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# Resolving IT-Culture Conflict in Enterprise 2.0 Implementations

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# Resolving IT-Culture Conflict in Enterprise 2.0 Implementations

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## ABSTRACT

Social media technologies have grown from the personal recreation tools of college students to systems that can benefit business. In addition to using social networking to market, sell, and manage external stakeholder relationships, some organizations are leveraging social networking's communication and collaboration tools to improve internal operations. However, implementing social networking systems (hereinafter SNSs) within an organization can prove challenging since the values associated with SNSs (i.e., having fun and getting to know people personally) may conflict with an organization's culture (i.e., work, control, and authority). Therefore, the purpose of this case study is to understand how to resolve IT-culture conflict in workplace implementations of internal SNSs, often referred to as Enterprise 2.0.

## Keywords

Enterprise 2.0, Web 2.0, workplace, implementation, IT-culture conflict, and boundary theory

## INTRODUCTION

Social networking systems (SNSs) emerged in the early 2000's as personal recreation tools for college students (Ellison et al. 2007). These systems enable people to create personal profiles, build a network of friends, play games, and share content. People typically share information about themselves, news articles, pictures, and videos. Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Twitter are some of the most popular SNSs. A survey conducted in May 2010 indicates that SNSs have proliferated in society: while 86% of young adults use SNSs, the fast growing demographic is adults over 50, whose SNS use has risen to 42% (Madden 2010). Social networking technologies help individuals stay in touch with one another, feel connected, learn new things, and have fun (Joinson 2008; Valenzuela et al. 2009).

Aspiring to leverage the benefits SNSs elicit for individuals, many organizations are currently implementing social networking into their business strategy (Yates et al. 2010). Gartner predicts that by 2014, social networking will begin supplanting email in business communications (Green 2010). Organizations can use SNSs to manage both external (i.e., customer, supplier, and partner) and internal (i.e., employee, department, and division) relationships. For example, Dell, Wal-Mart, and Starbucks use social media to brand, sell directly, provide customer service and support, develop products, and recruit employees (Culnan et al. 2010; Gallagher and Ransbotham 2010). Increasingly organizations like USAA (Leidner et al. 2010) and IBM (DiMicco et al. 2008; Majchrzak et al. 2009) are implementing internal social networking systems to connect employees, facilitate mass collaboration, and improve communication.

Workplace implementation of internal SNS has its challenges. Just a few years ago, many organizations banned SNSs like Facebook, Twitter, iTunes, and YouTube (Gaudin 2009). A follow-up survey conducted in April 2010 indicates that in spite of SNS becoming more pervasive, organizations have either maintained or tightened their policies on employee SNS use (Green 2010). The core issue is the conflict between the values embedded in SNS (e.g., having fun, socializing, and recreating) and the values embedded in workplace culture (e.g., process, control, and work). To shed more light on the implementation of internal SNSs in the workplace, we conducted a case study of a global security company's efforts to implement an internal SNS. The purpose of our study is to answer the following research questions:

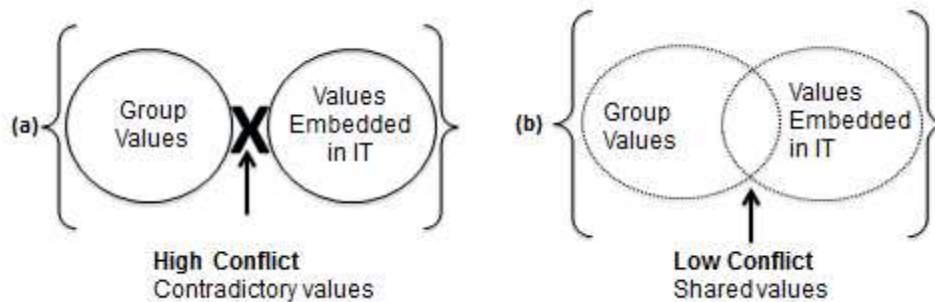
- Why do organizations with cultures that conflict with SNS values decide to implement internal SNSs?
- How can these organizations resolve IT-culture conflict in internal SNS implementations?

**THEORY OF IT-CULTURE CONFLICT**

This section presents essential elements of the theory of IT-culture conflict to help illuminate our understanding of the implementation of SNSs within the workplace. This theory “provides a perspective of culture and IT by focusing on the potential value conflicts that may occur in the context of IT development, adoption, use, and management” (Leidner and Kayworth 2006 p. 358). Culture manifests itself in artifacts and values. Artifacts, like IT, are not culturally neutral and may come to symbolize a host of different values driven by underlying assumptions and their meaning, use, and consequences (Robey and Markus 1984). Forming the foundation of corporate culture, values signify the basis for appropriate behavior, convey espoused beliefs, and identify what is important to a particular group (Leidner and Kayworth 2006, p. 359). Values explain why people behave the way they do (Schein 1985a).

The theory of IT-culture conflict takes a value based perspective of culture and recognizes group members' values and values embedded in IT. Group member values represent the values held by members of a group that signify the espoused beliefs about what is important to the particular group. For example, engineers working for an airplane manufacturer may not share information with the profession in an effort to maintain competitive secrets. Values embedded in a specific IT refers to values that are assumed in the work behaviors that the IT is designed to enable. For example, given that most people associate SNS with Facebook and fun, managers often correlate it with time wasting, lost productivity, and leaking information (Green 2010).

The theory of IT-culture conflict suggests that “system conflict will emerge when the values implicit in a specific IT contradict the values held by the group members using, or expected to use the system” (Leidner and Kayworth 2006, p. 374). See Figure 1a. Table 1 shows the values often attributed to SNS and the values associated with the workplace. The contradictory nature of these values makes IT-culture conflict likely in workplace SNS implementations.



**Figure 1. Likelihood of IT Culture Conflict**

SNS Values	Workplace Values
Information sharing, fun, recreation, and personal relationships (Ellison et al. 2007; Joinson 2008; Valenzuela et al. 2009)	Security, work, and professional relationships (Gallaughar and Ransbotham 2010; Leidner et al. 2010) Organization, hierarchy, authority, systems, procedures, and control (Jones 1983; Ouchi 1977)

**Table 1: SNS and Organizational Values**

The theory of IT-culture conflict, suggests that *implementation problems* are likely when the values embedded in IT conflict with an organization’s values. These problems might include users not adopting the system, being slow to adopt the system, and altering the system to support their values (Leidner and Kayworth 2006, p. 376). Potential interventions might include: giving IT-culture conflict forethought, considering different groups in system design, customizing the application for a particular group, and working to shape IT values (Leidner and Kayworth 2006). Organizations can shape IT values by promoting positive values and breaking dysfunctional stereotypes surrounding the use of the system (Leidner and Kayworth 2006). These strategies represent supra-organizational, interpenetration, and boundary mechanisms (Koch and Schultze 2011) that can be effective in integrating IT’s values with the organization’s values, see Figure 1b above.

Applying this body of knowledge as a theoretical lens to analyze our case, we will add insight to the two research questions set forth at the beginning of this paper.

## METHOD

### Research Context

Our study was conducted in a large global security company, which we refer to as GloSecure, a pseudonym. GloSecure's primary business units include aeronautics, electronic systems, global services, and space systems. With annual sales exceeding, \$40 million, GloSecure's primary customer is the US government. It operates in all 50 US states and 75 countries. Its 136,000 worldwide employees include primarily engineers, scientists, and IT professionals. We chose GloSecure for theoretical sampling reasons (Patton 1990). GloSecure was implementing an internal SNS and its culture (i.e., high security, work focus, and baby boomer workforce) made IT-culture conflict likely.

### Data Collection and Data Analysis

A vice president at one of GloSecure's largest divisions provided the researchers entry to conduct fieldwork at the company. This gave the researchers immediate legitimacy and credibility with the interviewees (Patton 1990). The vice president provided internal documents (i.e., Internet use policy, social media policy, and system screen shots) and arranged most of our interviews, which were conducted at one of GloSecure's largest divisions. Prior to entering the field, the researchers spent two weeks reviewing relevant external documents (i.e., corporate website, annual report, and public presentations) about the company and its SNS. The study was initiated in May 2010. While the second author maintains on-going informal relationships with a GloSecure engineering planner and a property management lead, most data collection occurred in June 2010, with two follow-up interviews in February 2011.

Table 2 provides interview details. To gain a broad understanding we interviewed people involved with implementing the SNS, people using or considering using the SNS, and people who chose not to use the SNS. Two of the researchers went on a plant tour and conducted the formal interviews. Eleven of the interviews lasted 45 minutes and were tape-recorded and transcribed. The other interviews ranged between one and three hours. To allay interview fears, we provided signed informed consent forms assuring anonymity. The interview questions were tailored to the informant's role and were designed to be open-ended and exploratory in nature. We wrote extensive field notes that described our plant tour, the physical facilities, and the rest of our interactions.

INTERVIEWEE	NO. OF FORMAL MEETINGS/INTERVIEWS
<b>PEOPLE INVOLVED WITH IMPLEMENTING THE SNS</b>	
Enterprise System Champion	1
Enterprise System Designer-Enterprise	1
Division-Vice President	2
Division -System Champion	1
Division-System Support	
Division-IT Consultant	2
<b>PEOPLE USING/CONSIDERING USIGN THE SNS</b>	
Engineering Planner	3
Property Management Lead	2
IS Account Manager	1
<b>PEOPLE WHO CHOSE NOT TO USE THE SNS</b>	
IT Staff Specialist-Senior	1
	Total: 14

**Table 2. Interview Details**

Recognizing the nascent stage of knowledge on our topic, a case study approach was most appropriate. This approach allowed us to answer why and how questions (Yin 1994) and afforded us the ability to study social media in its organizational context (Walsham 1995). To leverage the flexibility of case research, our data analysis followed an exploratory approach (Strauss and Corbin 1998). First, we prepared a detailed account describing the organization and its internal SNS. We then read through each line of data seeking to understand GloSecure's SNS implementation. The conflict between the SNS's values and GloSecure's culture became apparent. After reviewing the organizational literature, we decided that the theory of IT-culture conflict (Leidner and Kayworth 2006) was the best lens through which to analyze the data. Upon choosing this theory, we read through the field notes once again to better understand the conflict between GloSecure's culture and the SNS and the steps GloSecure took to resolve the conflict and implement the SNS.

We used QSR NVivo 8 to organize that data into categories. The four broad categories were: GloSecure's culture, the values of the SNS, the conflict between GloSecure's culture and the values of the SNS, and the strategies GloSecure used to resolve these conflicts. The case section, which follows, elaborates on these categories. The section includes sample quotes which add rich insight to the issues GloSecure's employees faced.

## CASE

Figure 2 summarizes the theoretical framing that we will use to present and analyze the GloSecure case. The figure shows that when GloSecure tried to implement its internal SNS, the SNS's values (box 2) conflicted with GloSecure's culture (box 1). GloSecure tried several implementation practices to resolve this conflict (box 3). This resulted in an integration of GloSecure's culture and the SNS's values (box 4) to reduce conflict. We will now discuss each category in turn.

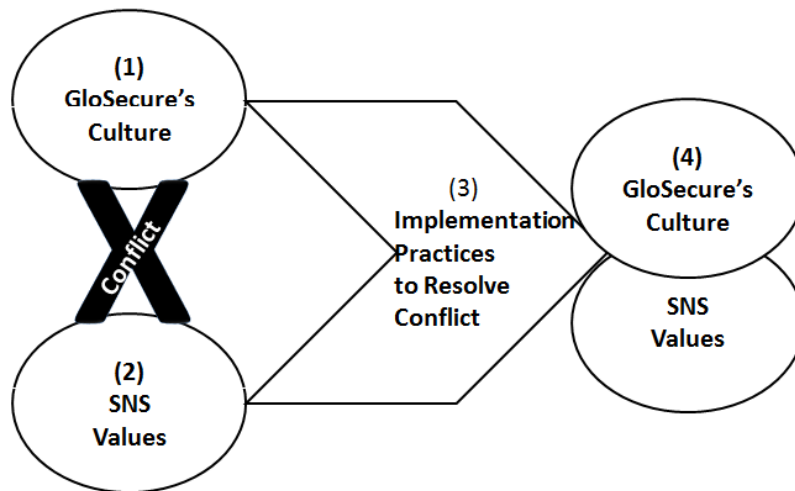


Figure 2. IT-Culture Conflict Framework

In 2007 GloSecure was facing potential decertification as a US government contractor. A GloSecure enterprise system champion commented, "High dependence on email has led to budget overruns, missed deadlines, knowledge sharing issues, and repeated responses to the same inquiries." In response to potential government decertification, GloSecure began implementing many systems and trying to change its *culture* (box 1) from "need to know to need to share<sup>1</sup>." To facilitate this cultural change, GloSecure began implementing an internal SNS. Two dynamics contributed to GloSecure information hoarding culture. First, as the primary provider of security, intelligence, and advanced weaponry for the US government, the very nature of GloSecure's business, requires high security. This is evident throughout the organization. Guests require security clearances and constant escorts, cameras and recording devices are prohibited, and employee badges don stars denoting security access levels. Furthermore, employees undergo extensive background checks before being hired (e.g., interviewing elementary school friends and former roommates), they can be searched upon entering or existing the premises, and all vehicles on the campus are subject to search. Second, GloSecure's history of hiring freezes, acquisitions, mergers, and government cut-backs, creates employees who guard knowledge in efforts to prove their indispensability and abate lay-offs.

<sup>1</sup> Quotes not attributed to a particular person came from the fieldnotes.

As a government contractor, GloSecure's culture can be described as hierarchical, authoritarian, and orderly with systems, procedures, and controls. Most GloSecure employees are baby boomer engineers who have spent their careers climbing to the top of GloSecure's organizational ladder. With each promotion, employees gain authority, security access, and privileges. For example, an employee's rank determines information access, building access, and even parking spaces. Since most of GloSecure's contracts are cost plus government contracts, the government constantly audits GloSecure. This creates a culture, where GloSecure's employees emphasize value-added work. Many of our interviewees commented, "All we do is work. There is no socializing within the organization or on company time. That is all done outside. We could be dismissed and face additional legal ramifications for engaging in activities that are not related to the government contract."

Driven by its research and production of advanced military aircraft, that require years to design and produce, GloSecure values long-term planning, measurement, and order. GloSecure subscribes heavily to earned value management, a project management technique for measuring project progress and performance. Gantt charts measuring IT and engineering project progress line GloSecure's walls. Every pillar, bin, and item in GloSecure's manufacturing plant is tagged and accounted for.

Given GloSecure's culture, implementation of an internal SNS implementation created some *conflict*. Most of GloSecure's baby boomer employees associated the SNS with Facebook and viewed it as a tool for recent college graduates who wanted to play at work. An IT staff specialist commented:

I think it's just a big time waster, a distraction from my responsibilities. It's Facebook for the kids coming out of college. They want Facebook but we can't give them Facebook because we need the security. They say "I want my I-tunes, I want my Facebook." They're not looking for jobs or real work. The SNS is for people who don't have enough work to do. I don't use it!

In fact, the SNS being a tool for millennial new hires was partly true. Recognizing that "60% of its workforce is baby boomers who will be eligible for retirement in the next five years," GloSecure implemented the SNS as a way to attract recent college graduates and leverage the technologies they are used to. The comments of a baby boomer vice president and a millennial new hire are telling:

The hiring freezes of the 80s and 90s have created a bathtub organization. We have lots of baby boomers and few Gen X'ers. We now need millennials to replace the retiring baby boomers. --Baby boomer vice president

One of the main problems we have is that there is no one in between the young people and the older people. We see how they do things and are like "you should do it this way" and they are like "we've always done it this way and we don't want to change." So we just try to rely on facts to get them to change how they do things. --Millennial new hire

GloSecure hoped that the SNS's (box 2) collaboration capabilities and knowledge repositories would provide mechanisms to transfer and preserve the retiring baby boomers' knowledge to their millennial replacements. Furthermore, GloSecure surmised that leveraging the SNSs knowledge sharing capabilities would reduce corporate silos and increase its ability to leverage collective knowledge. GloSecure's high security culture, diverse business lines, and geographic dispersion made it difficult for employees to know the projects their counterparts in other departments or division were working on. A GloSecure SNS designer commented, "It is very likely that employees in the aeronautics division and employees in the space division could be working on the same project without either group knowing." GloSecure's dependence on email resulted in a given knowledge worker repeatedly responding to emails asking the same questions. The imminence of government decertification because of GloSecure's budget overruns and missed deadlines made initiatives to reduce redundant work high-priority.

The *conflict* between the fun, collaborative, and sharing values associated with SNSs and GloSecure's secure, work-focused culture manifested itself in few users adopting the SNS. A SNS enterprise system champion commented:

User adoption has been a struggle for us. Many of our employees are not technically savvy and they are stuck on email. I've had people get upset and leave the room during the training sessions. People are sensitive, they are used to things a certain way and change isn't easy for everyone.

With SNS use optional and email readily available, employees had a variety of justifications for their nonuse of the SNS:

We have a new quality initiative coming in here about every 6 months. They come and go and it's hard to tell if it's something we should invest our time in. There is so much to subscribe to that you can get overwhelmed by so much information and you can't get anything done. I can't put the time and investment in to learn another tool. Not enough people are using it to make it valuable. The system is too slow.

Indeed, accessing the SNS, much less creating a profile with pictures and hobbies on GloSecure's SNS, seemed risky in light of its work-focused culture.

Since the SNS was part of a broader effort to change GloSecure's culture, GloSecure implemented several changes to its work practice and policies that helped resolve the *SNS-culture conflict* (box 3). GloSecure began promoting information sharing by incorporating collaboration into employee performance objectives and decreasing hierarchy in its security levels and work arrangements. With reduced information security levels, employees could access previously classified information thus increasing the information that could be posted on the SNS. GloSecure's reduced hierarchy in work arrangements by placing engineers on the shop floor with the factory workers to enable on-going communication.

GloSecure further changed its culture by allowing telecommuting, expanding workday Internet privileges, and hosting events to encourage personal relationships between employees. Combined, these *cultural changes* (box 4) created an environment that made SNS use more likely by reflecting increased tolerance for taking breaks from work, increased trust that employees will only charge for work-related activities, and an increased understanding of the value of personal, rather than physical, relationships for accomplishing work tasks.

In conjunction with these cultural shifts, the SNS implementation team began customizing the SNS (box 4) to better fit GloSecure's culture. After obtaining user feedback to better understand the collaboration tools that users needed, the SNS implementation team modified the SNS so that its features resembled GloSecure's culture of work, security, hierarchy, and control. For instance, SNS features include team pages with security features and places to post schedules and charts so that managers and team members can monitor colleague's project progress. Illustrating how the SNS supports hierarchy, an SNS ambassador commented, "Unlike Delicious our bookmarking feature is not anonymous, we can lend credibility to sites by seeing who is bookmarking it, if we see 500 engineers have bookmarked a site we know it's credible."

These shifts in the SNSs values and GloSecure's culture resulted from a disciplined implementation plan to resolve the underlying conflict between GloSecure's culture and the SNS's values (box 3). A GloSecure vice president commented:

They [the SNS implementation team] had a formal plan, which is like I'm doing with SAP; it includes all those things you need to do to prepare people to use it. What we know is it can be the best technical solution, but if nobody is prepared to use it and feel confident using it, they're not going to. I was glad to hear they went through that kind of discipline in the roll-out.

The SNS implementation addressed both executive buy-in and employee resistance. GloSecure achieved executive buy-in by focusing on the SNS value story, resolving concerns about the SNS, and conveying how the SNS could help GloSecure meet its objectives. Once executive buy-in was achieved, GloSecure formed an SNS implementation team that consisted of SNS ambassadors. Having functional responsibilities within business lines, these ambassadors were chosen because of their understanding of SNSs and their willingness to find ways to integrate the SNS into their working environment and business processes. An ambassador commented, "It's important to have different change agents all across the board so that they can find what about the tool makes sense for what they are doing. The same feature isn't going to make sense for every group."

As SNS super-users, the ambassadors dedicated part of their time to training others in their department on the SNS. The training sessions explained the SNS, addressed concerns about it being Facebook, and discussed how the SNS could help employees do their jobs. The ambassadors served as productivity coaches and provided one-on-one support to employees that wanted to use the SNS. These efforts resulted in the SNS growing from 6,000 users in June 2010 to in February 2011 "becoming a major document repository and a place you go to keep up with things going on your different groups, what people are talking about."<sup>2</sup>

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of our case study was to answer two research questions: (1) why do organizations with values that conflict with SNS values decide to implement SNSs and (2) how can these organizations resolve IT-culture conflict in internal SNS implementations. Insights from these questions, are generalizable to theories (Lee and Baskerville 2003) on SNS implementation and IT-culture conflict. We address each question in turn.

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<sup>2</sup> As of February 2011, the use level is significantly higher than in February 2010. The authors are in the process of obtaining statistics for the SNS current use level.

### **Research question 1: Why do organizations with values that conflict with SNS values decide to implement internal SNS?**

While SNS potentially offer many benefits including better collaboration and cost savings, our case analysis suggests that when conflicts exist between the SNS and the organization's values, efforts to satisfy external stakeholders or increase legitimacy in their eyes (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Meyer and Rowan 1977) (i.e., institutional theory) may be the primary drivers of SNS implementation. In this case GloSecure's external stakeholders were the millennials it was trying to recruit and the government officials that it was trying to convince of its efforts to change its culture, increase information sharing, and ultimately regain its certification.

### **Research question 2: How can organizations resolve IT-culture conflict in internal SNS implementations?**

The GloSecure case suggests that organizations can resolve IT-culture conflict in internal SNS implementations by recognizing the conflict and implementing integration mechanisms to promote shared values. When GloSecure decided to deploy the SNS corporate-wide it immediately recognized the conflict between employee's perceptions of SNSs and its culture. GloSecure embarked on an implementation strategy to resolve the IT-culture conflict.

This strategy involved *integrating* the SNSs' values and GloSecure's culture. To accomplish this, GloSecure invoked supra-organizational mechanisms, boundary mechanisms, and interpenetration mechanisms (Koch and Schultze 2011). GloSecure's new motto "need to know vs. need to share" served as a *supra-organizational* goal communicating the criticality of increased information sharing and collaboration to its survival. By positioning the SNS as a tool for achieving this goal, GloSecure transcended the initial conflict between the SNS and its culture. GloSecure relied on *boundary* spanners, called SNS ambassadors, to help transform its culture and practices. Selected from their workgroups because of their relationships and understanding of workgroup processes and SNSs, the ambassadors were charged with finding productive ways for the workgroup to use the SNS. After determining how practices could be reengineered with the SNS and how the SNS could be customized to accommodate practices, the ambassadors engaged in *ideological interpenetration* activities (i.e., information and training sessions) to implement the SNS. These sessions discussed changes to work policy and the SNS. With work policy changes that encouraged employees exploring the SNS, the sessions developed behavioral expectations regarding SNS use: employees could only charge for work-related activities. The SNS sessions explained the SNS, how employees could use it, and how use would reduce an employee's workload and improve their effectiveness. The ambassadors also assisted co-workers in their SNS deployment efforts.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

Our study enhances the current understanding of internal workplace SNS implementations. While many internal SNS initiatives are user-driven and met with management resistance (Kaganer and Vaast 2010), this study implicates organizational culture in SNS resistance by showing that employee resistance accompanied management-driven SNS implementations. Enriching the theory of IT-culture conflict (Leidner and Kayworth 2006), our study demonstrates how the integration strategies explicated in boundary theory (Koch and Schultze 2011) provide a useful theoretical lens for understanding how to resolve IT-culture conflict in internal SNS implementations. Furthermore, this study shows how organizational culture shapes technology and technology's role in cultural change.

While much of the literature highlights positive aspects of SNS implementation (e.g., Li and Bernoff 2008; McAfee 2009), this study provides in-depth understanding of the conflict associated with SNS implementations and how to overcome it. Managers embarking on Enterprise 2.0 implementations should recognize that effective implementations may require some of the same disciplines (i.e., business case, top management support, and change agents) involved in large-scale ERP systems (Brown and Vessey 2003). Change agents are critical to integrating SNSs into organizations culture by facilitating adaptation of both the organizational culture and the SNS.

## **CONCLUSION**

Relying on a case study of an organizational implementation of an internal SNS, this study examines why organizations with cultures that conflict with SNS values implement SNSs and how these organizations can resolve IT-culture conflict. Our findings posit that the desire to gain legitimacy in external stakeholder's eyes drive these implementations and that integration strategies may be effective in resolving the conflict between the SNS values and the organization's culture. The theory of IT-culture conflict (Leidner and Kayworth 2006) offered a framework to examine the case. Theoretically, the conflict between the SNS and organizational culture is a system conflict that emerges because the values associated with SNS (e.g., fun, recreation, and personal relationships) contradict workplace values (e.g., work, hierarchy, authority, and control).



This paper has several limitations. For one, most of the interviews were conducted during the early stages of the SNS's implementation. While this allowed us to capture significant information on the conflict between its culture and the SNS, quantifiable examples of how the SNS added value to GloSecure are limited. Future research is necessary to better understand workplace uses of SNSs and their benefits. A second limitation is that we only examined one organization. A comparison between three diverse organizations would help bolster our understanding of SNS-culture conflict.

Given the rising use of social networking, organizational adoption of these technologies will only accelerate. Accordingly, organizations will need to brace for the cultural changes that may accompany adoption of these technologies. Our research will help managers become aware of the effect SNS technologies may have on organizational culture and devise plans for leveraging the technology in beneficial ways.

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