



How does social collaboration support the energy industry?

Richard H. Holsman and Adrian Bradley discuss what the future of work in the oil and gas industry holds

The social collaboration tools that have transformed our lives outside of work are now being applied to the workplace environment: they will make old ways of working as redundant as the typewriter. At Accenture, we believe social collaboration is particularly and increasingly relevant to the oil and gas industry.

Why is this? The energy industry relies on continuous innovation and enhancing the value of the knowledge and skills inherent in its workforce. Oil and gas companies have to work collaboratively between joint venture partners to share expertise and risk. Social collaboration tools provide capabilities to transform these ways of working.

Oil and gas companies can either embrace this transformation to gain competitive advantage or miss the opportunity to address choke points inherent in their operating models. The first upstream movers are already embedding these activities into their business processes.

Accenture sees five top-use cases applied to tools like Yammer and Office 365 in oil and gas:

- Distributing information and knowledge better across geographies, business units and outside traditional hierarchies using Yammer, enabling business units to make better decisions and deliver the business plan
- Using communities of interest to execute consistently against – and continuously improve – best working standards by sharing problems with a wider community of expertise
- Planning, managing and co-ordinating a multi-party workforce by granting wide access to knowledge repositories and workspaces without conventional constraints, such as requiring a company-owned personal computer

- Managing information overload through bite-size news feeds, following relevant individuals or groups, tagging and recommendations for all enable users to ‘graze’ personalised, relevant information and deep-dive for key information
- Driving innovation by using social tools to support idea generation and qualification, exposing innovation to a wider pool of knowledge to improve the initial concept and accelerate speed to market.

Accenture understands that a digital enterprise is judged by measurable business goals. Social tools need to support specific business processes, providing the organisation with real use cases to measure direct benefits. The value of a knowledge-sharing community around health, safety, security and environment can be measured in the reduction in the number of days lost to accidents, lessons-learned repositories to reduce downtime and decision-support communities to reduce the cycle time for capital projects.

In these ways, oil and gas companies are creating more interactive, community- and discussion-based organisations – breaking down the barriers of hierarchy, organisation and geography, which in our industry conspire to lock knowledge and innovation in silos. This is like standing at the dawn of the desktop computer era; organisations that embrace this change are more likely to become more productive and innovative, and make better decisions.

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