A STEP-BY-STEP IMPLEMENTATION OF A CORPORATE SOCIAL NETWORK *

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Abstract

Purpose: This paper demonstrate a step-by-step implementation of a corporate social network involving employees, partners and customers considering cultural changes. It also demonstrates the Corporate SNS evolution to a Daily Collaborative Work Platform incorporating Corporate SNS and other tools as Enterprise Content Management (ECM), Business Process Management (BPM), Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), Mall (APP Store), Enterprise Service Bus (ESB), Web Content Management (WCM), Identity Management (IDM), Analytics Tools, Portals like Human Resources and Demand Management providing a single experience to their users.

Design / Methodology / Approach: This paper is a case study carried on in the biggest developer of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) in Latin America.

Results: The use of a Corporate Social Network starts as a project but in order to continually being productive and generating results it should be necessary for this tool to become a routine activity in all company.

Originality / Value: Social Network Sites (SNS) revolutionized human relationship in personal, academic and professional ways, extending the range of connections bringing new forms of communication. New technologies bring new opportunities but also bring challenges. The first companies to learn about SNS use will enjoy a great competitive advantage, improving how to do business and coordinate internal and external relationships and activities. A corporate social network implementation is a good start to obtain the advantages of this new technology but, for the companies to conquer a collaborative form of work, a cultural base for the proper use of the platform is crucial.

Keywords: social network sites, corporate social network, collaborative work platform, collaborative work.

IMPLANTAÇÃO PASSO A PASSO DE UMA REDE SOCIAL CORPORATIVA

RESUMO

Objetivo: Este artigo visa demonstrar o passo a passo da implantação de uma rede social corporativa envolvendo funcionários, parceiros e clientes atentando para as mudanças de cultura. Demonstra também a evolução da rede social corporativa para uma plataforma colaborativa de trabalho através da incorporação de ferramentas como ECM (Enterprise Content Management), BPM (Business Process Management), ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning), Mall (plataforma de venda de aplicativos), ESB (Enterprise Service Bus), WCM (Web Content Managament), IDM (Identity Management), Ferramentas Analíticas e Portais como Gestão de Recursos Humanos e Demanda, tudo envolvendo uma única experiência para os usuários.

Design / Metodologia /Abordagem: este artigo é um estudo de caso desenvolvido na maior desenvolvedora de sistemas de gestão integrada (ERP) da América Latina.

Resultados: O uso da Rede Social Corporativa inicia como um projeto mas para se manter produtivo e gerando resultados deve se transformar em uma atividade de rotina de toda empresa.

Originalidade / Valor: Redes Sociais revolucionaram os relacionamentos pessoais, acadêmicos e profissionais aumentando a amplitude de conexões trazendo novas formas de comunicação. Novas tecnologias trazem novas oportunidades mas geram novos desafios. As primeiras empresas que aprenderem sobre o uso das redes sociais vão usufruir de grande vantagem competitiva, otimizando e encontrando novas formas de como fazer negócio e coordenar relações e atividades internas e externas. A sua implantação é um bom começo para obter as vantagens desta nova tecnologia mas para conquistar uma forma colaborativa de trabalho, uma base cultural do bom uso desta plataforma de trabalho é crucial.

Palavras-Chave: redes sociais, rede social corporativa, plataforma de trabalho colaborativa, colaboração no trabalho.

1 INTRODUCTION

Since Internet invention, fast changes in world had become a common assumption. To adapt at this scenario it is important to have agile methodologies of work (Chuang, S.; Luor, T. and Lu, H, 2014). Collaboration and communication with transparency is the essential factor to succeed in this era, hierarchy had changed and flattened organizations started to appear (Garbajosa Sopeña; Markku; Pasi; Rodríguez and Kirsi, 2013).

Social Media such as SNS had provided the opportunity to create large social networks that spread information, ideas and influence at a flattened and fast way (Kazumi; Masahiro; Kouzou and Hiroshi, 2013). Information flow has exceeded expectations and ordinary people become the major drive of data. For example, new research ideas are stimulated by these tools between scholars. Academics use SNS for exchanging information, starting new relationships, and communicating with others for professional development (Al-Aufi and Fulton, 2014).

According to Rahman (2014), SNSs are familiar to young generation. The new consumers and workers approve the popularity, functions and user-friendliness of these tools. Any person or company who do not possess SNS will tend to be regarded as outdated. However, to truly engage with online audience, companies need to understand and follow the norms in the virtual sphere (Li and Li, 2014).

This paper contributes with a corporate social network implementation case study, informing step-by-step how this platform had been incorporated at daily work attempting to gain the necessary engaged collaboration without losing information security control. An important guideline of this implementation is that a new form of communication is a cultural change which will only succeed if some steps are respected.

The article has been divided in the following sections:

- Methodology: this section demonstrate the methodology applied in this article;
- Theoretical Background and Literature Review: presents a comparative study about SNS and Corporate SNS;
- A Step-by-step Implementation of a Corporate Social Network – a Case Study: describes the SNS implementation, its evolution to a Daily Collaborative Work Platform and its maintenance in the biggest developer of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) in Latin America;
- Discussions and Conclusions: this section demonstrate a framework created according to the case study data that presents the steps to implement a Corporate Social Network, the article conclusions and future researches suggestions.

2   METHODOLOGY

This research, from the nature point of view, is applied as it aims to generate knowledge for practical application and has the objective of solving a specific problem, in this case, demonstrating a step-by-step implementation of a Corporate Social Network.

From the point of view of technical procedures, this article is a case study because it involves the deep and comprehensive study of how the case study company successfully implement a Corporate Social Network. The case study had been done in the biggest developer of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) in Latin America. This company has presence in 39 countries, also through units and franchises and has more than 26,000 active customers, totaling 80,000 companies attended, and approximately 12,000 employees. In addition to the SNS implementation and evolution, the case study includes a research to collect the next Corporate SNS improvements. To obtain these improvement suggestions, an internal committee had been created composed by 7 people who had been participated in the implementation of Corporate Social Network and had been considered key users. The committee aims to understand the difficulties encountered in daily use of Corporate Social Network. Based on the committee results, a quantitative research had been made through a survey to collect the prioritization of the necessary improvements. This survey had been applied at the Customer Support Department, which uses Corporate SNS daily.

This research, from the point of view of its objectives, is exploratory through a literature review to realize the comparison of the concepts and theories of Corporate Social Networks. From the approach point of view, the research is qualitative because the natural environment of the research, the case study, is the direct source for data collection to create the step-by-step implementation framework of a Corporate SNS.

3   THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

It is in man's nature to form communities and to communicate. Human being has been moved by instincts and desires, which can only be fulfilled in a community and by communication (Curran; Okame and Mcgingley, 2010). Social networks sites are platforms where individuals can create a personal profile and connect with other users, supplementing in a virtual way, human needs of communication and inclusion in communities (Johnson and Knobloch-Westerwick, 2014). According to Krishnan and Atkin (2014), these platforms permit interaction on a one-to-many basis. The internet can be viewed as a mass medium, an interpersonal medium and now, with the presence of SNSs, a social medium.

SNSs have many uses, for example to social commerce, the proliferation of internet has given the opportunity to consumers interact with other users without meeting them. Consumers are now content generators on the internet, which offer new opportunities for both businesses and consumers. (Hajli, 2014).

According to Freitas, Hernâni; Barão, Alexandre; Rodrigues, Adalberto (2014), employees and customers find SNSs useful and fun to use, and that permits a new way to connect inside and outside of a company. Bowen, Alexander and Miller (2014) defend that corporate social networks are tools that potentiate the knowledge management, collaboration and innovation. Shared information, geographical barrier reduction and customer direct treatment are the main benefits perceived by corporate social networks usage.

To companies conquer a collaborative environment with Corporate SNS usage, it is important to highlight that social networking is not an exact science. Social networking has become a key analysis in modern subjects such as sociology, anthropology, social psychology and organizational studies. Companies who use SNS tools understand that injecting trust into the equation lowers the barrier to entry and sharing ideas (Curran; Okame and Mcgingley, 2010). According to Roy (2010), joining a virtual community depends on a wide range of factors, such as:

- Affiliation: find similar users;
- Information: experiences, ideas, and issues sharing;
- Recreation: meeting people, playing, sharing stories;
- Transaction: such as commercial business and other business activities.

Cognitive identity causes significant difference in the effect on quantitative SNS usage. Cognitive dimension is a process of self-categorization. Cognitive identity acts as a normative factor in terms of commitment and cooperation. It is linked to the resources, which provide shared vision that requires collective goal, common representation, interpretation of meaning, and aspiration (Yoon, 2014).

Information sharing and knowledge generation would be successful when interactive environments are cultivated. Technology should only be designed and applied after a thorough investigation of the work practices and work preferences of the people and teams in the organization (Ali; Warne and Pascoe, 2010).

From the user point of view, SNS formation, setting and structure have not been the most import features. Social quality features are the key to the users and, the sense of community has been considered the most important social quality feature. Sense of community is often described as a set of subjective experiences of belonging, mutual respect, and commitment that can be

gained only through participation. Implementing a SNS platform is not only about releasing a space, but is about releasing collective experiences that only can be provided by engaged people (Berki, 2010).

4 A STEP-BY-STEP IMPLEMENTATION OF A CORPORATE SOCIAL NETWORK – A CASE STUDY

The case study had been done in the biggest developer of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) in Latin America that provided internal documents, which are the database for all this section. This company has distributed teams all over the world and its structure had been formed from brand fusions with different cultures that by the geographical distance had been suffering communication obstacles. To the software house of this case study, implementing a Corporate Social Network have been considered a cultural change and a strategic goal to prepare the company, its employees, customers and partners to the future. To reach this goal, it was decided to develop the Corporate Social Network tool inside the company that will be first used to internal purpose to after be available to market purpose.

The master goal of having only one daily platform of work, uniting services and product, employees, partners and customers.

To better describe the Corporate Social Network implementation project this section has been divided in subsections as follows:

• Implementation Strategy: describes risks, guidelines, implementation strategy decision, schedule and engagement methods;

• A Step-by-step Implementation of a Corporate Social Network: each implementation phase called as wave with their goals has been described in this subsection;

• From Corporate Social Network to a Daily Collaborative Work Platform: informs the new waves that had been defined to this new stage of changing the traditional work experience to a collaborative work experience;

• Corporate Social Network Continuous Improvement: human engagement is related directly with getting successfully the attention and from a good experience of use. To maintain the Corporate Social Network usage, a committee had been created by this research with the main objective to describe new necessary improvements and a survey had been made in a sampling of users to help to prioritize the next wave of evolution.

4.1 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

From the beginning, focus has been applied in guarantee the engagement of the tool usage. To manage this focus, the project meetings and decisions gain an important guideline: tool reputation over planned schedules. If a delay tendency appears in the tool implementation schedule and it has been identified that the adjustment to maintain schedule could compromise the quality, an agreed reschedule must be made.

Other guideline is the communication importance. For every stage of the project, corporate communications from the CEO must be sent to employees, customers and partners informing every step, its importance and how anyone could act and help. Before Corporate SNS implementation the communications must be done by Internet Portals and e-mail, after Corporate SNS implementation, the communications must be done in this new tool.

Other engaged methods must be planned as thematic parties promoting the new culture of sharing information. Campaigns rewarding the most engaged customers, employees and partners must also be planned. Human Resources area must be involved directly in the implementation project, from the start, to help in engagement challenge.

To a safer implementation of the Corporate Social Network, the project had been divided in phases nominated as waves and this kind of implementation had been aligned with all stakeholders because it permits to control the risks described at Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Project Risks

Source: Data from research (2015)

4.2 A STEP-BY-STEP IMPLEMENTATION OF A CORPORATE SOCIAL NETWORK

Company strategic plan included the Corporate Social Network Implementation in 2010 and the tool started being used officially in 2011. Each wave had been planned to gradually bring to this tool new requirements, internal and external users.

The first phase had been started after Corporate Social Network tool was developed and tested by a selected group in the end of 2010. The following requirements had been developed and released:

- "Personal Profile" and "Corporate Profile" integrated;
- First communities had been created according to common interest;
- First discussion forums had been made.

    The following first goals had been expected:

- Obtain instant and inclusive communication;
- Conquer a better relationship between employees, customers and partners;
- Knowledge and data capture for future use;
- Collaboration: everyone is part of the problems and solutions.

The waves demonstrated at Figure 2 had been defined to the Corporate SNS implementation.

The first phase of the Corporate Social Network tool implementation brought new ways of communication and a uniform culture, decreasing boarders and stimulating a collaborative environment. It also brought to the employees, partners and customers the image of a company that always invests in innovation, a real technology company.

4.3 FROM CORPORATE SOCIAL NETWORK TO A DAILY COLLABORATIVE WORK PLATFORM

With Corporate Social Network release, now customers, employees and partners have to put into your daily agenda one more tool. The volume of tools and double forms of communication bring some threat to social network, because collaboration competes with traditional work tools like portals. Ideally, to Corporate Social Network succeeds, this platform must be part of the daily routine. So, the next phase to change cultural way of work, it is necessary to develop a single work platform, a Daily Collaborative Work Platform that will make available all necessary tools in one single site, a unique usage experience.
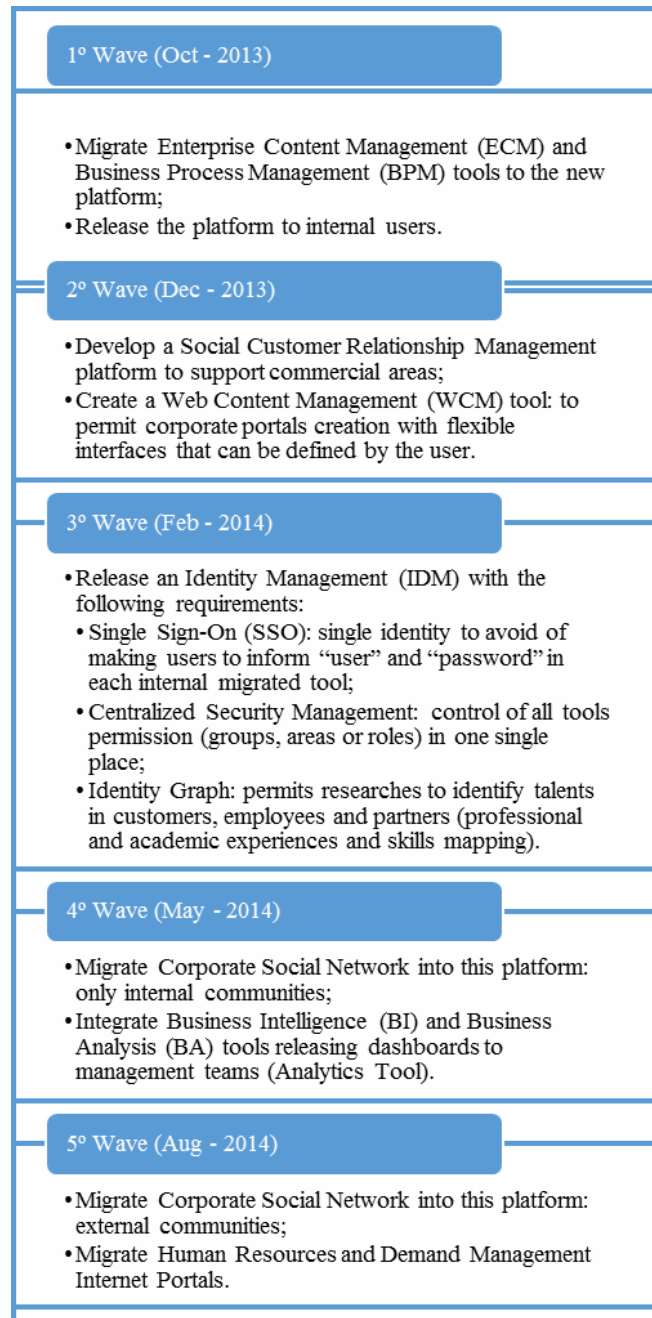
Figure 2 – SNS Implementation Waves

1º Wave (Jan - 2011)

- Become available for everyone the necessary infrastructure: equipments and a broadband network;
- Convert corporate communications in social network posts;
- Encourage collaborative groups and provide workshops: explain concepts, risks, opportunities, examples of SNS usage and good practices, responsiveness and autonomy significance;
- Become available physical boards simulating social collaborations in common areas to exercise this new communication;
- Release tool usage first for internal users (only employees) to make some tests in a real environment.

2º Wave (Feb - 2011)

- Gradually release the Corporate SNS to all employees (internal communities).

3º Wave (Nov - 2011)

- Gradually release Corporate SNS to partners and customers (external communities with specific security controls). Primarily, external communities stimulate communication about commercial, administrative and support assumptions;
- To implement the Corporate SNS in a control number of customers to make the final adjustments before market tool release.

4º Wave (Jan - 2012)

- Market release of the new product: a Corporate Social Network tool developed for companies that need to create your own Corporate SNS.
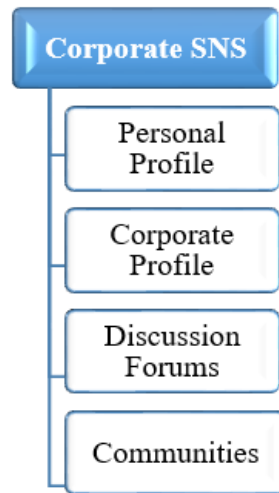
Source: Data from research (2015)

To conquer this final goal, a new project had been planned with the same guidelines, engaged methods, sponsor and stakeholders of the Corporate Social Network implementation project. This phase also had been divided in waves as described at Figure 3.

Finished all the five waves, the Daily Collaborative Work Platform was concluded, a single platform uniting processes, documents and identities had been developed. The Daily Collaborative Work Platform have been still growing, absorbing new tools like Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), Mall (APP Store) and Enterprise Service Bus (ESB – multi-protocols tool that permit the platform to integrate to external tools). The following Figures 4 and 5 describe the evolution from SNS to a Daily Collaborative Work Platform.

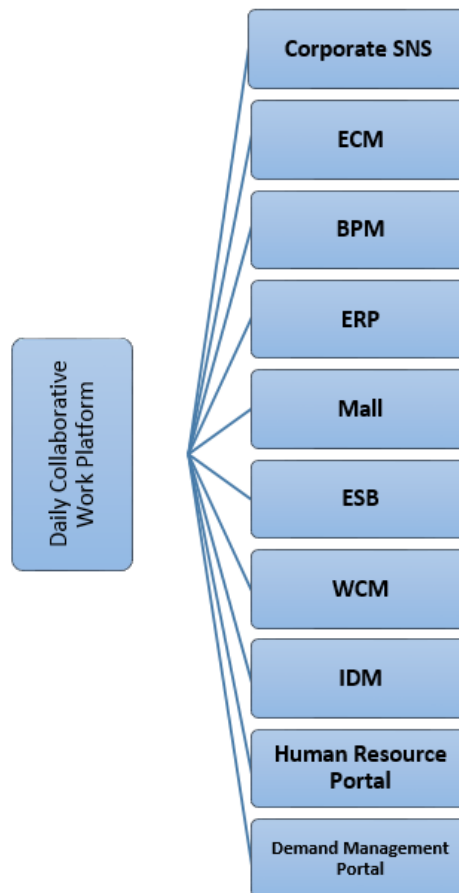**Figure 3** – Daily Collaborative Work Platform Implementation Waves

1º Wave (Oct - 2013)

- Migrate Enterprise Content Management (ECM) and Business Process Management (BPM) tools to the new platform;
- Release the platform to internal users.

2º Wave (Dec - 2013)

- Develop a Social Customer Relationship Management platform to support commercial areas;
- Create a Web Content Management (WCM) tool: to permit corporate portals creation with flexible interfaces that can be defined by the user.

3º Wave (Feb - 2014)

- Release an Identity Management (IDM) with the following requirements:
- Single Sign-On (SSO): single identity to avoid of making users to inform "user" and "password" in each internal migrated tool;
- Centralized Security Management: control of all tools permission (groups, areas or roles) in one single place;
- Identity Graph: permits researches to identify talents in customers, employees and partners (professional and academic experiences and skills mapping).

4º Wave (May - 2014)

- Migrate Corporate Social Network into this platform: only internal communities;
- Integrate Business Intelligence (BI) and Business Analysis (BA) tools releasing dashboards to management teams (Analytics Tool).

5º Wave (Aug - 2014)

- Migrate Corporate Social Network into this platform: external communities;
- Migrate Human Resources and Demand Management Internet Portals.

Source: Data from research (2015)

Figure 4 – SNS Features.

Source: Data from research (2015)

Figure 5 – SNS Evolution to a Daily Collaborative Work Platform

Source: Data from research (2015)

Collaborative platforms supported by a cultural base can change a business in rapidly way, making a company more resilient to adapt in future changes. A collaborative environment can also motivate ideas and helps to create a good organizational environment.

4.4 CORPORATE SOCIAL NETWORK CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Like any human engagement tool, the Corporate Social Network must always be part of the company radar to not lose the attention. Continuous improvements and frequent campaigns must be done to have collaborative work at focus.

To collect the next suggestions to continuous improvement, this part of the case study has been divided in two stages. The first stage aims to understand the difficulties faced by key users of the Corporate Social Network, and through these difficulties define what improvements need to be done. The second stage of the research aims to collect the improvements implementation prioritization.

• First stage - improvement suggestions collection:

An internal committee composed of seven participants had been created. Chosen participants are considered key users of the Corporate Social Network at the Customer Support Department. This department is responsible for the greatest portion of SNS internal usage and coordinates your activities through internal and external communities. The committee held a weekly meeting, totaling 6 meetings, to collect the difficulties faced in daily use of the Corporate SNS and the points, which need to be worked to facilitate and promote its usage in all areas of the company.

This research classified the improvements proposed by the committee in the following items: performance, usability and documentation.

Table 1 displays the items and the proposed improvements.

The committee also brought some internal actions to improve the Corporate Social Network usage as described in Table 2.

• Second stage - improvement suggestions prioritization:

A survey had been sent on December 2014 to 110 users of Customer Support Department to discover the prioritization of the improvement suggestions that were collected from the first stage. The results returned by 83 users (sampling = 75,45%) had been showed at Figure 6.
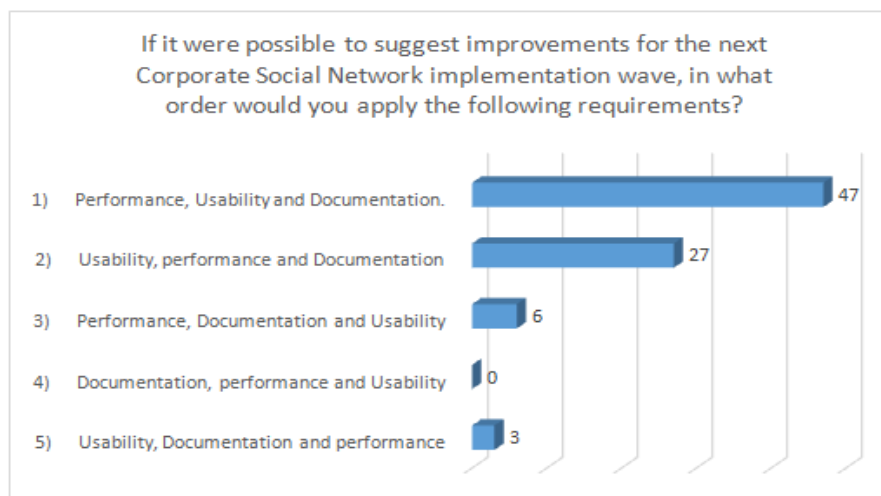
Table 1 – Improvement Suggestions

Item	Improvement Suggestions
Performance	1) Improve navigation performance; 2) Improve search performance.
Usability	1) Allow sending a post link to other network users; 2) New filters inclusion in communities: post, occurrences, description, keywords and unanswered posts; 3) Pages automatic update when there are new interactions, without losing what had been done; 4) Enable users to download all documents of a particular community and make it available in a single compacted archive; 5) Facilitate navigation inside communities.
Documentation	1) Best practices definition of corporate social network usage; 2) Tags standardization; 3) Release tool requirements documentation.

Source: Data from research (2015)

Table 2 – Internal Actions

Responsible	Actions
Committee	Start a new engagement phase to promote once more the use of Corporate Social Network in all areas
	Encourage the sharing of information
	Standardize articles, videos and document posting (per module, subject)
	Highlight engaged professionals and customers
	Standardize tags to facilitate information search in the communities
	Define a process that ensures that a post is answered at the same day it was published
	Conduct periodic events to disclosure the tool features

Source: Data from research (2015)

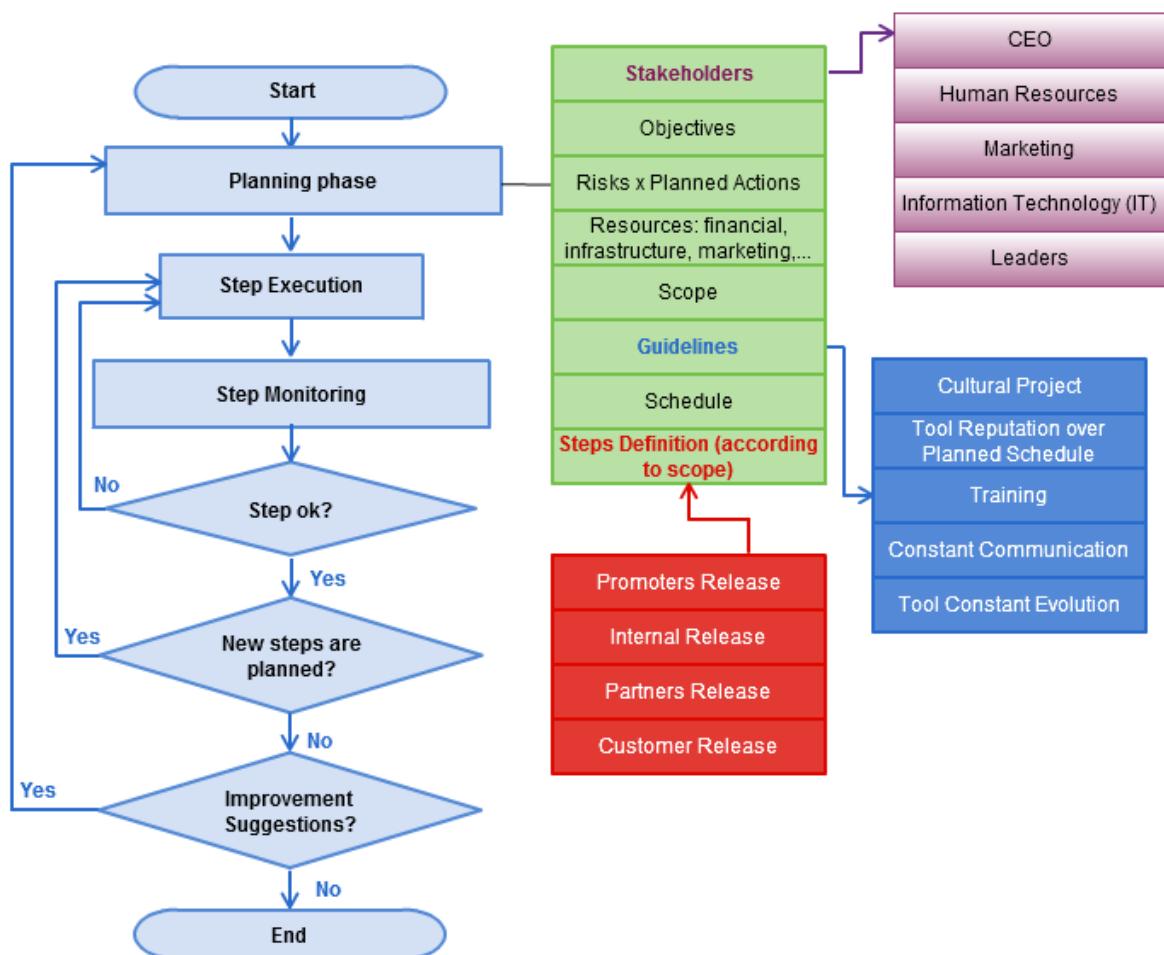**Figure 6** – Improvement Suggestions Prioritization

Source: Data from research (2015)

The tool improvement suggestions had been passed to the team responsible for the Corporate Social Network tool including the prioritized items. Internal actions generated a project inside the Customer Support Department. These recommended improvements and actions will be carried by the committee until their results are considered as satisfied by all stakeholders.

5 DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

According to case study data, some important guidelines and steps must been followed for a successful Corporate Social Network implementation. To demonstrate this research data result, a Step-by-step Implementation Framework of a Corporate SNS had been created. This framework had been illustrated in the Figure 7.

Figure 7 - A Step-by-step Implementation of a Corporate SNS

Source: Data from research (2015)

The suggested framework starts with the main phase: planning. At the planning phase, described as "Implementation Strategy" in the case study, it is important to attempt to some items like:

- Stakeholders: besides the involvement of the Information Technology (IT) responsible for the Corporate SNS implementation, is crucial to involve the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Human Resources, Marketing and Leaders because the Corporate SNS implementation is a cultural project that aims to increase collaboration and conquer a new working format;

- Guidelines: a cultural project must attempt to create the necessary environment to gain engagement and a collaborative work. The tool reputation and its evolution gets a high focus to create the reliability needed to obtain a good and constant usage of the platform. A new working format brings the need of training to form the necessary collaboration skills and aligned with a constant communication, the necessary security are developed in each involved bringing the wiliness to participate;

- Steps Definition: a cultural project demands time and dividing the project in small steps is a good practice, for example in the case study the company created the "SNS Implementation Waves". Small steps bring to the project the necessary control and create the opportunity to perceive and celebrate each evolution. The framework suggests that the steps must be focus on the number and types of people involved, starting with few users and internally then gradually release to more users. When internal group release is finished, then starts the release to partners and finally to customers, attempting that partners and customers users must gradually be involved.

After the planning phase starts the execution of each step. Each planned step must occur sequentially to minimize risk of tool usage control and infrastructure problems. The monitoring phase had been created to highlight the importance of a group carry the project analyzing the data produced to make the necessary tool adjustments and making the important communications and trainings.

Finally, when all the steps were concluded, a continuous improvement routine must been implemented to maintain the new working format. In the case study for example, the evolution of the Corporate SNS to a Daily Collaborative Work Platform was very important to maintain the tool usage and lately, some tool improvements like performance were required to users perceive the platform evolution and to maintain the interest in this form of communication.

According to the case study and suggested framework, a Corporate Social Network implementation starts as a project that must be divided in phases with focus on the planning part attempting to stakeholders, steps definition and guidelines respecting the cultural aspect of a new working format. Lately the project must be changed to a routine activity of continuous improvement requiring investments by every part of the social work community to obtain the expected collaborative results: Human Resources, CEO, customers, partners, employees, teams and leaders.

Collaborative work is not only an option; it is a survival strategy in a connected world. The whole supply chain of a product or service must be connected to fast change response. It is an ability that must be pursued by all workers to communicate by SNS. The attitude of sharing information is a great skill in a personal curriculum that makes all difference in a social environment. This article contributes with a step-by-step implementation of Corporate SNS that helps to successfully conquer the collaborative work attempting to cultural variables.

Future researches must been made to implement this framework in other companies, even evolving to an implementation model of SNSs. Other suggestion of future research is to identify the new skills of a social worker and the reflection of these new kinds of workers in business results.

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