THE CORPORATE SOCIAL NETWORK AS AN INTERNAL COMMUNICATION MEDIUM:
EMPLOYEES’ PERCEPTIONS OF ITS USEFULNESS

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ABSTRACT

Social media have become important tools in the workplace, allowing employees to share ideas and participate in running the business. Most large corporations currently use a corporate social network for internal communication, with over 80% of Fortune 500 companies using the Yammer platform alone (Yammer, 2012). Deetz (1992, 2003) theorizes that this return to the ancient Greek concept of participation has the potential to improve corporate productivity—and ultimately, profitability.

This pilot study set out to better understand employees’ perceptions of social networks, and how they influence productivity and engagement. Twenty-one participants responded to an online survey on these topics. The results suggest that by a small margin, employees feel these networks increase productivity. Two-thirds of respondents also feel that the networks increase engagement. Women tend to feel that the network decreases productivity, while men feel it increases productivity.

Future studies with larger participant samples will allow for more prominent trends to be identified. Additional research might also include validated surveys to quantitatively measure productivity and engagement before and after implementing a corporate social network.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

In recent years, many companies have begun using social media to enhance communication both to and between employees (Bond, 2010; Brzozowski, Sandholm, & Hogg, 2009). Social media encompass a variety of platforms, including blogs, micro-blogs (e.g., Twitter), online video, wiki pages, virtual worlds, and profile-based online networking (e.g., Facebook, Yammer) (Bond, 2010; Buechler, 2010). The adoption of these tools in the corporate world in North America has accelerated over the past few years, and a growing number of employees—especially those of the Millennial generation—fully expect to have these tools available in the workplace (Bond, 2010).

While social media have taken root within the corporate environment, evidence proving their value through improved employee productivity and engagement has yet to emerge. Executives are watching carefully to determine whether corporate social media are merely a passing fad or much needed business tools that will ultimately improve their bottom line (Bughin & Chui, 2010; Pervaje, 2011).

This study focuses on only one form of social media—internal corporate social networks—and aims to answer two key research questions. First, do employees who use corporate social networks believe that they enhance productivity? Second, do employees feel more engaged in their jobs due to the social component of these tools? And if so, in what ways?
1.2 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Over 80% of Fortune 500 companies currently use the Yammer corporate social network for internal communication (Yammer, 2012). Similar corporate social networks include Chatter, SocialCast, Present.ly, and internally constructed platforms, among others. While these tools give employers additional communication channels through which to reach employees, corporate social media platforms come with a price. Annual contract fees, IT support, and printed promotional items to generate buzz about the technology within the workplace are key costs associated with social media platforms. Opportunity costs include the time and resources needed to train administrators and employees on social media usage, roll out the platform to employees, and respond to IT help requests caused by application and user errors.

If corporate social media can be found to increase productivity and improve employee engagement, these costs may very well be worthwhile. Conversely, if employees feel that social media are a distraction from their job or yet another channel they must check for announcements and other messages, companies employing these technologies may be wasting a considerable amount of money each year. Therefore, the need for research in this area is clear, and may have both theoretical and practical import.

1.3 DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

The following terms are used frequently throughout this study, and serve as a focal point for the ensuing discussion:

- **Social Media**: Online media platforms that facilitate two-way dialogue, participation, content creation, networking, and bookmarking (Jones, 2009). Social
media “encourage discussion, feedback, voting, comments, and sharing of information from all interested parties” (Jones, 2009).

- **Corporate Social Network**: Any Facebook-like platform that allows employees to create a user profile and communicate online with co-workers. The information shared typically includes status updates, links, documents, photos, and videos.

### 1.4 ORGANIZATION OF REMAINING CHAPTERS

Chapter Two begins with an overview of the study's philosophical and theoretical foundations. The chapter then summarizes the existing literature pertaining to both individual and business use of social media, and concludes by outlining the rationale for the study and noting the two research questions.

Chapter Three covers the scope, research instrument, and specific methods used to carry out the research. This chapter also discusses the permissions and ethical considerations employed throughout the study.

Chapter Four presents the results of the study, identifying key trends about employees' perceptions of corporate social networks and discussing the insights gleaned from the participants' feedback.

The study concludes with Chapter Five, which summarizes and frames the study findings in theoretical and practical terms. This chapter also presents the limitations of the study and explores related topics for future research.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEORETICAL BASIS

Aristotle’s concept of *Rhetoric* serves as the philosophical foundation for this thesis. While the rhetorical tradition is typically recognized as a means of persuading others through credibility (*ethos*), emotion (*pathos*), and reasoning (*logos*), the key concept of *participation* is often overlooked (Deetz, 1992). The Greek tradition of communication “presumed a model of participation to already be in place,” which encouraged collaboration among the citizens (Deetz, 1992, p. 95). This model enabled citizens to contribute thoughts and ideas within the public forum, to “enable truth itself to emerge” (Deetz, 1992, p. 95). Through social media, individuals and businesses are experiencing a modern-day revival of participation.

The research presented in this thesis is framed by Deetz’s *critical theory of communication in organizations*. This theory explains the inner workings of the corporate environment by outlining the flow of power and communication between management and employees. Deetz uses the term *strategy* to classify the rigid control many companies exert over employees—giving them virtually no decision-making capabilities and few two-way communication channels (Deetz, 1992). *Consent* is the corresponding response from most employees—they go along with the flow, supporting management’s interests “in a faulty attempt to fulfill their own” (Deetz, 2003, p. 118). Deetz believes that over the long-term, this model only helps managers advance their own careers, and does not drive profitable growth (Deetz, 2003).
The counterpoints to strategy and consent are involvement and participation (Deetz, 1992; Deetz, 2003). Involvement refers to giving employees a voice in corporate decisions, though this does not always mean that employees’ suggestions will affect the executives’ decisions (Deetz, 1992). Providing employees with a channel to voice their opinions and ideas is a step in the right direction. Participation is Deetz’s term for increasing the number of people who are actively engaged in how the company is run (Deetz, 2003). This form of “stakeholder democracy,” including open communication and empowerment for all, is predicted to lead to improved financial health for the business (Deetz, 2003).

In light of this theory, corporate social networking platforms can help companies who aim to move from strategy to involvement and from consent to participation. Through social media, employees can voice their opinions and requests for information across the entire company in real-time, and may become more active in running the business.

Admittedly, this shift will only be successful in companies with management teams that are open to such a transformation. In addition to requiring management’s blessing, the overall culture of an organization also comes into play. Corporations known for having an innovative, collaborative culture are more likely to embrace social networking platforms, and many have done so already (Tapscott & Williams, 2006). This is the new reality in the corporate arena. Companies that wish to remain competitive in today’s marketplace will need to promote a culture of open communication and collaborative work practices (Deetz, 2003; Tapscott & Williams, 2006).
2.2 THE LITERATURE

2.2.1 Social media’s dramatic growth.

Human beings possess an innate desire to interact and socialize (Gossieaux & Moran, 2010; Naslund, 2010). Over the past few decades, new communication technologies—such as email, the Internet, and mobile devices—have become widely adopted. These tools allow people to communicate faster, more frequently, and to a larger audience than previously possible. Social media represent the latest evolution of communication technology.

Profile-based social networks (one category of the broader social media genre) are now the most frequently used method for communicating with a circle of friends—exceeding even face-to-face communication (Hutton & Fosdick, 2011). Facebook currently boasts over 800 million users (Gambhir, 2012), and over 4 billion messages are sent each day via this platform alone (Taske & Plude, 2011). While email continues to be a popular means of communicating—especially for more formal messages—social networks are supplanting email in both total users and year-over-year growth (Conger, 2011; Vascellaro, 2009). Additionally, many people actively use multiple forms of social media each day (Trusov, Bodapati, & Bucklin, 2010). Clearly, the use of social media has seen explosive growth across the globe.

People use social media primarily to keep in touch with friends, express their personal identity, and have fun (Hutton & Fosdick, 2011; Taske & Plude, 2011; Vorvoreanu, 2009). Though not cited as frequently, meeting new people is another reason people actively engage in social media (Hutton & Fosdick, 2011). Social media platforms
allow users to communicate with people they would never have met nor interacted with otherwise. Geographical boundaries no longer restrict people’s ability to meet and interact with new acquaintances (Decarie, 2010; Lazaroiu, 2011).

Initially, younger people were the fastest group to begin using social media tools (Verdegem, 2011), and even today they tend to disclose the greatest amount of personal information when using these technologies (Bond, 2010). Members of the Millennial generation use social media for the majority of their personal communication and tend to reserve email for work and other, more formal communications (Cardon & Okoro, 2010; Taske & Plude, 2011). However, social media tools are no longer the domain of only the supposedly tech-savvy younger generation (Pervaje, 2011). For example, women over age 55 comprise the fastest-growing group of Facebook users (Decarie, 2010). Regardless of the user’s age, the ability to navigate social media platforms is now a necessity for people to effectively communicate with friends and co-workers (Decarie, 2010).

Instead of the clearly marked identities of the producer and consumer of content found with other media, social media users have melded these roles and are now considered both creators and consumers of information (Tapscott & Williams, 2006; Verdegem, 2011). This two-way flow of information, ideas, and opinions has become the hallmark of the social media phenomenon. Social media technologies have changed the way people and even businesses interact with those around them. Verdegem (2011) even postulates that social media can serve as the foundation of a “massive social and economic transformation” (p. 28).
Given the rapid and widespread adoption of social media, it is clear that these tools have had a major impact on communication around the globe.

2.2.2 Businesses are rapidly adopting social media.

Though social media allow users to keep in touch with friends, family, and acquaintances, these platforms are not strictly limited to the building of personal relationships. The boundary between using social media for work and for play continues to blur (Bond, 2010).

Many businesses have adopted social media technologies, and are leveraging them for several purposes (Buechler, 2010; Cardon & Okoro, 2010; Naslund, 2010; Pervaje, 2011). While social media are not universally used across every business worldwide, the pace of adoption continues to accelerate (Bond, 2010; Pervaje, 2011). This assimilation of social media tools into the workplace has led to a fundamental shift in how companies run their businesses (Bulmer & DiMauro, 2009; Gossieaux & Moran, 2010).

First, companies that successfully implement social media tools are morphing their “business processes into social processes” (Gossieaux & Moran, 2010, p. 33). That is, they are adding a human relationship aspect back into business transactions and customer service (D’Aprix, 2011). These companies engage customers, vendors, and employees in discussions and—to a certain degree—decisions about the company and its products (Bughin & Chui, 2010).

Second, social media are part of a shift away from simple information channels, and toward networks of knowledge (Gossieaux & Moran, 2010). These tools serve as a central repository for gathering and analyzing information, and they promote
collaboration between users during the decision-making process (Buechler, 2010). Social media also foster accountability for the ideas presented to the group (Buechler, 2010).

The majority of companies in North America now incorporate social media tools in their external communication with the public and internal communication with employees (Bughin & Chui, 2010). Some companies, including IBM and Accenture, even use social media for their employee training programs (Bond, 2010). Companies also use social media tools to build and maintain their image. Blogs, social network pages, and micro-blogging applications allow companies to interact with customers and emphasize key components of the brand to reinforce their public image (Gilpin, 2010). Whole Foods, for example, uses Twitter to promote its reputation of using sustainable and local food sources, its focus on health and longevity, and dedication to customer service (Gilpin, 2010).

Simply using social media to engage the public is no guarantee of corporate success. Vorvoreanu (2009) found that college students are wary of corporations that leverage social networks, and are suspicious of these organizations’ reasons for doing so. The same group of students noted that they will, however, engage with corporations on social networks if the interaction: 1) helps them keep in touch with friends via gifts or applications, 2) helps them express their personal identity (via likes or dislikes), or 3) offers a discounted or free product or service (Vorvoreanu, 2009). Companies, especially those targeting younger consumers, must be mindful of these preferences. It is also important to note that consumers who do engage with companies via social media are less likely to visit to those companies’ official websites (Hutton & Fosdick, 2011). From
2008 to 2010, the number of people visiting any “official brand/company website” in the preceding six months fell by 22% in the United States and 23% in Canada (Hutton & Fosdick, 2011, pp. 568-569).

Organizations that do not effectively leverage social media technologies are predicted to weaken their competitive position and lose market share (Bulmer & DiMauro, 2009). Even so, business leaders are still concerned about the actual value these tools offer to their companies—and the potential dark side of social media (Pervaje, 2011). Postman (1992) warns that technology is “both a blessing and a burden” (p. 5), and this is certainly true for social media tools. Unhappy customers can damage a company’s reputation by publishing hostile comments on various social media sites (Gonzalez, 2011). Hackers can leverage these platforms to steal or commit fraud through social engineering (Gonzalez, 2011). Corporate leaders are also understandably concerned that employees might share the company’s intellectual property and other trade secrets via social media channels—even if inadvertently (Bond, 2010).

Clearly, using social media for business purposes can be both an asset and a liability.

2.2.3 Corporate social networks for internal communication.

Email is losing its share of the communication space, both for personal and professional use (Blodget, 2011). Many companies are supplementing email systems, and in some cases replacing them altogether, with corporate social networks. For example, Atos looks to completely eliminate the use of email for internal communication within the next 18 months, giving the nod instead to instant messaging and the company’s corporate
social network (Blodget, 2011). These social networks allow colleagues to publicly post questions, answers, and ideas; share photos, videos, and documents; and send private messages to specific co-workers. Communication is no longer simply an email, PowerPoint, or meeting directed from the top brass down to front-line employees. The new approach includes discussions in real-time (or not) in a many-to-many environment.

Yammer was one of the first commercially available corporate social networking platforms (Klie, 2011), and over 100,000 companies currently use Yammer as an internal communication tool (Vance, 2011). This figure includes 80% of Fortune 500 companies (Yammer, 2012). Similar corporate social network applications—such as SocialCast, Present.ly, and Chatter—are also being used for internal communication in the corporate and government environment.

The true value of social networks within the workplace is not the technology itself, but the types of behaviors these tools promote between employees and even between company leaders and front-line workers (Pervaje, 2011). Corporate social networks can help businesses improve knowledge sharing and collaboration between employees, reinforce their brand, generate new ideas, and build a sense of community (Naslund, 2010). The importance of these collaborative behaviors cannot be overstated.

Geographically distributed teams that communicate and collaborate most frequently are more successful at achieving complex tasks (Gloor, Paasivaara, Schoder, & Williams, 2008). Also, the number of people a team member is linked to in his or her online network has a direct correlation to his or her individual performance—even if the communication with each member is infrequent (Gloor, Paasivaara, Schoder, & Williams,
Thus, having access to many colleagues via social networks has great potential to transform how—and how well—employees carry out their job duties.

The collaborative behaviors social networks promote can lead to increased productivity among employees (Semple, 2011). Increased productivity allows companies to deliver more goods and services with fewer people, presumably leading to increased profit margins. Indeed, large companies including General Electric (GE) are claiming “many millions of dollars in cost savings” thanks to using an internal corporate social network (Naslund, 2010, p. 37).

Using social networking for employees to communicate with each other inside the workplace requires a cultural shift (Naslund, 2010; Semple 2011; Grossman & McCarthy, 2007). Corporations cannot foist these technologies on employees and demand that they codify their knowledge—this goes against the very grassroots nature of social media and is not well received (Levy, 2009; Nash, 2011). The idea of forcing employees to interact in a sociable manner with the expectation of increased productivity is rarely successful (Nash, 2011). Instead, providing social networking tools as an optional, even fun resource leads employees to willingly share tips and information with co-workers as more of an altruistic gesture (Levy, 2009).

Opening up a workplace to internal social networks requires a willingness from management to give up a portion of the control over what, when, and how information is communicated (Grossman & McCarthy, 2007). Even corporate communicators—the very professionals charged with communicating with employees as part of their day-to-day duties—will need to relinquish some control over the content and timing of internal
communication (Mengel, 2009). Employees need to be able to speak their minds and share their ideas freely, without fear of retribution if they happen to post a dissenting point of view.

A culture of open communication offers many benefits to the company—including the potential for an improved bottom line. D’Aprix (2011) notes that companies with highly effective internal communication averaged a 47% higher return to shareholders over a five-year period (2004-2009) than companies with less effective communication programs. Effective communication within companies is also linked to higher levels of employee engagement, performance, satisfaction, and retention (D’Aprix, 2011; Vance, 2011).

On the other hand, there are some concerns about using social networking in the workplace. Given the informal nature of social networking, employees may be less formal in their communication—opening the door to potentially unprofessional discussions for all to see (Vance, 2011). Business leaders are concerned about the security of social media platforms (Levy, 2009), as well the potential lack of interoperability between the various tools (Grossman & McCarthy, 2007). Some parties argue that the use of social networks in the workplace actually decreases productivity (Hoover, 2007).

While it is true that some workers use corporate social networks to discuss topics unrelated to their job, employees who use corporate social networks the most are generally the least likely to leave the organization (Vance, 2011). This is presumably because high levels of interaction with colleagues on a social network reflect an employee’s engagement and satisfaction in his or her role.
Companies that choose to not implement a corporate social network might have trouble attracting and retaining employees from the Millennial generation. Bond (2010) explains that, “The next generation of workers has been brought up on a lifestyle of social networking and will expect access to such facilities in the workplace” (p. 36). Similarly, Levy (2009) notes that younger employees not only find social networks to be intuitive channels for communication, but fully expect them to be available as a business tool.

2.3 RATIONALE

It is clear that some workers want and expect social networking tools to be available in the workplace. Is this simply because they are familiar with the technology and enjoy using similar platforms for personal reasons, or do they feel these tools lead to better business outcomes? How do older workers feel about corporate social networks?

While the use of corporate social networks sounds good in theory—and anecdotal evidence seems to confirm the benefits of such tools—additional research is necessary. Are companies simply attributing outstanding results to their social networks to justify their price tag? Are the majority of employees truly using these tools, and do they feel that the tools improve productivity? Do employees really feel a sense of united community as they use corporate social networks—and does this lead to being more engaged in their work?

Though corporate social networks may help spark employees’ participation, as defined in Deetz’s (1992, 2003) critical theory of communication in organizations, implementing such a network requires time and money. Sales of corporate social networking services were estimated at $769 million in 2011—an increase of 16% over the
previous year (Vance, 2011). Given the costs of implementing and operating a corporate social network, it is critical to understand whether or not these technologies deliver commensurate value.

As there is currently a paucity of research on employees’ perceptions of the validity of corporate social networks, this study will fill an important gap in the current body of literature.

2.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study focuses only on corporate social networks, and aims answer two key research questions:

**RQ1:** First, do employees who use corporate social media tools for internal communication believe that they enhance or diminish productivity?

**RQ2:** Second, do employees feel more engaged or less engaged in their jobs due to the social component of these tools—and if so, how?

RQ1 aims to test Deetz’s (2003) assertion that enhanced communication channels and collaboration lead to improved productivity.

RQ2 tests Deetz’s (1992, 2003) theory that improved openness and two-way dialogue within a corporation increases workers’ *participation*—their active engagement in helping the company succeed.
CHAPTER 3: SCOPE AND RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In today’s society, a variety of social media are used for both personal and business pursuits (Bond, 2010). The current literature is replete with studies of social media use for personal enjoyment; however, literature pertaining to social media’s business applications is less prevalent. The body of literature currently lacks any research on employees’ perceptions of corporate social media as a workplace communication channel. Thus, the present study is designed to fill this gap in the literature.

The scope of this research considers only corporate social networks. These networks include any online platform that allows employees to create a user profile and then share ideas, comments, and documents internally with their co-workers. This study excludes all other forms of social media, all other purposes for using these tools, and all other audiences.

As much of the literature summarized in Chapter 2 pertains to social media use in the United States and Canada—and with an aim to focus the study results on North American workers—this study does not extend to other continents or countries.

For the present research, the author used nonprobability sampling to select 20 business contacts in the United States and Canada. This group serves as the initial purposive sample. A judiciously selected purposive sample can provide a satisfactory representation of the population being studied (Hoyle, Harris, & Judd, 2002). Collecting data from an entire population requires extensive amounts of time and money (Rubin, Rubin, & Piele, 2005). Thus, selecting a smaller, valid sample of the study population
allows researchers to analyze the resulting data in more detail—producing valuable insights specific to that population (Rubin, Rubin, & Piele, 2005).

The initial 20 participants are non-executive employees who work at corporations believed to utilize a corporate social network as an internal communication channel. The study intentionally includes participants from corporations of various sizes, ranging from small boutique agencies to large Fortune 500 companies. This provides insights into the perceived usefulness of corporate social networks within small, mid-size, and large organizations.

In addition to being asked to complete the survey, the original participants were also invited to forward the survey to their co-workers—and other North American business contacts—as part of a snowball selection method (see Appendix A). A snowball sample, wherein initial participants “enlist” other members of the target population to participate, accelerates the growth of the sample size (Hoyle, Harris, & Judd, 2002, p. 188).

Finally, this study uses the term “employee” to describe any worker below the level of vice president. In the author’s experience, executives are frequently the internal sponsor of a corporate social network (i.e., they championed to bring the platform to the company), or find themselves too busy to use the platform, or enlist a communication specialist to maintain their profile for them. As this research aims to understand the average employee’s impressions of corporate social networks, executives have been excluded from the study sample.
3.2 RESEARCH METHODS

Research helps us understand “how and why people communicate,” and even helps us improve the communication process in various settings (Rubin, Rubin, & Piele, 2005, p. 205). With these goals in mind, the present research is a qualitative study aimed at better understanding employees’ perceptions and experiences of social media use in the workplace. Qualitative studies take an inductive approach to problem solving, using observations and feedback to better understand the issue at hand (Rubin, Rubin, & Piele, 2005).

This study is designed to gain insights into employees’ attitudes toward the use of social networks for internal communication in the workplace. As this research is the first of its kind to examine this topic, this investigation is considered an exploratory pilot study. The following sections outline the steps taken to conduct the research, providing a detailed review of the research instrument itself and the procedures followed throughout the study.

3.2.1 The research instrument.

The research instrument used for this study was an online survey created in Google Docs (see Appendix B). Using a Web-based survey allows data to be gathered quickly, easily, and with minimal cost—and also offers participants a high level of anonymity (Hoyle, Harris, & Judd, 2002; Rubin, Rubin, & Piele, 2005). As a result, the use of Web-based surveys in research studies has increased dramatically in recent years (Hoyle, Harris, & Judd, 2002).
This original, researcher-designed survey is titled, “Employees’ Perceptions of Corporate Social Networks.” The survey aims to capture participants’ attitudes, insights, and perceptions of using social networks within the workplace—with a particular focus on employees’ productivity and engagement. The instrument consists of seven questions. A “yes” or “no” screening question ensures that the participants do, in fact, work for a company with a corporate social network. The two main research questions are qualitative and open-ended. These questions focus on the participants’ perceptions of their own productivity and engagement in the workplace—factors that may or may not be influenced by a corporate social network:

- Do you feel that the corporate social network enhances or diminishes your productivity? Please explain your answer in detail.
- Do you feel you are more or less engaged with your job/company because of the corporate social network? Please explain your answer in detail.

The written responses to these questions are the crux of this study, and are summarized in Chapter 4.

The remaining four questions are quantitative, multiple-choice questions that allow the data to be stratified by frequency of network use, gender, age group, and company size.

3.2.2 Procedures.

The researcher initially emailed a link to the online survey to a total of 20 employees at 11 different companies across the United States and Canada (see Appendix A). The participants clicked a hyperlink in the email to open the survey in a new browser.
window. The survey included background information explaining the purpose of the study and defining what a corporate social network is. The survey instructions asked the participants to provide as much detail as possible in their responses, and also outlined the confidential and voluntary nature of the research. Participants were also directed to a Permissions and Research Ethics document for more information on how their privacy would be protected (see Appendix C).

After reviewing the background information and instructions, participants began the survey by answering the screening question about having access to a corporate social network. Participants who answered “no” to this question were directed to submit the survey immediately without progressing through the remaining questions.

For the next two items, the participants typed out their responses to the qualitative, open-ended research questions pertaining to productivity and engagement. The participants were then asked to provide quantitative data about how frequently they used their corporate network. The multiple-choice responses—selected by clicking a corresponding radio button—included:

- Daily
- A few times per week
- Every couple weeks
- Rarely or never

The participants then completed the survey by reporting their demographic data, including their age, gender, and size of their corporation. These items were quantitative,
multiple-choice questions selected by clicking a corresponding radio button. The possible responses for age group included:

- Age 30 or younger
- Age 31-45
- Over age 45

These three age groups roughly correspond to the three age groups in today’s workforce: the Millennial generation, Generation X, and the Baby Boomer generation. The possible responses for business size, again selected by radio button, included:

- Under 1,000 employees
- 1,000 to 10,000 employees
- Over 10,000 employees

The final question asked the participants to report their gender.

After completing the survey, participants clicked a “Submit” button at the bottom of the form to submit their responses and exit the survey. Upon submitting the survey, the participants received a survey completion message thanking them for their participation and providing instructions for withdrawing their responses at any time, if desired.

It took each participant an estimated 5 to 10 minutes to complete the survey. Google Docs automatically aggregated the subjects’ responses into an online spreadsheet, where the data were easily sorted for analysis by frequency of use, age group, gender, and business size.
3.3 PERMISSIONS AND RESEARCH ETHICS

It is critical for researchers to be “accurate, honest, and precise” when carrying out a study (Rubin, Rubin, & Piele, 2005, p. 212). In studies that involve people, it is also vitally important to respect the rights of the participants at all times and not harm them in any way (Hoyle, Harris, & Judd, 2002; Rubin, Rubin, & Piele, 2005). This study was designed to comply with all guidelines pertaining to research ethics and permissions. It is considered a low-risk study, as there is no risk of physical harm and the survey does not investigate potentially invasive topics.

To ensure that the participants were fully informed before consenting to participate, the voluntary nature of the research was emphasized during each step of the study. The initial invitation to participate (Appendix A) as well as the survey itself (Appendix B) notes that participation is completely voluntary and anonymous. The survey also links to a Permissions and Research Ethics document (Appendix C), which provides additional details about how the participants’ rights are protected, and how the survey data will be used. The survey also notes that no personally identifiable information is linked to the answers, and that participants are free to answer as many or as few questions as they desire.

The Permissions and Research Ethics document explains that in addition to reporting demographic data, participants will be asked to share their opinions about the usefulness of their employer’s corporate social network. By participating in the study and completing the survey, the participants agree to allow the researcher full access to their survey data—including the right to quote, paraphrase, summarize, and/or publish their
feedback. Again, the document notes that none of the data will be linked to the participant individually, and that all responses are completely anonymous.

The Permissions and Research Ethics document also highlights that participants will not be asked their name, the name of their company, or their location. Additionally, the document explains that none of the gathered data will be shared with the participants’ employers, co-workers, or fellow participants.

As a final reminder, each participant received a survey completion message (Appendix D) after submitting their responses. This message thanked the participants for their participation and outlined the process for contacting the researcher to withdraw any of their responses, if desired.
CHAPTER 4: THE STUDY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As corporations increasingly turn to social media for internal communication and collaboration, these platforms will likely come under intense scrutiny at some point to determine whether they enhance companies’ bottom lines. The present study aims not to provide quantitative results on the financial benefits of corporate social networks, but to glean insights about employees’ perceptions of these networks’ influence on productivity and engagement.

Deetz (2003) surmises that fostering a culture of open communication and knowledge sharing is a critical requirement for driving true gains in productivity. He also postulates that improving two-way communication within a corporation leads to increased participation, or engagement, from employees (Deetz, 2003). Similarly, Tapscott & Williams (2006) believe that the workplace has shifted—and will continue to shift—to more online collaboration between employees, and that this shift will enhance the sense of community and engagement between co-workers.

This study serves as a first step to test these theories in a real-world, corporate environment.

4.2 DATA ANALYSIS

Twenty business contacts in the United States and Canada were emailed the research instrument, and invited to forward the survey to their colleagues. Over the following 12 days, 14 females and 10 males responded to the survey. The raw data,
including demographic information and the full responses to the open-ended research questions, are reported in Appendix E.

Three participants noted that their organization does not use a corporate social network for internal communication. As a result, their responses are not included in the study results below. For the participants whose companies do employ a corporate social network, their responses to the two research questions were coded into the following categories:

- “Increases” (the participant believes the corporate social network enhances his or her productivity or engagement, respectively)
- “Decreases” (the participant believes the network diminishes productivity or engagement)
- “Neutral” (the participant gave conflicting responses to the same question, or believes that the network does not have a significant impact).

The data were then analyzed as a complete set, and also examined by age group, gender, business size, and how frequently the participants use their corporate social network.

4.3 RESULTS OF THE STUDY

When the 21 valid responses were examined as a whole, the results for RQ1 (perceived impact on productivity) were mixed. Nine participants (43%) felt that the corporate social network increases their productivity, while seven (33%) believed that the network decreases productivity. Five participants (24%) provided neutral responses.
The participants who felt that social networks make them more productive expressed a preference for receiving information via the network instead of by email. One participant shared this insight:

“If the social network did not exist, most of these posts would likely come to me in the form of email, which (without setting up email filters) would clutter my inbox and most likely be archived/deleted before I have time to really read through them.”

Another participant explained, “It is helpful to be able to have circles where we can share ideas and articles without jamming up each other’s e-mail.” As employees receive a deluge of email each day—leaving many to feel like they are perpetually running behind—social networks may be seen as a faster way to communicate and accomplish more work.

The participants who felt that social networks decrease their productivity noted two main reasons for their position. First, multiple participants explained that they use the social network when they need a break from work. They view the network as a source of entertainment that actually distracts them from the daily grind. For example, one participant wrote:

“[It] decreases [my productivity]. I mainly use it to look at co-workers’ updates and pictures, and if I just need a break from work. Sometimes I feel like I need to look at it as well, just to keep up with what’s going on, but it’s not ‘working.’”

However, another participant touched on an interesting theory. The participant felt neutral on whether the corporate social network increases or decreases her productivity. She went on to explain that while the network occasionally “is just entertaining and ends up being a nice little break,” it also helps “to make me more engaged when I go back to my work.”
Another participant felt that his company’s social network is not utilized enough to make it a valuable resource. He explains:

“The challenge is that it's an answer looking for a problem. People don't use it regularly enough for it to be more efficient than sending an email for help. So what ends up happening is it is used for communicating a solution to a previous problem. That’s great except that if you don't happen to be working through that problem at the moment it's not very applicable and therefore gets lost.”

This person was the only participant who works in a company of 1,000-10,000 employees.

While the results for this RQ1 (perceived impact on productivity) were inconclusive, the participants' feedback pertaining to RQ2 (perceived impact on engagement) were more compelling.

A total of 14 participants (67%) reported that the corporate social network helps them feel more engaged in their jobs. One participant noted:

“[I feel] more engaged. It's helped me become more aware of what other people are working on, and also what their opinions are on a broad number of topics (both work and non-work related). I feel I have a better pulse of the organization as a whole.”

A second participant expressed similar feelings:

"More engaged. The social networking tool allows coworkers to share both work-related and non-work-related updates with each other, thus further blurring the lines between in- and out-of the office lives, creating a sense of community, and promoting engagement.”

None of the participants felt that the social network diminished their sense of engagement. Seven participants (33%) reported feeling neutral on the subject. Of the participants reporting a neutral response to RQ2, three also felt neutral about RQ1.

Figure 1 below summarizes the survey results for all participants.
32

Figure 1: Survey Results – All Participants

4.3.1 Results by age group.

Of the five participants age 30 and younger, three (60%) felt that the corporate social network increases their productivity, one (20%) felt that the network decreases productivity, and one (20%) was neutral on the subject. Four of the five (80%) concurred that the corporate social network increases their sense of engagement in the workplace, and one respondent (20%) was neutral.

For participants ages 31-45, eight (53%) felt that the corporate social network increases their productivity, three (20%) felt that the network decreases their productivity, and four (27%) reported feeling neutral on this item. Ten (67%) of the participants in this age group reported feeling more engaged as a result of the corporate social network, with five (33%) voting neutral. None in this age group reported feeling less engaged as a result of the network.

The lone participant over age 45 felt that the network decreases her productivity, and was neutral about any impact on her engagement.
Figure 2 summarizes the survey results, stratified by age group.

**Figure 2: Survey Results by Age Group**

4.3.2 Results by gender.

Twelve females and nine males completed the survey. Of the females, only three (25%) felt that the corporate social network increases their productivity. Conversely, six (50%) felt that it decreases their productivity. Three (25%) were neutral. For the males, six (67%) reported increased productivity, one (11%) reported decreased productivity, and two (22%) were neutral.

Regarding engagement, eight females (67%) reported feeling more engaged in their job due to the corporate social network, with four (33%) providing neutral responses. Six (67%) males reported feeling more engaged, while three (33%) reported feeling neutral. None of the participants—regardless of gender—felt that the corporate social network diminished their engagement.

Figure 3 summarizes the survey results, stratified by gender.
4.3.3 Results by business size.

Of the 19 participants who work in a corporation of 10,000 or more employees, eight (42%) feel that the network increases productivity, while six (32%) feel that their corporate social network decreases their productivity. Five additional participants (26%) were neutral on this topic. For this same group, 13 participants (68%) noted that they feel more engaged in the workplace due to the corporate social network, while six (32%) expressed neutral feelings on the matter.

Only one participant currently works in a company of 1,000 to 10,000 employees. He reported that the corporate social network decreases his productivity, and is neutral as to whether the network enhances or diminishes his engagement.

Of the four employees invited to participate from corporations of fewer than 1,000 employees, one did not respond and two reported that their organization does not use a corporate social network. The remaining participant felt that the corporate social network enhances both her productivity and her sense of engagement.
Figure 4 below summarizes the survey results, stratified by business size.

**Figure 4: Survey Results by Business Size**

4.3.1 Results by frequency of use.

Of the seven participants who reported using their corporate social network on a daily basis, five (71%) reported increased productivity, two (29%) noted diminished productivity, and none were neutral. The results were less pronounced for those using the network a few times a week, with two (40%) reporting increased productivity, one (20%) stating decreased productivity, and two (40%) remaining neutral. For the two participants who use the corporate social network every couple weeks, one (50%) noted increased productivity and one (50%) noted decreased productivity. Finally, seven participants stated that they rarely or never use their social network. One participant (14%) of this subset felt the network increases her productivity, three (43%) felt it decreases productivity, and the remaining three (43%) were neutral.

The majority of those who reported using the network on a daily basis perceived an increase in their engagement. Six participants (86%) noted increased engagement, with
only one (14%) remaining neutral. No participants reported being less engaged. A similar
trend was seen for those using a corporate social network a few times a week, with five
(100%) reporting an increased perception of engagement and none reporting diminished
engagement or neutral feelings on the topic.

Two participants reported using the corporate social network only every couple
weeks; one (50%) felt it increases engagement and the other (50%) was neutral. Of the
seven participants who reported using the network rarely or never, two (29%) were of the
opinion that it increases engagement. The other five participants (71%) were neutral.

Figure 5 summarizes the survey results, stratified by how frequently the
participants utilize their corporate social network.

**Figure 5: Survey Results by Frequency of Use**

4.4 DISCUSSION

4.4.1 RQ1: Do corporate social networks help enhance productivity?

In reviewing the data set as a whole, the results for RQ1 show an inconclusive mix
of those who believe corporate social networks increase productivity, and those who feel
they decrease productivity. As social networks are a relatively new workplace technology, these results are in line with Deetz’s critical theory of communication in organizations. Deetz (2003) notes that even as organizations make their communication and decision-making processes more open and inclusive, improvements in productivity can take years to emerge. It takes time for employees to learn new methods of fulfilling their job duties, and for the enhanced sense of community to ripple throughout the corporation and improve productivity (Deetz, 2003).

While RQ1 was intended to be a simple “yes” or “no” question with space for additional feedback, nearly one out of every four participants (24%) gave a neutral response. This could reflect Deetz’s (2003) theory of consent. These employees may simply go along with management’s mandate to use the social network, without any personal thought or enthusiasm regarding its potential value. Through consent, employees support their leaders’ interests in the erroneous belief that this will ultimately benefit them personally (Deetz, 2003).

It is interesting that a few participants used the corporate social network for entertainment, and then felt more engaged when they returned to their work. Perhaps the act of taking a break and using the network for fun helps employees return to their tasks with more mental energy and enthusiasm, thus increasing overall productivity— even though in the moment, some might feel the technology hampers their productivity.

The lone participant who works for a company of 1,000-10,000 employees felt the network decreases his productivity. It may be that smaller companies have been slower to adopt corporate social networks, and are still ramping up in terms of the frequency and
number of employees using these platforms. Additionally, employees in smaller
companies may already know many of their co-workers quite well, and may not feel that
online collaboration enhances their rapport and work processes.

While the study data in their entirety do not conclusively identify social networks’
influence on perceived productivity, stratifying the responses into demographic categories
leads to visible trends, which are discussed in section 4.4.3.

4.4.2 RQ2: Do corporate social networks help enhance engagement?

In contrast to the results for RQ1, a solid trend emerged for RQ2. The results were
positive, with two-thirds of all participants reporting that the social network helps them
feel more engaged, and only one-third feeling neutral. None of the participants felt that
the network decreases their engagement. This corroborates Deetz’s (1992) theory that
corporations with open, two-way communication channels ignite more participation—
defined as engagement in this study—from their employees. Tapscott & Williams (2006)
similarly predicted that collaborative communication, specifically in an online format,
leads to improved engagement and fulfillment: “Our sense of stability and our sources of
encouragement, learning, and growth in our careers will come from communities of
practice and our engagement with like-minded peers who we meet and keep in touch
with online” (pp. 265-266).

Multiple participants noted that they feel more engaged because the social
network lets them see pictures of their co-workers, and find out more about their
personal lives. Perhaps as employees get to know each other better as people (and even
connect as friends), the enhanced sense of community helps them feel more engaged and enthusiastic about their jobs.

Participants also cited a few additional reasons why the corporate social network helps them feel more engaged:

- Better understanding of their colleagues’ work projects
- The ability to have real-time discussions and collaboration with colleagues
- Easy access to the latest company news, products, and industry trends.

4.4.3 Observable trends by demographic group.

When the study data are separated into demographic categories and reexamined, additional insights and trends emerge.

The five participants under age 30—a demographic that one might expect to uniformly rally behind social media—were divided. Three felt that the corporate social networks increase productivity, one believed they decrease productivity, and one was neutral. These respondents were also all females who work in organizations of 10,000 or more employees. The differences of opinion regarding RQ1 might be attributed to the brand of social network each person was using, the type of work each person does, or perhaps simply to different personality types. A larger sample of participants from this age group would provide more robust and potentially more conclusive results. Four of the five participants, however, reported that the corporate social network enhances their feelings of engagement in the workplace—so there was a strong trend in that regard.

The sole participant over age 45 felt that the corporate social network decreased her productivity, and was neutral when describing the network’s impact on her sense of
engagement. This could be due to “organizational inertia”—the idea that the longer a people work in an organization, the more difficult it is to change the way things are done (Tapscott & Williams, 2006, p. 266). Tapscott & Williams (2006) note that “this is especially true of elders in the workplace, many of whom resist changes in their routines” (p. 266).

By a ratio of six-to-one, males perceived that the corporate social network enhances their productivity. A reverse trend is observed for females, with women who feel that the network decreases their productivity outweighing those who believe it increases productivity by a ratio of two-to-one. One potential explanation is that men may be more likely to view the social network as a work tool, while women—as reported in the survey responses—may view it more as a distraction or way to “take a break” from work. As previously noted, these types of rest breaks may actually lead to more productivity, without the employee realizing it.

In examining the data by business size, of particular interest is the social networks’ perceived influence on engagement. Of the participants who work for companies with more than 10,000 employees, over two-thirds felt that the network increases their sense of engagement. In such large organizations, it can be difficult to feel connected to—or even meet—fellow employees in distributed offices. Since corporate social networks foster exchanges of ideas, answers, and dialogue (while also helping users put a face to a name), the enhanced sense of community appears to boost engagement.

Finally, employees who use the corporate social network most frequently appear to derive the greatest benefits. Those using the network on a daily basis were most likely
to report a benefit in terms of both perceived productivity and engagement. The
participants who use the network a few times a week also experienced a high level of
increased engagement, but did not report as much in terms of productivity gains. Those
using the social network rarely or never were the most likely to be neutral in their
answers to both RQ1 and RQ2, or to note decreased productivity. This is to be expected,
as employees who rarely or never use a new technology would be hard-pressed to
recognize any value in it.
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARIES AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present research was an exploratory pilot study to better understand employees’ perceptions of corporate social networks. As an exploratory study, the design was limited in certain aspects.

First, the overall study sample (21 employees) was very small, which made it difficult to identify conclusive trends in employees’ perceptions. Second, while 19 of the respondents work at companies of more than 10,000 employees, only one participant works at a company of less than 1,000 employees, and one other participant works at a company between 1,000 to 10,000 employees. Gleaning a single response for these two categories does not adequately represent employees’ perceptions for businesses of this size. Third, only one employee age 45 or older participated in the study. This limits the ability to draw widespread conclusions from the employee’s response. Fourth, it can be difficult for employees to gauge their own productivity in the workplace, so the respondents’ perceptions may not accurately reflect their actual productivity.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Further research on this topic can yield additional insights into employees’ perceptions of corporate social networks—and has the potential to provide quantitative data in terms of employees’ productivity and engagement. Recommendations for future research are outlined below.
First, conducting a similar study with a much larger sample of participants would be extremely valuable. A sample of 300 or more employees would allow trends to be more readily identified for the study as a whole, as well as for each demographic group.

Second, in addition to gaining broader qualitative feedback about employees’ perceptions of corporate social networks, gathering quantitative data about the networks’ impact on productivity and engagement would shed additional light on this topic. This future study would require the use (or creation) of validated surveys that measure actual productivity and engagement. The surveys would be administered before and after an employer implements a corporate social network.

Third, a study of corporations’ profits spanning the five years preceding and five years following the implementation of a corporate social network would be enlightening. Though certain variables would need to be controlled, this type of study would be a real-world test for Deetz’s (1992, 2003) theory that improving corporate communication and participation ultimately leads to better business results.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

Communication technologies in the workplace continue to evolve. Corporate social networking platforms, including Yammer, are increasingly being utilized within public and private sector organizations. With the proliferation of social media tools in the workplace, corporations have returned to the classical Athenian philosophy of participation, with each member of the company able to freely share his or her thoughts and opinions with the group.
The present research tapped into employees’ attitudes and perceptions of corporate social networks, and their impact on perceived productivity and engagement. The study found that by a slight margin, employees feel that corporate social networks increase their productivity. A more pronounced trend was seen for engagement, with two-thirds of employees feeling more engaged in their jobs due to the network. These results corroborate Deetz’s (1992, 2003) assertion that by increasing two-way communication within the workplace, corporations will see enhanced productivity and participation in their workforce. Whether or not this translates to improved profitability, as Deetz predicts, is a topic for future study.
REFERENCES


Appendix A: Invitation to Participate

Dear [Name],

I am in the final stage of the Master of Communication and Leadership Studies program at Gonzaga University, and I’m conducting a research study for my thesis. The study focuses on employees’ perceptions of the usefulness of corporate social networks. The key research questions include:

• Do corporate social networks enhance or diminish productivity?
• Do employees feel more or less engaged with their job/company because of the corporate social network?

I am inviting you to assist my research by completing this brief survey, which is completely voluntary and anonymous. The survey should take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. I believe your company uses a corporate social network (i.e., a platform where you create a user profile and share ideas, status updates, and documents), so you would be an ideal participant for this survey.

Also, it would help me greatly if you would please forward the survey to a handful of your non-executive co-workers or external business contacts (North America only) whose companies use a corporate social network for internal communication.

I appreciate your help!

Many thanks,
Jeff
Appendix B: The Survey

Employees’ Perceptions of Corporate Social Networks

Background
This survey aims to gather data about employees’ perceptions of corporate social networks. A corporate social network is an online system—similar to Facebook—that allows employees to create a user profile and then share the following types of information with other employees within the same company:

- Status updates
- Questions, comments, and ideas
- Documents, photos, and videos

A few popular corporate social networks include: Yammer, Chatter, and Socialcast. Some companies create their own network instead of using an “off-the-shelf” system.

Instructions
Please answer the following questions as honestly and in as much detail as possible. You can answer as many or few questions as you wish, and your responses will be completely anonymous. No personally identifiable information will be linked to your answers. Please see this Permissions and Research Ethics document for more information.

Survey Questions
1. Does your company have an internal corporate social network?
   - Yes
   - No

   If you answered “No” to this question, do not proceed any further. Simply submit the form and you are finished.

2. Do you feel that the corporate social network enhances or diminishes your productivity? Please explain your answer in detail.

3. Do you feel you are more or less engaged with your job/company because of the corporate social network? Please explain your answer in detail.

4. How frequently do you use your corporate social network?
   - Daily
   - A few times per week
   - Every couple weeks
   - Rarely or never
5. What is your age?
   - Age 30 or younger
   - Age 31-45
   - Over age 45

6. How large is your company?
   - Under 1,000 employees
   - 1,000 to 10,000 employees
   - Over 10,000 employees

7. What is your gender?
   - Female
   - Male
Appendix C: Permissions and Research Ethics

Permissions and Research Ethics
Research Study: Employees’ Perceptions of Corporate Social Networks

Permissions
As part of this study, you will be asked to share your impressions of the usefulness of your company’s corporate social network. You will also be asked to report your age range, gender, and approximate size of your company. By choosing to participate in the study and complete the survey, you agree to allow the researcher (Jeff Brady) full access to your anonymous survey data. You also agree that the data may be quoted, paraphrased, summarized, and/or published as part of the researcher’s master’s thesis. Note: This information will not be linked to you directly.

You are free to answer as many or as few of the survey questions as you wish. After submitting the survey, you may also withdraw any or all of your responses by emailing the researcher at jbrady2@zagmail.gonzaga.edu. In order for the researcher to delete your data, you must note the date and time (Eastern Daylight Time) that you completed the survey.

Research Ethics
This is considered a low-risk study, as there is no risk of physical harm and the survey does not investigate potentially invasive topics. The study has been designed to preserve your anonymity. No personally identifiable information will be linked to your survey responses. You will not be asked to provide your name, the name of your company, or your location. Any data that are quoted, paraphrased, summarized, and/or published in the resulting thesis will not be attributed to you individually. Also, none of the gathered data will be shared with your employer, co-workers, or fellow participants.
Appendix D: Survey Completion Message

Thank you for participating in this study and completing the survey!

If you would like to withdraw any of your responses at any time, please email Jeff Brady at jbrady2@zagmail.gonzaga.edu. In your email, please note the date and time (Eastern Daylight Time) that you completed the survey.
## Appendix E: Survey Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reply #</th>
<th>Corporate Network?</th>
<th>Feedback on Productivity</th>
<th>Feedback on Engagement</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Company Size</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Frequency of Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Decreases but since I work in communications, also enhances some of the ways I can target and interact with employees. I can market broadly without sending an email or poster the entire campus as well respond to individual's contacts and make a personal connection with them.</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>31-45</td>
<td>&gt;10,000</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Decreases - I mainly use it to look at co-workers updates and pictures and if I just need a break from work. Sometimes I feel like I need to look at it as well, just to keep up with what's going on, but its not &quot;working.&quot;</td>
<td>Probably more engaged but moreso with my co-workers than with the company per se.</td>
<td>&lt;30</td>
<td>&gt;10,000</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Few times per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, it is a way to communicate out to our employees and stay current on what is going on in any given office or team.</td>
<td>More engaged because you can see real time updates, comment and carry on a dialogue with people that can enhance collaboration.</td>
<td>31-45</td>
<td>&gt;10,000</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Daily</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No. I use it the same way I use my personal social network - during lunch, at night, etc.</td>
<td>More engaged. There is a lot of great information that is passed around via the corp social network. I look there for trends and news.</td>
<td>31-45</td>
<td>&gt;10,000</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Enhances. I prefer receiving updates and posts about content that is interesting, but does not affect my work directly (e.g., articles, upcoming talks, etc.), in the social network, because I can access them <em>when I have time.</em> If the social network did not exist, most of these posts would likely come to me in the form of email, which (without setting up email filters) would clutter my inbox and most likely be archived/deleted before I have time to really read through them.</td>
<td>&quot;More engaged. The social networking tool allows coworkers to share both work-related and non-work-related updates with each other, thus further blurring the lines between in- and out-of the office lives, creating a sense of community, and promoting engagement. Moreover, our company built the social networking tool, so using/testing it IS part of my job and, by definition, use of the tool = engagement! &quot;</td>
<td>31-45</td>
<td>&gt;10,000</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Few times per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>I think it evens out! I check it a few times a week and may spend some time there, but I feel like the info I read is helpful to my work or is just entertaining and ends up being a nice little break to make</td>
<td>I think I'm more engaged with my company as I'm now better aware of people's interests (especially those I'm not as close to) and read more content about the company</td>
<td>&lt;30</td>
<td>&gt;10,000</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Few times per week</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Enhances productivity in that now all emails show your profile picture so it makes it easier to recognize people and it can make the tone of the emails seem more friendly. Enhances productivity in that it allows project teams to share documents and information more effectively than simply using share drive folders. It decreases productivity in that I get annoying Tasks to Approve from our shared project sites that are not useful. Overall the corporate social network enhances productivity more than decreasing productivity.</td>
<td>More engaged in that I feel slightly more familiar with co-workers from seeing their faces on their emails so often. However, I have yet to see people sharing posts or doing much with their social network besides putting their profile picture up and creating project team pages.</td>
<td>31-45</td>
<td>&gt;10,000 Male Daily</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>It is helpful to be able to have circles where we can share ideas and articles without jamming up each others e-mail. It would be nice to keep e-mail for tactical issues.</td>
<td>Slightly more engaged. The relationships I have at work are important, but I only feel they are slightly enhanced by social networks.</td>
<td>31-45</td>
<td>&gt;10,000 Male Daily</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>We use Lync for messaging and Yammer for corporate Social Networking. Yammer uses the chatter desktop feature which gives you notification and streams. The general streams tend to be very distracting and of little value. If you customize your stream specifically for what you need then it can be helpful. The challenge is that it's an answer looking for a problem. People don't use it regularly enough for it to be more efficient than sending an email for help. So what ends up happening is it is used for communicating a solution to a previous problem. That's great except that if you don't happen to be working through that problem at the moment it's not very applicable and therefore gets lost. &quot;In regards to Yammer - it actually hasn't changed anything. It's something that occasionally becomes useful but for the most part it just it's thing with little involvement from me. Where social networking seems to be having a huge impact on our businesses is on the recruitment side. We are developing tools and using social networking products in our software to help employers reach new audiences. From this perspective we are all becoming more engaged in social networking.&quot;</td>
<td>31-45</td>
<td>1,000-10,000 Male Every couple weeks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Neutral. I don't check it often enough to make an impact on my productivity.</td>
<td>I feel more engaged since it introduces me to new products/programs happening throughout the company.</td>
<td>31-45</td>
<td>&gt;10,000 Female Few times per week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No response submitted.</td>
<td>I haven't been engaged with a</td>
<td>&lt;30</td>
<td>&lt;1,000 Female Rarely or</td>
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social network at work but I think for larger organizations it could create synergies and employees could really benefit from learning about what their peers are doing, how they handled something, and the information exchange could be extremely valuable.

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<td>12</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Increases. When used as a distraction, it's a substitute for other distractions such as Facebook, twitter, etc. so I think the net productivity loss is zero (haven't measured that). However, it does help me keep in touch w/co-workers around the world which is important to maintaining working relationships. The easy and more regular touch points facilitate easier communication when we start up a new work project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More engaged. It’s helped me become more aware of what other people are working on, and also what their opinions are on a broad number of topics (both work and non-work related). I feel I have a better pulse of the organization as a whole.</td>
<td>31-45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>It has no effect on my productivity, as I rarely pay attention to it at all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our company engages us in different ways, but the corporate social network does not add much to this engagement. The only things I read on occasion are our VP blogs, which are part of the social network.</td>
<td>31-45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No response submitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No response submitted.</td>
<td>31-45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>It can enhance productivity in the workplace if used in the right way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, I feel engaged--it promotes collaboration. Also, with all the changes going, there is great opportunity to be even more engaged. It's an education process for all: employees should post in relevant groups whenever possible; non-business content must be appropriate, brief and shared in the right private group/message.</td>
<td>&lt;30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>It would decrease it, if I used it I have not found it useful, so I don't use it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>&gt;45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Neither.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Right now I would say I am not any more engaged with my company.</td>
<td>31-45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>I joined Yammer, but I don't</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|   | The corporate social network | 31-45 | >10,000 | Female | Rarely or
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Engagement</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>More engaged</td>
<td>Increased productivity</td>
<td>Pertinent information is shared across Chatter which allows the upload and comment on documents, important messages, and just positive feedback between employees. The network is used daily but not to the point where it is overwhelming.</td>
<td>31-45</td>
<td>&lt;1,000</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Rarely or never</td>
<td>Less engaged</td>
<td>Doesn't impact productivity</td>
<td>I don't have an opinion either way on this question.</td>
<td>&lt;30</td>
<td>&gt;10,000</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Every couple weeks</td>
<td>More engaged</td>
<td>Enhances to a small degree</td>
<td>Slightly more engaged.</td>
<td>31-45</td>
<td>&gt;10,000</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Rarely or never</td>
<td>Less engaged</td>
<td>If it turns out like Facebook</td>
<td>I don't have an opinion either way on this question.</td>
<td>31-45</td>
<td>&gt;10,000</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Rarely or never</td>
<td>More engaged</td>
<td>Enhances, only because I rarely use it and participate only when I feel I can gain some sort of value personally.</td>
<td>More engaged with others in the network that share similar job positions, but I feel indifferent regarding engagement with my company or my specific job.</td>
<td>31-45</td>
<td>&gt;10,000</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Rarely or never</td>
<td>More engaged</td>
<td>Decreases as there are a lot of email threads I get from our network that I have to delete.</td>
<td>I feel that I am more engaged. I subscribe to a few of the 'feeds' like what the cafe is serving for lunch, etc. I feel like I have a better idea of what is going on around campus.</td>
<td>&lt;30</td>
<td>&gt;10,000</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F: Mentor Agreement Form

MENTOR AGREEMENT (To be submitted with Thesis or Project Proposal)

Mentoring: A deliberate pairing of a more skilled or experienced person with a lesser skilled or experienced one, with the agreed-upon goal of having the lesser skilled person grow and develop specific competencies.

You have been asked to serve as a Mentor for Jeff Brady, who is completing the requirements for his master’s degree in Communication and Leadership Studies. As a mentor you are asked to share ideas with this student and read the next-to-final draft of his thesis. You are not expected to directly supervise this student’s work, but rather meet with him as a “young colleague.” If you are willing to serve as a Mentor for him, please sign this agreement. Your Mentee will provide you with full guidelines of their requirements.

I am willing to serve as a Mentor for Jeff Brady as he completes his thesis or project. As a Mentor I will provide help in the way of suggestions, ideas, and resources, and am willing to review drafts of his written work. I also agree to read the next-to-last draft of the student’s thesis or project, and will sign my name on the signature page of their final draft. My signature on the thesis only indicates that I have read it and is no indication of the quality of the work. I will not be asked to assign a grade or make any evaluative comments to the course convener.

Signature: ___Alex Kuskis (via email)___

Title: ____Adjunct Professor, COML____

Email and telephone number: kuskis@gonzaga.edu 519-941-7452

Date: ___February 10, 2012___