Transforming Knowledge Management and Collaboration in the Intelligence Community
Social, semantic technologies will change the game

The statement “knowledge is power” has never been more relevant. Knowledge is what powers the mission. It’s what helps analysts do their jobs. And it’s the lifeblood of the intelligence community.

However, today’s intelligence agencies face high turnover, and losing people means losing knowledge. It is often a lengthy process to fill these empty pockets. But even for those agencies not plagued by staffing shortages, there are issues of collaboration. Knowledge often sits in disparate silos or is buried in unique documents. These disconnects make it nearly impossible to locate information, identify a topic’s expert or discover synergies. With the help of social, semantic technologies, intelligence agencies can connect people to people—and people to content—to unleash the full power of knowledge.

Identifying the knowledge gaps—and opportunities
Social semantic technologies are fueling a new era of collaboration. For many years, agencies have implemented enterprise-wide systems to tap into, extract and package employee intelligence. Yet many of these efforts have failed to meet expectations. Why?

Quite simply, knowledge management cannot keep pace with the speed at which the unprecedented volume of today’s information flows. This makes it challenging for organizations to effectively and rapidly provide new and existing employees with the institutional or historical knowledge to contribute to the organization’s mission effectively.

Traditional knowledge management tools isolate information on “islands” with no connections. Today, social collaboration tools make new connections possible.

By investing in the next generation of knowledge management and going a step beyond connecting people to people, agencies can connect people to knowledge and knowledge to knowledge, allowing agencies to collaborate more effectively.

The journey begins by liberating knowledge.
Initial steps to get there include:

Creating a knowledge “hub”—By gathering, organizing, and connecting tacit and disparate knowledge in a central and synchronized architecture, information-sharing is not only possible, but encouraged.

Cataloguing more strategically—By organizing knowledge around topics, it is no longer captured inside of documents, making it easier to locate and share specific and targeted information.

Encouraging teamwork—When knowledge workers are free to contribute to content, all can benefit from the more robust knowledge stores.

While these steps are important to connecting knowledge, challenges remain to truly unlocking information. Even with the growing popularity of social networking technologies or enterprise wikis, organizations continue to struggle with motivating employees to fully embrace and adopt such efforts. Specifically:

• As knowledge must be manually gathered and entered, it is cumbersome and difficult to get knowledge into traditional knowledge stores, databases or other enterprises.

• After content articles or pages are populated, users must manually connect and create links between such content and categorize it appropriately to help ensure they can easily navigate between knowledge topics.

• Using a traditional knowledge management system or modern enterprise is usually seen as above
Applications built on social, semantic technologies can help agencies overcome these challenges and tap a deeper level of intelligence.

Better tools, better intel

Today it requires a significant amount of labor to manually maintain proper linkage to and from associated topics. Although the Wikipedia™ phenomenon has illustrated the productivity power of seamlessly navigating from topic to topic, information extraction and natural language processing systems are not mature enough today to automate the manual process of maintaining a wiki.

Agencies need to break through the clutter and get to relevant information. To help them achieve this, Accenture created a social semantic knowledge platform to connect people to content, connect people to people and facilitate useful content creation. This innovation combines four key features:

1. Wiki—Enhances topic-centric knowledge management and collaborative content creation.
2. Social—Includes rich user profiles, discussion forums, personal spaces, activity feeds and status updates.
4. Text mining—Includes document ingestion, automatic link identification, automatic page categorization, all crowd-sourced for maintenance efficiency and improved accuracy.

“Crowd-sourced text mining” allows any user to teach the system to create automatic and accurate linkages and categories of knowledge content. This type of automation can be game-changing for analysts who manually ferret through intel reports, link node analysis charts and search engines.

Within Accenture’s offering, two powerful elements combine to enhance collaboration. A reference library allows users to share knowledge so analysts can get up to speed on new topics quickly and “contribute back” to the institutional memory of the organization.

In addition to providing users a place to share knowledge, this innovative knowledge platform provides structured spaces where analysts go to “do the work,” executing the organization’s systematic processes and operations by collaboratively creating standard deliverables. No longer is knowledge contribution a separate duty from executing mission processes. With process-centric collaboration and knowledge management, they are one and the same.

Real-world relevance

Humans will always do the analysis, but collaboration tools facilitate critical connections. Rather than combing through hundreds—or thousands—of pages looking for information on a suspected terrorist, analysts can leverage the power of semantic technologies to create connections between the suspected individual and documents in which they may be mentioned. Analysts may even draw inferred relationships suspects have with other individuals, organizations or locations.

Analysts can also make the rules. By applying rules, these interconnections are firing in the background during a search. The rules will show inferred relationships and interconnections. This accelerates the search, allowing analysts to spend more time doing the actual analysis, rather than spending up to 90 percent of their time hunting for relevant information.