



# The Groundswell Inside Your Company

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Using Social Technologies to Engage Employees

EXCERPTED FROM

*Groundswell*

BY

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## 11. the groundswell inside your company

How would you feel if one of your employees wrote something like this?<sup>1</sup>

I work retail. I inspire creativity and fun with my employees. I grand open stores, as many as possible, really. And I have never before loved a job and a company the way I love this one.

My name is Ashley Hemsath, and I am Best Buy.

Ashley works at the Charlotte, South Carolina, Best Buy, one of twelve hundred Best Buy electronics stores. She's a Blue Shirt—that's what everybody at Best Buy calls the sales associates (if you've been to a Best Buy store, you've seen them working in their blue polo shirts). She's also a member of Blue Shirt Nation ([blueshirtnation.com](http://blueshirtnation.com)), an internal community site for Best Buy's employees—this quote comes from her profile on the community. The idea of Blue Shirt Nation attracted her, and she's one of the site's most-read contributors. "I can share my thoughts on how we should fix the company, and I can also post about my day," she says. "I then get support from other people, and not just at the local level. I can relate to people outside of my own store."

In any company, on any given day, employees may or may not feel committed to their company's goals. But with some forethought, internal

groundswell applications like Blue Shirt Nation can make them feel empowered, connected, and more committed on a day-to-day basis. As Ashley says, “It feels like I’m making a difference. It makes me feel better at work, and I have a greater sense of responsibility to not just point out what’s wrong but to come up with ways to fix things that are wrong. That’s because what I’m saying could impact what someone thinks who just started a few days ago.” Ashley credits her activities on Blue Shirt Nation for giving her a bigger picture of the company’s goals. And that, in turn, led to her promotion to supervisor.

### **tapping the groundswell inside your company**

In the first ten chapters of this book, we talked about how you can connect with your customers in the groundswell. But what about your employees? They’re a natural constituency for social connections. They obviously have something in common: they work for you. And they ought to have a common goal: your company’s success.

The bigger a company is, the more of a problem internal communication becomes. Information flows down the management ladder, but getting insights back up to management and encouraging collaboration among people throughout the enterprise is harder. Email boxes fill with a combination of urgent requests, irrelevant “cc’s” and offers of free kittens. If Dell can get its customers to support each other and salesforce.com can get its customers to prioritize feature suggestions, why can’t your employees work together in the same way?

They can.

Throughout corporations around the world, employees are connecting on internal social networks, collaborating on wikis, and contributing to idea exchanges. Some of these applications came from management and others began as skunk-works projects, but what they have in common is this: they tap the power of the groundswell of ideas among the people who know best how your business runs, your employees. It’s a little scary to put this power in the hands of your workers. It doesn’t fit into a nice, neat org chart. But if you want to run faster and smarter, you ought to take a look at it.

In this chapter we look at three kinds of internal groundswell applications: the community at Best Buy; wikis at Avenue A/Razorfish, Organic, and Intel; and an idea exchange at Bell Canada.

#### CASE STUDY

##### **best buy: connecting far-flung sales associates**

Blue Shirt Nation was started by two corporate marketing guys, Steve Bendt and Gary Koelling, who wanted to gather customer insight on what kinds of advertising worked. Best Buy's Blue Shirts are on the front lines and have, collectively, a lot of insight into what's really working at the stores. Steve and Gary, who aren't known for doing things in traditional ways, decided to give the Blue Shirts a voice. As Steve told us, "We wanted to get insight into what's really happening at the store, not just when the store is spic and span for corporate visits."

Gary started in August 2006 by finding a spare server, stashing it under his desk, and loading it with Drupal, an open-source suite of community-building software. He and Steve opened the site up to a few colleagues for testing and got feedback. "We had a lot of posts that said it sucked," Gary remembers. The project took off when they showed it to the senior VP of marketing, Barry Judge, who told them that they weren't thinking big enough—and promptly offered them a generous budget to build out the community.

But it turned out, money wasn't what they needed to make Blue Shirt Nation a success—participation was. "We thought this could be really awesome," Steve says, "but then we realized we didn't need hundreds of thousands of dollars. We knew that something coming down from corporate wasn't going to fly and that this needed to grow organically." So they turned down most of the money.

Instead, Steve and Gary went on the road, participating in "chalk talks" in the stores and giving away Blue Shirt Nation T-shirts to employees. They took store teams bowling, getting feedback on what worked on the community and encouraging employees to participate. By the time the site went live to all employees in February 2006, there

was already enough activity to see it as an early success, and the employees greeted it with enthusiasm. By October 2007, Blue Shirt Nation had grown immensely, with fourteen thousand employees logging in each month, 85 percent of them sales associates in stores.

Despite this success, Steve and Gary are still the irreverent guys who started the site on a server under Gary's desk. When we pointed out to them that their little community now had 10 percent of Best Buy's employees as members, they high-fived each other. "Dude," Gary exclaimed, "we're at 10 percent!"

#### the impact of blue shirt nation

Blue Shirt Nation was created to listen to what employees had to say. What Best Buy didn't anticipate is that it would not only educate management but also enable employees to help *each other*. For example, Blue Shirts had clamored for email addresses so that they could communicate with each other more effectively than leaving a note at the cash register and to follow up with customers. Someone posted that this wasn't possible because it would cost Best Buy close to \$1 million to implement. Somebody else checked with IT and found the price was closer to \$58,000 for all full-time associates. Soon after, the Blue Shirts got email. Chalk one up for the groundswell in Blue Shirt Nation.

Some managers worry that connecting their employees will create a revolt. And sometimes it does. When Best Buy pushed through a change in the employee discount, one poster wrote, "Don't like the changes? Let your opinion be heard! . . . We may not be able to stop the change from happening, but we can definitely let our company know exactly how displeased we are about it." Three days later, responding to a surge of impassioned comments in Blue Shirt Nation, a management staffer posted this: "We heard you. You made it very clear how valuable the employee discount is, and based on that feedback we have decided NOT to change it." The company realized that the discount was crucial to attracting and retaining employees and decided that it had better keep the discount as it was.

Blue Shirt Nation also solves mundane but impactful problems. An employee named Chris posted that a new SLR camera display case was

too tall, included a picture with his post, and asked whether anyone had a similar problem. Within two hours, the case's original designer responded, writing, "There are two variations of the case . . . [Y]ou apparently got one that has an extra toekick in it . . . I will immediately follow up with this to make sure the right cases got ordered for the right stores." What normally would have taken weeks to wind its way through company bureaucracy was resolved in just a few days—and the case designer was proactively preventing others from suffering the same problem. That's the power and speed of the groundswell within companies—the ability for people to find what they need from each other.

internal groundswell benefits touch on many objectives

In chapter 4 we told you to build applications with a single objective in mind: listening, talking, energizing, supporting, or embracing. This approach also applies within the enterprise, but as Blue Shirt Nation shows, these objectives tend to blend together in internal applications. Management's relationships with employees—and employees' relationships with each other—are multidimensional. For example, here's how Best Buy's Blue Shirt Nation accomplishes all five objectives:

- *Listening.* Steve and Gary set up Blue Shirt Nation to listen, but its utility goes beyond the merchandising feedback they were seeking. With employees, listening can turn rapidly into problem solving. Management listened and then restored the employee discount. And it's not just management—the SLR camera case designer got to hear how his display was being used in stores and to fix problems with it.
- *Talking.* Now corporate can post policy changes where everyone can read them and see how they're playing in Peoria.
- *Energizing.* How much is an enthusiastic employee like Ashley Hemsath worth to Best Buy? Not only does Blue Shirt Nation give Ashley a platform, but it also amplifies her voice across the entire Best Buy employee base. She spreads her positive thinking and advice, which has an impact on stores everywhere.

- *Supporting.* A key part of Best Buy's success is its commitment to support and promote employees from within. According to Ashley, "My biggest goal is to get my team members promoted. I remember the names of everyone I hired and I know what store they are at now. It's really cool seeing them interacting with me and each other directly on BSN [Blue Shirt Nation]." The online forum on Blue Shirt Nation is a natural extension of that mentoring culture, where employees can find the support they need from around the company, not just from within their store or district.
- *Embracing.* In the summer of 2007, Ashley was invited to attend a Best Buy women's leadership forum in Chicago. She ended up sitting down with someone named Kal and talked with him for four hours straight about improvements. As she recalls, "I found out later that he was Kal Patel, Best Buy's EVP of strategy. He saw my posts on BSN and said to his assistant, 'I need to meet that girl!'" The community turned out to be a way to surface both ideas and great talent.

Blue Shirt Nation brought Blue Shirts together for listening and problem solving. But some companies need more than that—they need a full-fledged collaboration environment. That's what wikis are good for.

#### CASE STUDY

##### **avenue a/razorfish: collaborating on a wiki**

Just before Christmas in 2006, Clark Kokich sat down at his computer and wrote this blog post:<sup>2</sup>

[A colleague] just sent me an email asking me to post my favorite guitar solo of all time. He thought there would be lots of people with opinions on this subject. Given that it's the day before the holidays and I haven't received [another] email all morning . . . , it seems like a good time to have some fun.

The quick and easy answer: I still get chills when I hear Cream play *Crossroads* live. But after thinking about it for a few minutes, I'd have to say that the ONE guitar solo that still surprises and amazes me every time I hear it is *Man in The Box* by Alice In Chains.

Sounds like a thousand other blog posts on the Net. But this one was written by the CEO of Avenue A/Razorfish, one of the largest interactive agencies in the world, and it appeared on his company intranet. Why is the CEO of a busy agency wasting time writing about guitar solos? Clark explains, "This post didn't serve any specific business purpose, but it was an opportunity [for our employees] to be connected to the leadership. You can do this with a few people over a beer, but how do you accomplish that with a whole company? If you look back on our history five to ten years from now, this connection is going to be one of the things that will get us to where we'll be."

Avenue A/Razorfish's internal intranet site, which is a wiki with blogs and collaboration spaces, is for lots more than sharing opinions on guitar solos. Since the company is organized around projects, the whole place increasingly runs on the wiki. Over nineteen hundred staff in nineteen offices needed to get out from under clogged email boxes and files scattered on various servers. Now those staff have pages where they share their ideas and skills and blog about their work or, as Clark did, about anything else. More important, projects have pages featuring project summaries, team members' roles, meeting notes, documents on which those team members collaborate, and schedules.

It works. Technologies have cut the time spent looking for sample tech architectures and third-party tools from hours or days to minutes. One of the company's consultants in Fort Lauderdale posted a request for insight into the company's expertise with a tool called RedDot. Within hours, the consultant aggregated case studies from London, Frankfurt, and Paris and used that information on the client's project. Similarly, new employees can get up to speed quickly as they learn about their colleagues' skills—and vice versa.

Rather than create a top-down imperative, Avenue A/Razorfish created features so that teams found using the wiki a whole lot easier than



doing things the old way. When the wiki started in January 2006, pages in it were viewed fifty-seven hundred times. Nearly two years later, pages on the wiki had been viewed 1.8 million times. Over 90 percent of the employees have logged in, uploading three thousand files and contributing to seven thousand pages.<sup>3</sup>

It works not just for the employees but for Clark. Every morning he spends fifteen minutes reviewing employees' blogs, wikis, and bookmarked articles. "The biggest benefit is being able to listen in on what people are working on, what they are concerned about, and where they are focused. It's the virtual equivalent to management by walking around."

Clark's ability to monitor the pulse of the organization became crucial on May 20, 2007, when Microsoft announced that it was acquiring aQuantive, Avenue A/Razorfish's parent company.<sup>4</sup> Clark knew that employees would be concerned about what the acquisition would mean for them, their clients, and more important, their ability to make independent technology choices.

He wrote a blog post addressing these concerns and then addressed comments and questions as they came into the blog and wiki. "I could have made the announcement by email," Clark explained, "but this was more conversational. That kind of dialogue is comforting to people because change is stressful. There is openness, and things aren't happening in secret. They are reassured that there's no diabolical plan that they didn't know about." As he toured around company offices following the announcement, he regularly checked the wiki and blogs to keep tabs on the latest concerns and complaints and then addressed them at live meetings. The result: by the time the acquisition closed in August 2007, employees felt more assured that the acquisition would be good for them.

The key here is that in creating a collaboration tool, the company had also created a communication channel. Not all the communication among employees is hearts and flowers, of course. But Clark's ability to carry his company through an acquisition, using the blogs and wiki for communication, demonstrates leadership through groundswell thinking. Rather than flinch at the negative sentiments about the acquisition, he chose to address them in a shared space. This skill—talking *and*

listening—enables him to remain close to his employees while guiding the company through a crucial transition period.

wikis are spreading through the corporate world

Because they're so effective at enhancing collaboration, wikis are catching on with lots of companies. Take the case of Intelpedia.

In the fall of 2006, Intel product support engineer John G. Miner wrote a blog post on his internal Intel blog, asking, "Wouldn't it be cool to have something like Wikipedia inside of Intel?" Readers responded with skepticism, including comments like "It will never happen" or "It will take 2-3 years."<sup>5</sup> Except for Josh Bancroft, an engineer specializing in social media at Intel, who wrote back saying, "Give me a server and I'll get it running in a day." Josh found a server, loaded it with Media-Wiki (the open-source wiki software that's used to run Wikipedia), and enlisted his friends to start adding content. By the time John got back to Josh two weeks later, offering to try to find a server, it was too late; Josh had already launched Intelpedia. "It was one of the most enjoyable moments at Intel to tell John that Intelpedia was already up," said Josh. "He was blown away."

Two years after Intelpedia was created, it contained twenty thousand articles and generated seven hundred page views every month. The articles range from helpful references (such as how to configure Macs on Intel's corporate network) to the whimsical (such as the schedule for pickup soccer games near Intel campuses). The key to Intelpedia's success is that the articles are more than a static encyclopedia—instead, the wiki is an integral part of daily life at Intel. Oliver Young, a Forrester analyst looking at the application of social technologies within the enterprise, explains, "Out-of-date information is a serious problem with wikis. When you start living and breathing in these social tools, that's when they become a way to tackle business problems. They become part of the context in which you do daily work, instead of a separate island of information."

At Organic, an international interactive agency, staff faced exactly this problem—the internal wiki that they launched wasn't effective because

few people were using it. “It wasn’t that the wiki was difficult to use; it was just asking us to work differently,” said Chad Stoller, executive director of emerging platforms at Organic.

To re-energize employee collaboration, top management took an hour to sketch out the guiding principles for a new intranet at a 2006 off-site meeting. They planned (1) to provide employees, or “talent” as Organic liked to call them, with their own profile on an internal social network called Organism; (2) to support people trying to locate expertise across six offices in the United States and Canada; and (3) to encourage people to upload and share their work on their profiles. They also wanted employees to connect in the same way as the people using their applications did—on a social network.

Organism combines elements of social networks, collaboration software, and corporate intranets. According to David Feldt, a senior vice president in the Toronto office who drove the creation of Organism, “It helps the teams really get to know each other and ultimately work more effectively together.”

Organic realized that people’s business process revolved around knowing each other and, more important, around the work that each person did. “Organism became an entry point for the wiki,” Chad explained. “Anything that gets updated on your profile is documented in the wiki.”

Now whenever new employees join Organic, they get a page on Organism and are expected to keep it up to date with their client deliverables. Because Organism is tied directly into the company directory, anyone looking for a programmer with, say, experience creating widgets, will make Organism his first step. This, in turn, encourages employees to update their profile and upload client work—because it very likely will lead to their next project. Finally, Organism also has lightweight social networking features—employees can list their “friends,” allowing project leaders to get informal referrals and recommendations for new team members.

Intel and Organic learned that wikis and social networks don’t solve problems by themselves. Just as in external groundswell applications, you have to start by thinking about the *relationships*, not the *technologies*. There—as at Avenue A/Razorfish and at Best Buy—technologies succeeded in the enterprise only because the company nurtured them into useful business tools.

The examples we've describe so far show how companies can improve communication and collaboration. What about innovation? That was the goal Bell Canada pursued.

#### CASE STUDY

##### **bell canada: driving cultural change from the bottom up**

In early 2005, Rex Lee, director of collaboration services at Bell Canada, was holding a series of informal coffee sessions with small groups of employees. As is typical in many companies, these degenerated into gripe sessions, filled with complaints and criticisms about the company. Rex found it frustrating that these employees, asked how they would solve the problems they had surfaced, often responded, "It's not my problem." When employees finally did come up with some good ideas, they asked Rex what he was going to do about it. Rex had reached his limit. "Bell Canada has forty thousand people, and honestly, I didn't know how to move forward or who to go to with these ideas," he told us.

Rex needed a better way to corral the ideas and put them where appropriate managers could see them. So he turned for inspiration to . . . *American Idol*. That's right, the hit TV show. On *American Idol*, the audience votes for the winners. Could that work at Bell Canada? To find out, Rex and a small team of volunteers created ID-ah!, which allows anyone in the company to submit an idea and then have the employees vote on it. (It's similar to salesforce.com's IdeaExchange, which we described in chapter 9.)

In the year and a half that ID-ah! has been in place, employees have submitted more than a thousand ideas and shared more than three thousand comments. Fifteen thousand employees (out of forty thousand Bell Canada employees) have visited the site and six thousand have voted. Obviously, not all thousand ideas are worth pursuing—but that's what the voting is for. As a result of ID-ah!, over a six-month period in 2007, twenty-seven of the top ideas have been "harvested" for review and twelve have been implemented.<sup>6</sup>

But this is just the beginning of the cultural change that ID-ah! ushered in at Bell Canada.

Top management, led by Eugene Roman, group president, systems and technology, and Mary Anne Elliott, SVP of human resources, championed ID-ah! not just to generate ideas but to change employee attitudes. As Rex recalled, “We wanted each person to be personally invested in Bell, to feel a sense of accountability. And we saw ID-ah! as one of the key ways we could do this.”

It was rough initially. According to Rex, “ID-ah! got the attention of executives pretty quickly because they were concerned—after all, people could post anything that they wanted to. What if someone posted something false or slanderous?” To get comfortable with letting go of that control, executives became intimately involved early on, carefully reviewing ideas that were submitted in the beta release. It was only after several months of testing with more and more employees that executives felt comfortable rolling it out to all employees.

The success of ID-ah! as a driver of cultural change at Bell Canada stems from the commitment to make it available to all employees and, even more important, from the commitment from senior management to review the top ideas. That’s why it’s working. With ID-ah! in place, employees no longer felt that they couldn’t make a difference. Instead, they felt empowered by the groundswell. This was Rex’s dream and vision—that the sense of company ownership and responsibility would permeate throughout the organization.

Rob Koplowitz, Forrester’s workplace collaboration analyst, draws an important lesson from this story: that companies should deploy social technologies internally only when organizational change is both desirable and possible. “Don’t bring collaboration tools inside if your company’s not ready for it,” Rob says. But clearly, Bell Canada was very ready—and the management team accomplished its objective with its internal idea exchange.

### **strategies for nurturing the internal groundswell**

As the Bell Canada case study shows, the internal groundswell is all about creating new ways for people to connect and work together, and to that end, it’s about relationships, not technology. Here’s what you need to nurture the groundswell power of your employees: promote a

listening culture from the top down, ease and encourage participation with incentives, and find and empower the rebels in your organization.

internal groundswells work only when management is listening

Internal social applications demand a high level of trust because employees have more at stake when they participate—after all, their jobs and livelihoods are on the line. Unlike external social networks, the participants can't be anonymous. They need to know that management will listen to their openly contributed opinions, rather than punishing dissenters.

This works only when the culture permits it. Clark Kokich from Avenue A/Razorfish and the managers at Bell Canada understood their role and got involved early in the process. They led not with just the allocation of money and resources but with their own personal involvement. When Avenue A/Razorfish employees saw Clark regularly incorporating material from internal blogs and wikis into his own communications, they knew that they had the ear of their CEO.

This is crucial—without management's active participation, your efforts will fail. For example, we recall one puzzled professional services company that approached us with a conundrum. It had deployed blogs, wikis, and social networking tools internally, specifically targeting newly hired college grads who all said they were very familiar with these tools. Yet several months into the rollout, there was hardly any participation. Why not? Because the company had deployed the technologies with little management sponsorship or involvement. While managers were not using the tools themselves, they expected the people at the bottom of the corporate ladder—those who were still trying to figure out what it means to communicate professionally in an organization—to stick their necks out into the unformed corporate groundswell. As you can expect, no newly minted college grad picked up the flag to lead the internal charge.

There is no substitute for management involvement. The fact that a VP references an employee blog post in the course of everyday business discussions speaks louder and truer than any mandates or exhortations to use the technologies. Within a company groundswell thinking does not come naturally. Count on contributing significant executive time and sponsorship to nurture it, support it, and market it.

plan to ramp up in stages and ease people's participation

Having the right culture in place and an engaged management team is a good start, but it's not enough, especially if a key goal is to foster better communication and collaboration. Externally, as long as applications can attract thousands of participants, the mass of nonparticipating Inactives rarely gets in the way. Inside a company, however, Inactives are like the control rods in a nuclear reactor—they dampen the participation and keep the idea generation from heating up.

The critical level of participation varies based on your application. If only half of Organic's employees were actively managing their profiles and portfolios, for example, then Organism would be useless. Contrast this with Blue Shirt Nation, where 10 percent participation was enough to create a vibrant self-supporting community. Best Buy could survive with lots of employees missing because its application was mostly about listening. But Organic was targeting a groundswell of collaboration, which only works when nearly all the collaborators are present.

What strategies can you use to goose participation? Here's one that won't work: coercion.

One company we worked with was hoping to get close to 100 percent participation in its social collaboration technologies. As with the company's previous deployments of knowledge management and customer relationship management tools, executives mandated participation. An executive or manager would refuse to read files delivered via email and instead insist that they be loaded into the corporate wiki for him to retrieve and review. But the wiki was difficult to use, required a separate authentication sign-on, and had little structure. Forcing people to use nearly unusable tools doesn't work so well, and as a result, the company had a very difficult time getting employees to buy into the social strategy.

Contrast this with Avenue A/Razorfish's approach. It launched its wiki and encouraged, but did not require, participation. Each office had a "wikivangelist" whose job was to explain and encourage participation. One by one, teams decided to connect with the wiki for projects, found it useful, and became believers. Word began to spread, especially since the teams on the wiki were more productive. The early teams, with help



from IT, helped improve the design so that as later teams got on board, they found the wiki easier to use.

This staged approach is far more likely to succeed than strong-arming people. As Avenue A/Razorfish's David Deal explains, "People need to *want* to use the wiki." If your early participants aren't finding your social application valuable or usable, you'd better fix it first, rather than force it on the rest of the organization.

One way to encourage participation is to create easy "on-ramps." One law firm knew that its lawyers would resist using RSS, so it set up RSS folders within Outlook rather than make them use a separate RSS aggregation application. If it's important for everyone to participate, then you'll have to make some accommodations for people who would otherwise be Inactives.

Note that the technologies that are most effective at generating participation within the enterprise differ from the external customer-oriented efforts. For example, a blog is an effective tool for talking, but it doesn't help teams much. Instead, teams need support and collaboration tools like wikis, which allow them to stay up to date on a project, to share competitive market intelligence, and to collect and vote on promising ideas.

Once teams are more productive, you'll gain the participation of even those legendary corporate curmudgeons—you know, the guy who until last year insisted that all his emails be printed out by his assistant for him to review.

find and encourage the rebels

Because groundswell thinking is hard, it's important to find people like Intel's Josh Bancroft and Best Buy's Steve Bendt and Gary Goelling. You probably already know who these people are within your organization—they have been pestering you for the past year to do something, anything. Rather than think about the things that can go wrong, think about the opportunity cost—namely, the lost opportunity of creating a groundswell of enthusiastic employees like Ashley Hemsath.

To do this, companies need to be ready to fail often, fail quickly, and most important, fail cheaply. When Procter & Gamble launched its internal blogging program, the system was built over a weekend and housed



on a server underneath someone's desk, just like Best Buy's Blue Shirt Nation. Bell Canada's ID-ah! was built entirely with volunteers. Almost every example of internal groundswell initiatives began as skunk works.

As a senior manager, your job is to direct this energy productively. Help your rebels with political and technical resources. Help them figure out where in the organization change can happen most quickly—and where it will be resisted. Help them try things, pick them up when they fall down, dust them off, and help them learn from mistakes. And most important, use your management experience to see, when success begins, *what it is* that is succeeding, and duplicate *that*.

On the other hand, managers should stem the inherent corporate impulse to put in place processes, controls, and guidelines for everything. Instead, set some ground rules in advance. Just as companies have phone, email, and more recently, blogging policies, some basic rules of engagement are a good place to start. We've seen guidelines range from "slandorous name-calling will not be tolerated" to technical specs detailing which areas of corporate information or servers are off limits. You may have to adjust the ground rules over time as your experience with the groundswell increases, but once your rebels know how big of a box they have to play in, they won't have to go looking for approval each time they want to try something new.

## **culture and relationships trump technologies**

In this chapter you've seen how social networks can help spark employee communication, how wikis can stoke collaboration, and how idea exchanges can harness innovation.

No matter what you're after, in the internal groundswell, the secret to thriving is culture. This is not about technology implementation but about managing and changing the way organizations work, a change that needs the blessing—or, even better, the active participation—of top echelons of management. It's nearly impossible to force social technologies on organizations from the top down, because by their definition, these technologies require the participation of your employees. You can't force them to adopt groundswell thinking, anymore than you can convince reluctant managers to deploy social technologies with

your customers. But it sure helps if the social technologies have an executive or two behind them.

We'd all like to work in companies filled with Ashley Hemsaths. To get there, start on your internal groundswell applications now.

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You've come to the end of our strategy advice. What's left? A look into the future and some advice on how you, personally, should prepare yourself to live in the groundswell. All that's in chapter 12.

## notes

Much of the information in this book comes from direct in-person, telephone, and email interviews by the authors with the people and representatives of the companies described in the book. Facts and quotes that do not have a note come from these personal interviews.

In these notes, when citing a long Web address, we typically use an equivalent address of the form `groundswell.forrester.com/site $x$ - $y$` . We created these site references for the convenience of the reader. Enter the Web address into your browser and you will be redirected to the appropriate site online.

Please note that as in all cases with Web addresses, people sometimes change or remove content that we have cited. Web content cited was visible at the time the book was written.

Except where otherwise noted, the consumer statistics cited in this book come from these consumer surveys:

- U.S. data comes from Forrester's North American Social Technographics Online Survey, Q2 2007, an online survey with a sample of 10,010 adults in the United States.
- U.S. youth data comes from Forrester's North American Technographics Retail And Marketing Online Youth Survey, Q4 2007, an online survey of people ages twelve to eighteen with a sample of 5,359 people in the United States.
- European data comes from Forrester's European Technographics Benchmark Survey, Q2 2007, a mail survey with a sample of 24,808 adults.
- Asian data comes from Forrester's Asia Pacific Technographics Benchmark Survey, Q1 2007, a mail, online, and in-person survey with a sample of 6,530 adults.

Because of the differences in survey methodology and survey timing, comparisons across surveys must be made with caution.

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## **chapter eleven**

1. *How would you feel if one of your employees wrote something like this?:* This quote is from Ashley Hemsath's profile on blueshirtnation.com. Blue Shirt Nation is available only to Best Buy employees. We gratefully acknowledge the permission of Best Buy to allow us to see and quote from this site.

2. *Clark Kokich sat down at his computer and wrote this blog post:* This quote is from Clark Kokich on Avenue A/Razorfish's intranet. The intranet is available only to company employees. We gratefully acknowledge the permission of Avenue A/Razorfish to quote from this site.

3. *Over 90 percent of the employees have logged in, uploading twenty-nine hundred files and contributing to sixty-five hundred pages:* These statistics come from Avenue A/Razorfish's submission to the 2007 Forrester Groundswell Awards. The company and its wiki won the award in the managing category.

4. *Microsoft announced that it was acquiring aQuantive, Avenue A/Razorfish's parent company:* See the May 23, 2007, Forrester Report "Microsoft Buys aQuantive: The Future Of Avenue A/Razorfish Is Unclear" by Harley Manning, available at [groundswell.forrester.com/site11-4](http://groundswell.forrester.com/site11-4).

5. *Readers responded with skepticism, including comments like "It will never happen" or "It will take 2-3 years":* For more on the details of the creation of Intelpedia, see "'Wikimaniacs' debate corporate acceptance of wikis" by Phil Hochmuth, *InfoWorld*, August 9, 2006, visible at [groundswell.forrester.com/site11-5](http://groundswell.forrester.com/site11-5).

6. *twenty-seven of the top ideas have been "harvested" for review and twelve have been implemented:* These statistics come from an interview with Rex Lee. For detailed background on ID-ah!, see "Collaboration only blooms with employee cultural shift" by Paul Weinberg, *ConnectIT*, October 10, 2007, available at [groundswell.forrester.com/site11-6](http://groundswell.forrester.com/site11-6).

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