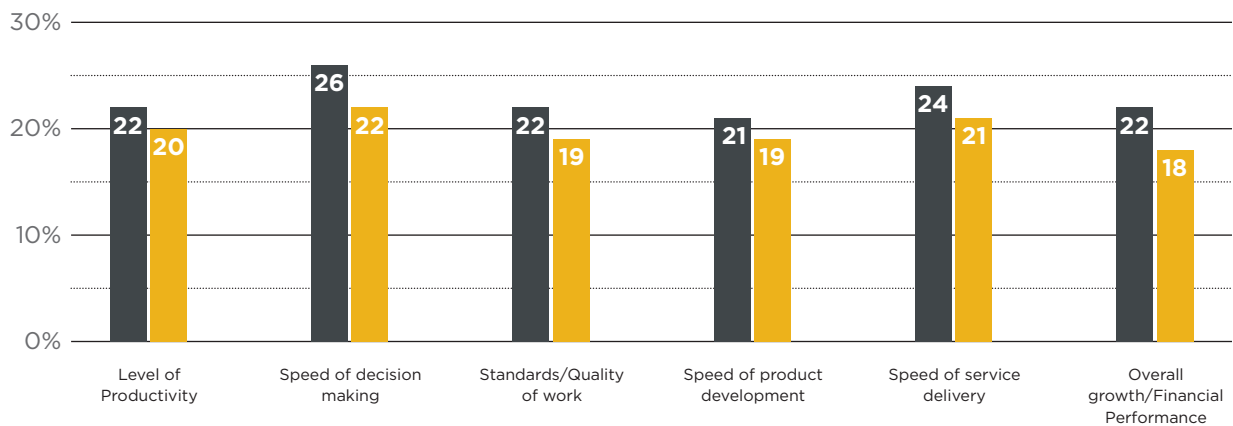
Employee use of social tools

Who is the biggest user of social tools in the workplace?



Chart 6: Predicted percentage improvement associated with use of Social Tools - by grade

● Senior managers
● Junior role



Fast growth companies use social tools to fuel success

Professionals in the fastest growing companies we talked to (those claiming over 10% growth in 2011) are making the greatest use of social tools to achieve success.

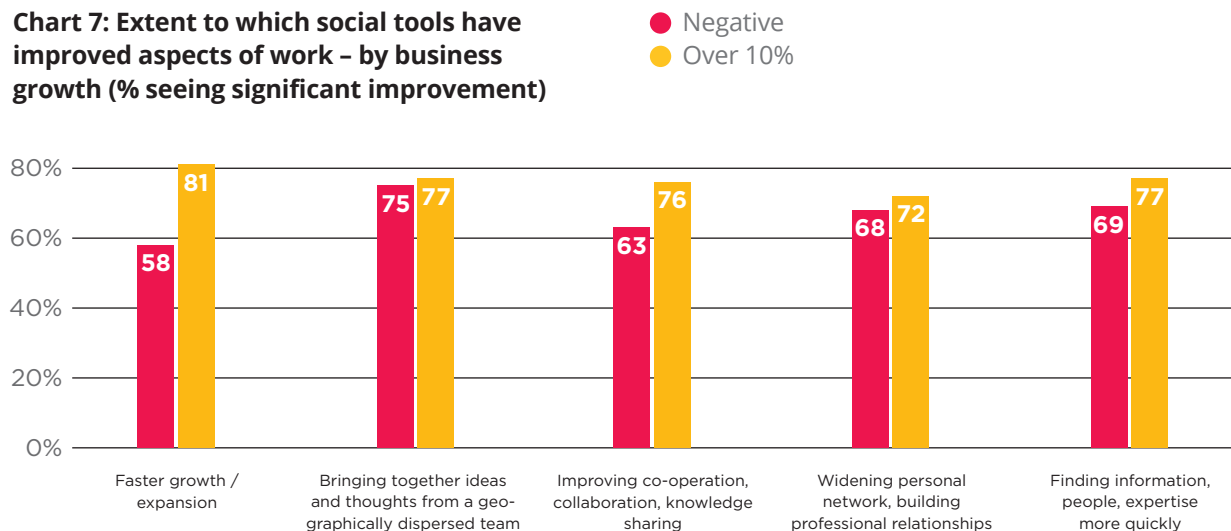
Fuelling faster growth and expansion

Among the 'dynamic' businesses using social tools to achieve specific outcomes, 81% report a significant impact on growth/expansion; 80% on team's collaboration and knowledge sharing. Meanwhile 66% have employed social tools to help them to drive elements of efficiency and productivity and 59% to improve business outcomes such as sales and to attract and retain talent.

High growth companies in the UK seem to be most proactive in employing social tools to drive success, with 88% using them to improve 'connectivity' with others at work (such as improved levels of co-operation or creation of the best-skilled teams), 72% to improve productivity and 70% for improved business outcomes. This is in contrast to Germany where the lowest number of professionals say they use social tools to support business success; here 41% of high growth companies using social tools say they are using them to achieve business outcomes.

Frequent users of in-house social tools are more than twice as likely to be working in high growth companies and only in Sweden and Germany is the pattern less distinct.

Chart 7: Extent to which social tools have improved aspects of work - by business growth (% seeing significant improvement)



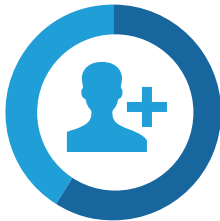
Improving quality

High growth companies are also significantly more likely than others to be using social tools to improve quality of work and enhance creativity and innovation, highlighting the role social tools can play in helping employees to generate new ideas and to take a fresh approach to the way they collaborate with colleagues. This is particularly true in Italy, where 70% of the fastest growing companies are using social tools to improve quality and support innovation, in contrast to Germany where just 28% are using social tools to improve quality of work.

Social tools and business growth

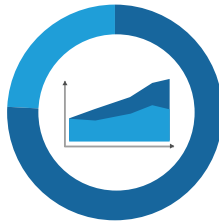
Use of social tools to achieve business growth:

59%



of professionals in high growth organisations are using social tools to **improve business outcomes**

76%



of senior managers believe businesses that embrace social tools **will grow faster**

53%



think that businesses **will not survive** unless they embrace social tools

High-flyers use social tools to get ahead

Successful workers are twice as likely to be active users of social tools. 86% of frequent users say they have recently been promoted and 72% say they are likely to be promoted, compared to 62% and 39% of non-users.

Moreover, they are happier in their jobs – over a third (38%) of frequent users of social tools are very satisfied with their jobs, compared to 18% of non-users.

They also consider their work to be more interesting (60% compared to 42%) and expect to have many more opportunities within the next two years (36% compared to 19%).

Those most likely to recommend their workplace are also frequent users of in-house social tools, with 64% of the most regular users stating they are 'extremely' likely to recommend their organisation to someone thinking of working there, compared to just 42% of those who never use them.

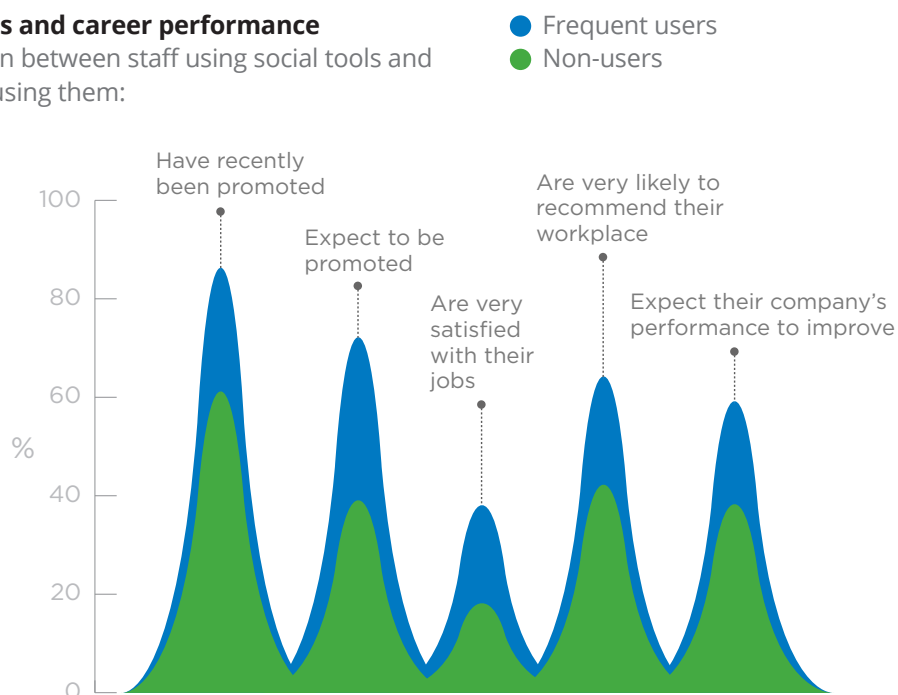
These findings demonstrate the significant impact that social tools can have on an organisation's ability to attract, retain and develop talent.

"It says something about the organisation; often a sign of confidence in the employee that they may make free use of internet and social media, people thrive better in their environment and they will therefore work faster and more efficiently."

– Frequent user, Junior Exec, HR/Personnel, Netherlands

Social tools and career performance

Comparison between staff using social tools and those not using them:



Conclusions

This report shows that the use of social tools in business is here to stay. They improve internal efficiencies while deepening relationships among employees and providing customers and stakeholders with the improved goods and services that tend to result from more joined up thinking.

Most organisations now appreciate the need to embrace social media to communicate, market and sell; perhaps now is the time for a similar revolution to take place as regards the use of social tools within the workplace; to grab the opportunity to improve and enhance internal processes and attract and retain the best talent. Some organisations have already seen the potential and acted upon it. Given that many of these are thriving within challenging economic circumstances their example is one worth following.

Appendix:

Research methodology

Google commissioned this pan-Europe research study to assess the use and impact of social tools within large and multi-site organisations; where collaboration is an important element of success. The objective was to review current relevance and perceived importance of social tools in businesses.

An online survey, designed by Millward Brown Corporate (London), was completed by 2,700 executives between 24th February and 14th March 2012. The number of interviews per country is as follows:

France	502
Germany	520
Italy	305
The Netherlands	303
Spain	300
Sweden	250
UK	520

All 2,700 respondents were currently working full-time in non-manual, office-based roles. They were drawn from organisations having at least 50 (if operating from a single site) or 25 employees (if the organisation had multiple sites). All respondents work in a role that, to some extent, requires collaboration with colleagues – they often collaborate on projects with colleagues within their own team/division or with those in other functions, divisions, offices or in other countries. The survey was only completed by employees who were able to access and use social media for work-related purposes in their workplace (either via personal accounts on Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+ etc. or internal social media applications run by their employer). A ‘control group’ of those never using social tools was included for the purposes of comparison.

Quotas were set on the following demographics in order to achieve a robust sample for comparative analysis within the most relevant target audience:

- Private vs. public sector/not for profit organisations
- Working in senior roles (Board level, reporting into board, or Practice Head) vs. junior roles
- Use vs. never use social media for work-related purposes

The figures in this report quoted for the European ‘average’ are based on weighted data (see profile in tables below). Each country’s contribution to the total is **in proportion to its GDP**; as published by Eurostat. As a result the data from Germany, for example, have a greater influence on the overall results than those from smaller economies such as The Netherlands or Sweden.

In addition, the data are weighted to ensure that each country can be compared on a ‘like for like basis’ as regards to the use of Social Tools, seniority of respondents and sector (commercial vs. not for profit):

The weighting factor for **sector** reflects the project design whereby we wanted to focus on the experiences of commercial enterprises;

For **seniority** we wanted to ensure that the study contained a good representation of people working outside the higher levels of organisations and could provide an ‘operational’ viewpoint. Among those who do use social tools, actual frequency was allowed to fall out naturally and weighting factors (reflecting average frequency across all countries) were applied to enable ‘like for like’ comparisons.

The weighted profile of the data is as follows:

European Total:

Size of economy (GDP)

Germany	26%
France	20%
UK	18%
Italy	16%
Spain	11%
Netherlands	6%
Sweden	4%

Sector

Private/Commercial	85%
Public/Not for profit	15%

Seniority

Senior/Mid-level Executives	40%
Junior Executives	60%

Frequency of use of Social Tools

Frequent (daily/almost)	36%
Often (most days/weekly)	36%
Occasionally (monthly)	16%
Never	12%

This report discusses the findings from the survey as a whole while paying particular attention to 'Frequent Users'; 'High Growth Companies'; and 'Senior Managers'. These groups of people are defined as follows:

Frequent users: 23% of total sample

Every day or almost every day they use social media/communities that have been specifically set up by their organisation for exclusive use by its people.

Note: frequent users of in-house social tools are most often found in:

- Italy (33%), France (26%)
- Aged 16-24 (26%) or 25-34 (27%)
- Consumer/FMCG (31%), Wholesale (28%), creative/media (27%) and professional services (27%)

High growth companies: 15% of total sample

Those reporting domestic year on year growth (2011 vs. 2010) greater than 10%.

Senior managers: 17% of total sample

Those describing themselves as part of their organisation's "Top level management/Board" or part of the "Senior Management" group such as the Head of an Office or Division who reports into the board.

Note: This is not a representative survey of ALL workplaces; it reflects the view of executives in 'collaborative' non-manual roles within medium and large organisations, mainly within the private sector.