Social Collaboration Maturity

Benchmark Report 2021

OrangeTrail knowman

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Social Collaboration Maturity Scan shows an organisation how mature the use of its social communication and collaboration technology is, be it Microsoft Teams, Yammer, Workplace by Facebook, or any other. The higher the maturity level, the more value created by the activities on the platforms.

This year, 39 organisations from 16 countries completed the scan. Together they represent over half a million employees.

- Data shows that 93% of organisations perceive the platform as extremely valuable, very valuable, or valuable (in 2020 it was 76%). 7% think it is a nice thing to have and no organisation thinks it is a waste of resources.
- The number one goal organisations cite for the use of social technology is 'improving collaboration across functional and regional divides': 79% of organisations name this as a goal. In 2020 knowledge sharing was the biggest goal.
- Organisations' most common objective for the next 12 months is to take more advantage of other functionalities their platforms have to offer.
- In the last year, collaboration-focused platforms like Teams, Zoom, Miro, or Mural saw the largest increase in usage.

79% of organisations want social technology to improve collaboration across functional and regional divides

More leaders active on the social platforms help with employees' engagement

LEADERS

- The effect on the pandemic has been that 64% of organisations indicate an increase in leadership activity on the platform.
- On average, 53% of leaders have a presence on the platform.
- Mature usage is much lower: 18% of leaders use the platform to create dialogue around important topics; 8% have a structured approach for doing so.
- Organisations with more leaders active on the social platform report significantly less negative impact on employees' engagement and connection across teams during the pandemic lockdowns.
- Getting more leaders active on the platform within the next 12 months is an objective for 59% of the organisations.

EMPLOYEES

- A vast majority of employees – 85% - uses the platform to consume information and get a sense of what is happening in the organisation.
- Contributing knowledge, ideas, and experience to posts from leaders is done by 35% of employees.
- Giving employees click training for the technology is twice as popular as teaching employees to innovate the way they work taking advantage of the technology.
- Using the technology as the main place to get work done is done by 44% of employees and 45% have made team agreements on usage.
- The pandemic pushed employees' usage of these technologies in 66% of organisations.

TEAMS

- There has been a significant increase in the average percentage of teams using social collaboration platforms: from 46% in 2020 to 65% in 2021.
- Optimising the way they work, maximising the impact of their work, and benefiting more from each person's knowledge and experience are activities reported by 26% of organisations.
- Only 9% of teams are exploiting the full potential of social collaboration technology.
- Social technology is used by 22% teams to share what they are working on; only 18% of teams use it to discuss past projects.
- When it comes to team work, 84% of organisations indicate a usage increase during the course of the pandemic.

COMMUNITIES

- In each organisation, an average of 54% of communities do not use social technology to connect, share knowledge, and learn together.
- Only 18% of communities use the platform in a structured way to build their practices and achieve higher standards.
- The percentage of communities using social technology has remained the same, but they are using the platforms more heavily.

84% of organisations say that teams are using the platform more than they used to before the pandemic

31% of communication departments measure the success of the platform by the value of comments to the business

SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

- Human Resources, Information Technology, and Learning / Training remain the support functions that most embrace the platform as an instrument to deliver their services and communicate with the organisation.
- The overall maturity stage of support functions has decreased in the last year.
- Only 25% of support functions use the platform to communicate with and serve their internal clients.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

- Using social technology to broadcast information is a practice in 90% of the organisations. Only 1 in 7 do so in a structured and planned manner.
- All the organisations that indicate having high levels of engagement with their content tailor their content to the platform.
- Looking at the value of the comments gives a better impression of the benefit to the organisation than only counting views and likes. Data indicates that 31% of communication departments measure the success of the platform by the value of comments to the business.
- Organising engagement activities according to a plan that reinforces organisational culture and keeps employees engaged with business goals is done by internal communication teams in 31% of organisations.
- Compared to 2020, more organisations now use the platform as their primary channel to communicate with their audience. Employee engagement with content when social technology is the primary channel is much higher than when it is used to complement other channels.

INNOVATION

- There has been a 11% decrease in communication about innovation this year.
- Sharing news about innovation and collecting random ideas is done by 86% of the organisations.
- Supporting parts of the innovation process is done by 76% of organisations. However, these are often ad hoc and isolated events.
- Structurally supporting all stages of the innovation process is done by a mere 14% of organisations.
- Platforms are less popular to support the middle stages of innovation - conceptualisation and prototyping.

THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19

- The vast majority of organisations report an increase in usage of social technology as a result of the COVID-19 lockdowns.
- About half of the organisations report a decrease in employee engagement due to the remote working situation.
- Organisations with higher levels of maturity have noticed a less negative impact on employee engagement.

Effects of COVID-19: Organisations with higher levels of maturity have noticed a less negative impact on employee engagement

INNOVATION

- **86% of organisations use the platform to share news about innovation and collect random ideas**
- Only 14% use the platform to support all stages of the innovation process
- Platforms are less popular to support the middle stages of the innovation process

LEADERS

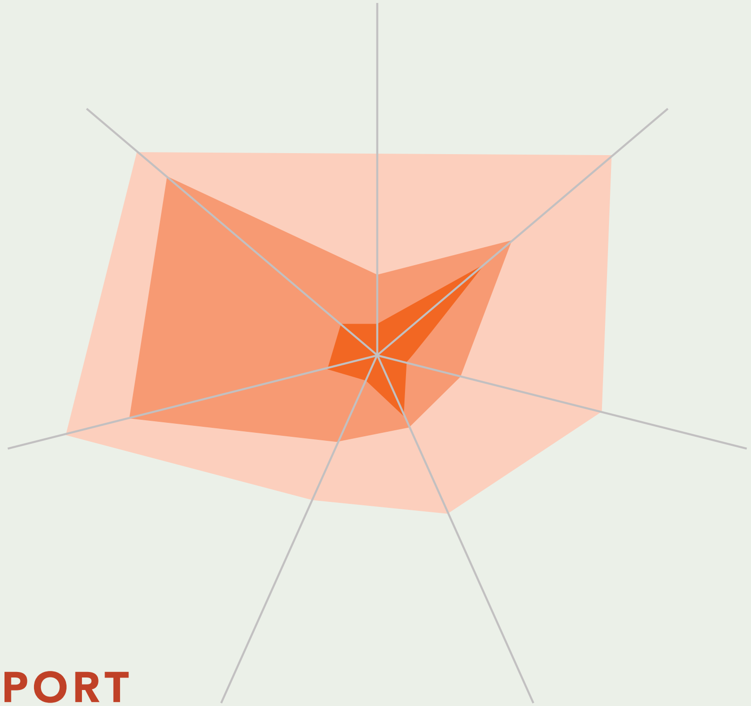
- **Having more leaders using the social platform helps with employees' engagement**
- On average, 53% of leaders are on the platform
- 64% of organisations have seen an increase in leadership activity on the platform since the beginning of the worlwide pandemic
- 59% of the organisations want to get more leaders active on the platform within the next 12 months

EMPLOYEES

- **66% of organisations see employees using the platform more since the forced lockdowns**
- 85% of employees use the platform to consume information and get a sense of what is happening
- 35% of employees contribute knowledge, ideas and experience to posts from leaders
- 45% have made team agreements for using the platform to get work done

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

- **Organisations with higher levels of maturity have noticed a less negative impact on employee engagement**
- Only 1 in 7 organisations use social technology in a structured and planned manner
- All the organisations that indicate having high levels of engagement with their content tailor their content to the platform
- 31% of communication departments measure the success of the platform by the value of comments to the business
- Employees' engagement with content is much higher when the platform is the primary communication channel



TEAMS

- **Only 9% of teams are exploiting the full potential of social collaboration technology**
- There has been a significant increase in the average percentage of teams using social collaboration platforms: from 46% in 2020 to 65% in 2021
- Social technology is used by 22% teams to share what they are working on; only 18% of teams use it to discuss past projects
- When it comes to team work, 84% of organisations indicate a usage increase during the pandemic

SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

- **The overall maturity stage of support functions has decreased in the last year**
- Only 25% of support functions use the platform to communicate with and serve their internal clients
- HR, IT and Learning / Training are the support functions which most embrace the platform to service the organisation

COMMUNITIES

- **46% of communities use social technology to connect, share knowledge, and learn together**
- Only 18% use it in a structured way to build their practices and achieve higher standards
- The percentage of communities using social technology was not affected by the COVID-19 lockdowns, but they are using the platforms more heavily

- Stage 1
- Stage 2
- Stage 3

THE SOCIAL COLLABORATION MATURITY MODEL

Over the last decade, OrangeTrail has noticed that organisations like to work with a stepped maturity-based model that helps them progress over time. After years of using this approach in its consulting, OrangeTrail decided to standardise the model and open it up to a wider audience.

The Social Collaboration Maturity Model measures the maturity of the activities organisations perform on their social communication and collaboration platforms. It has 7 focus areas: leaders, internal communications, teams, communities, innovation, support functions, and employees.

7 focus areas

Figure 1: The 7 focus areas in OrangeTrail's Social Collaboration Maturity Model

Social collaboration maturity model

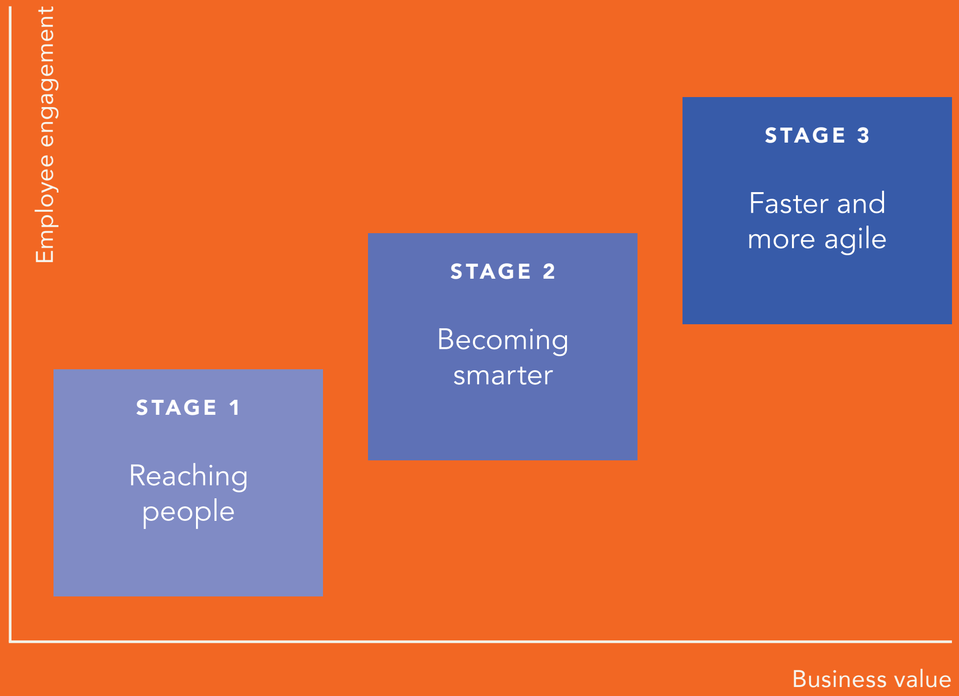


Figure 2: The 3 stages of OrangeTrail's Social Collaboration Maturity Model: reaching people, becoming smarter, faster and more agile

The Model describes 3 stages of maturity: reaching people, becoming smarter, faster and more agile. **Progressing through these stages leads to increasing employee engagement and business value.**

Organisations which do not progress past stage 1 are less likely to extract real business value from the platform. Over time, vibrancy on the platform drops, and, in many cases, technology takes the blame.

Would you like your own free personalised report?

Visit the website and click to perform the social collaboration maturity scan.

https://maturityscan.orangetrail.com

THE SOCIAL COLLABORATION MATURITY SCAN

In late 2019, OrangeTrail and Knowman launched the Social Collaboration Maturity Scan (SCMS): a survey that invites organisations to reflect on their use of social communication and collaboration platforms in the 7 focus areas of the Social Collaboration Maturity Model.

The first Social Collaboration Maturity Benchmark Report was published in June 2020, reflecting data gathered before the COVID-19 pandemic affected work practices around the world. In 2021, both organisations worked together to review the survey, adding **new questions to capture the impact of the widespread adoption of homeworking** imposed by the global health crisis.

The Scan was completed by 39 organisations from 16 countries. Together they represent over half a million employees.

The Scan was made available online on a **dedicated platform which allows participants to review their answers and access the personalised report** produced for their organisation. Answers were collected between 22 April and 23 June 2021.

Figure 3: A snapshot of the free personalised report made available to all organisations once they submit their answers to the self-assessment Scan which is available, also free, throughout the year

Recognising that in larger organisations different teams will be at distinct stages of maturity, the survey looks for the percentage of leaders, employees, teams, communities, and support functions demonstrating certain uses of the technology. The algorithm combines those answers to characterise each organisation's use of the platform and how it matches the 3 maturity stages. As a result, for each of those 5 focus areas, maturity is indicated by the percentage at each stage in a cumulative way: leaders at stage 2 are also at stage 1.

Internal Communications and Innovation were treated as functions or departments. They were analysed according to how they use the platform to achieve their purposes. Therefore, for those 2 focus areas, maturity is indicated by a number from 0 (the platform is not used) to 3.

Upon completing the survey, each participant had access to a free report. The report details the organisation's maturity stage in each of the 7 focus areas. It also offers personalised recommendations to help push the whole organisation towards more mature practices of platform use. The report remains available online so that it can be consulted anytime. It is intended that, in the future, organisations can use the Scan platform to track their progress over time and compare their maturity stages with the benchmark.

The Scan and the present Benchmark do not seek to check the boxes of scientific research. They were created to give organisations a tangible sense of where they are, as well as actionable suggestions to continue the journey towards reaping maximum benefits from their use of social communication and collaboration technology.

PARTICIPANTS

The Scan received responses from:

- 39 organisations - 29 private, 5 public, and 5 NGO
- from 16 countries in all 5 continents
- employing over half a million staff
- across several industries.

Figure 4: Industries represented in this year's benchmark

39 organisations from 16 countries performed the Scan

Figure 5: Participating organisations are based in Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Costa Rica, France, Germany, India, Namibia, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, UK, USA

FINDINGS
GOALS

Out of a list of 19 possible goals for launching a platform, the Scan invited participants to select their top 5. Although the question was about the objectives for launching the platform, the significant differences from last year's results suggest that participants answered the question based on the goals they currently have for the platform.

Last year, increasing knowledge sharing was clearly the most common goal (76% of organisations). This year, organisations are looking to enterprise social platforms to increase and improve collaboration across functional and regional divides (79%). Connecting people (63%) is the second largest goal. As expected, facilitating remote, mobile, and flexible work (53%) almost doubled from 29% last year. Increase knowledge sharing was identified as a key objective by 45% of the respondents.

INSIGHTS

The top three goals all relate to facilitating collaboration regardless of where employees work from, or when they work. The goals related to the outcomes of that facilitation process, like sharing knowledge, engagement, and improved agility, have paled in comparison.

We believe that a lot of the focus during the lockdown has been on enablement and less on application. If this proves to be true, in 2022 we should expect a returned focus on the results of using social technology for work.

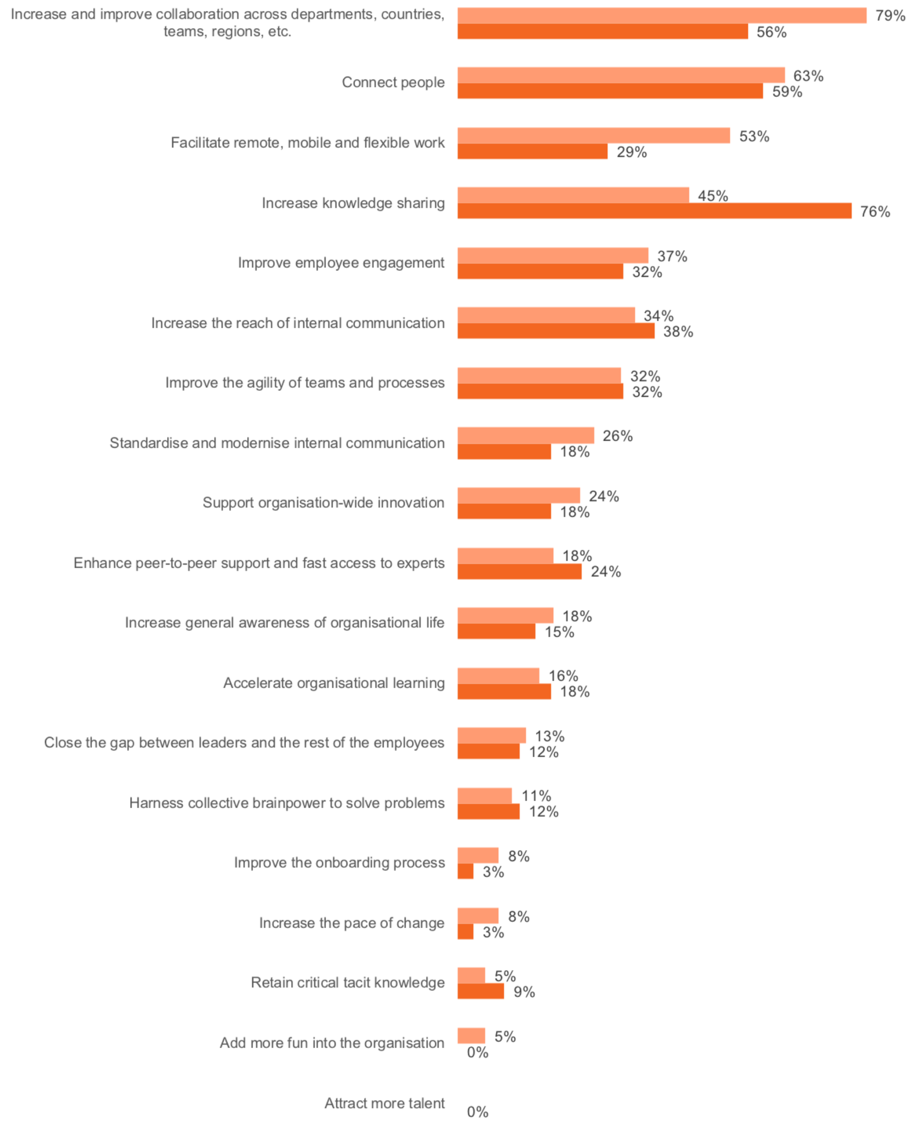


Figure 6: Organisations' goals for launching their social communication and collaboration platform

Two organisations (5%) see these platforms as a way of bringing more fun into the workplace. This is certainly a reflection of organisations' struggle to keep their staff motivated amid uncertainty and stress caused by health, work, and family pressures.

2020 - 2021	Order changes	% variation
Increase and improve collaboration across departments, countries, and continents	▲ 2	23%
Connect people	=	4%
Facilitate remote, mobile and flexible work	▲ 4	24%
Increase knowledge sharing	▼ 3	-31%
Improve employee engagement	=	5%
Increase the reach of internal communication	▼ 2	-4%
Improve the agility of teams and processes	▼ 2	0%
Standardise and modernise internal communication	▲ 1	8%
Support organisation-wide innovation	=	6%
Increase general awareness of organisational life	▲ 2	3%
Enhance peer-to-peer support and fast access to experts	▼ 2	-6%
Accelerate organisational learning	▼ 3	-2%
Close the gap between leaders and the rest of the employees	=	1%
Harness collective brainpower to solve problems	▼ 1	-1%
Increase the pace of change	▲ 1	5%
Improve the onboarding process	▲ 1	5%
Add more fun into the organisation	▲ 1	5%
Retain critical tacit knowledge	▼ 2	-4%
Attract more talent	▼ 1	0%

Figure 7: How organisations' goals for their social communication and collaboration platform varied since last year, before the pandemic

The biggest movers this year are:

- 'Increase knowledge sharing' dropped 31% to land at 45%
- 'Facilitate remote, mobile, and flexible work' went up from 29% to 53%
- 'Increase and improve collaboration across departments, countries, and continents' went up 23%.

TOOLS AND OWNERSHIP

The terms "platform" and "Enterprise Social Platform" are used to refer to the set of tools available in each organisation. We also refer to both in this report with the term 'technology'.

84% of the organisations rely on a mix of tools to cater to their communication and collaboration needs.

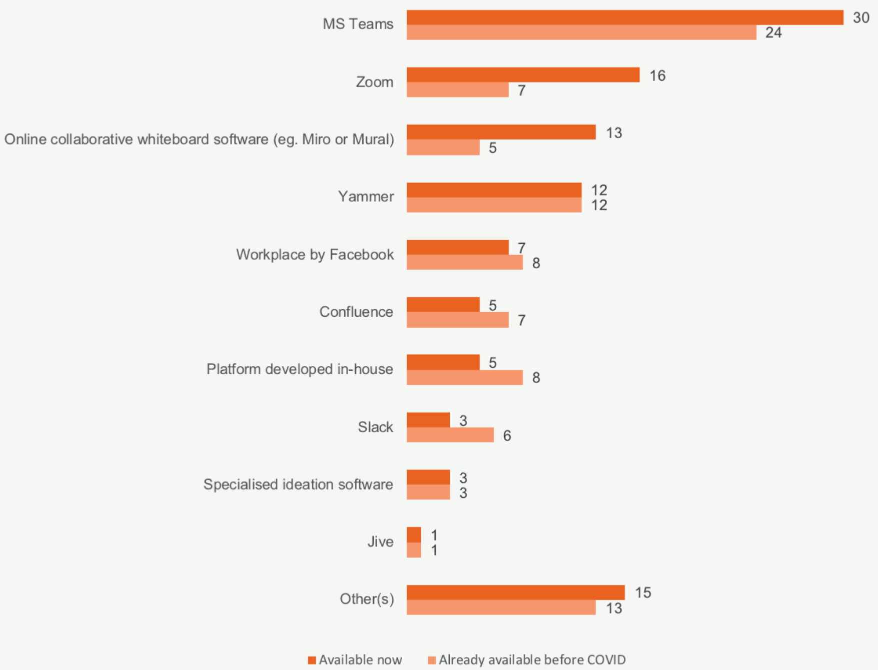


Figure 8: Platforms available at the participating organisations

Unsurprisingly, collaboration-focused platforms have seen the largest increase in uptake. Microsoft Teams for synchronous and asynchronous interactions, Zoom for audio and video calls, and online collaborative whiteboards like Miro or Mural, seem to have been the biggest winners.

In-house development and Slack seem to be losing ground.

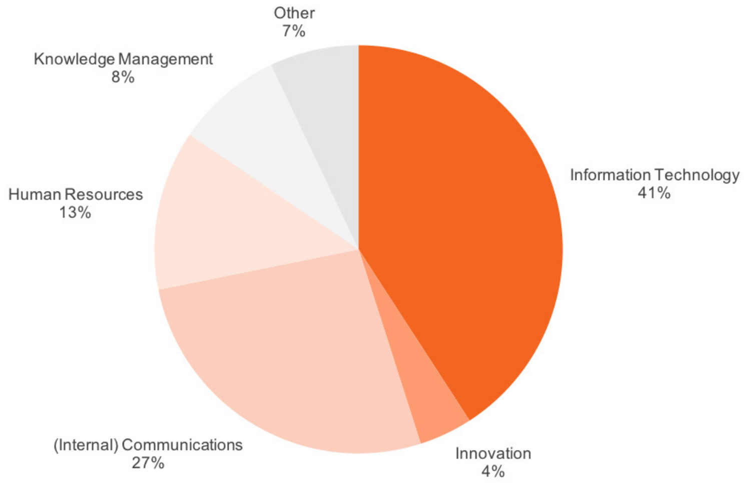


Figure 9: Owners or co-owners of their organisations' platform

Information Technology and Internal Communications remain the two organisational areas most frequently responsible for enterprise social technology. This divide is most likely explained by Communications having ownership of internal social networks and IT having ownership of M365 (MS Teams).

However, there seems to be a slight shift towards co-owned platforms.

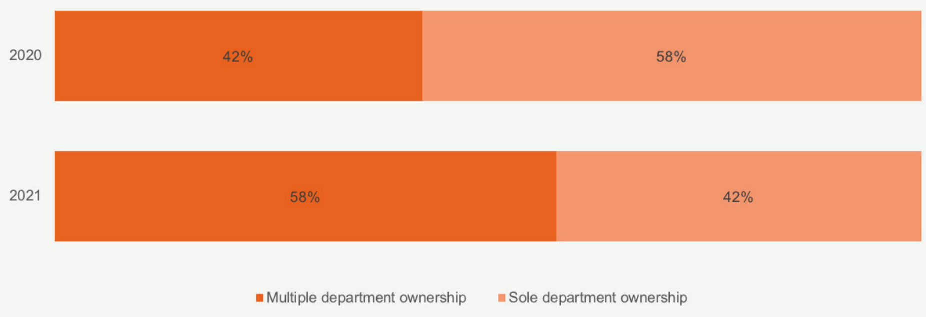


Figure 10: Percentage of single and co-owned platforms in 2020 and 2021

This is a positive trend. Considering the potential of enterprise social technology to positively impact the whole organisation in several ways, co-ownership brings in wider experience, vision, and commitment, de-risking the project and increasing the spread of adoption.

INSIGHTS

In our practice, we are also starting to see HR taking a lead on hybrid work, reviewing policies, reprioritising critical competencies, and rethinking both the physical and the digital workplaces. It will be interesting to see if this translates into future shifts: in platform ownership, in chosen technologies, in use cases, and in main goals.

Collaboration-focused platforms saw the largest increase in uptake

PERCEIVED VALUE OF THE PLATFORM

In 2020, 23% of organisations saw their technology as a waste of resources or simply as a nice thing to have; a similar percentage considered the technology extremely useful. After 12 months of working predominantly from home, organisations' perception of the technology has changed vastly. No organisation sees it as a waste of resources, only 7% consider the technology a nice-to-have, and 41% find it so extremely valuable that work would not be possible without it.

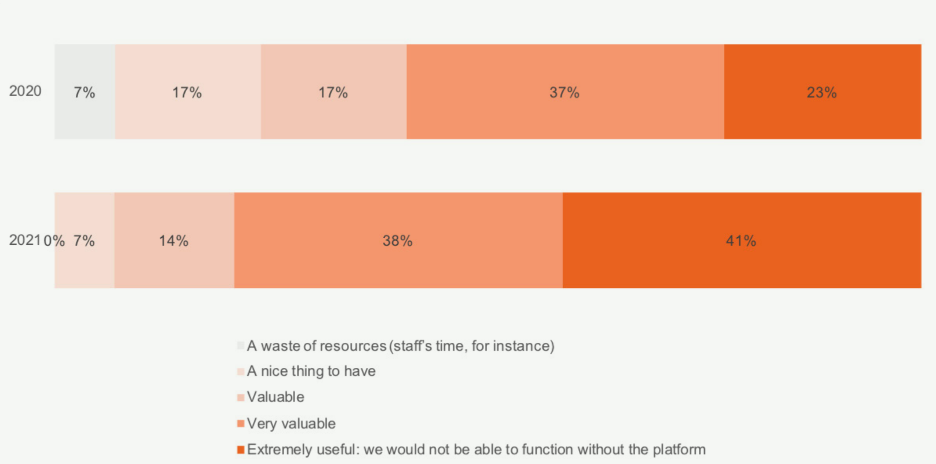


Figure 11: Participants' perception of platform value

When COVID-19 pushed workers, worldwide, to work from home or at least reduce the number of physical interactions, organisations had no alternative but to rely on social technology for communication, collaboration, and teamwork. Therefore, the huge increase in the perceived value of such technology does not come as a surprise.

MEASURING THE VALUE

A new question in this year's Scan evaluated which indicators are used to measure the value of the social platform. Quantitative indicators of volume – number of active users and groups - are the most frequent.

38% of organisations seek anecdotes of how the platform is impacting people and work. 38 is also the percentage of organisations looking for tangible outcomes enabled by the platform.

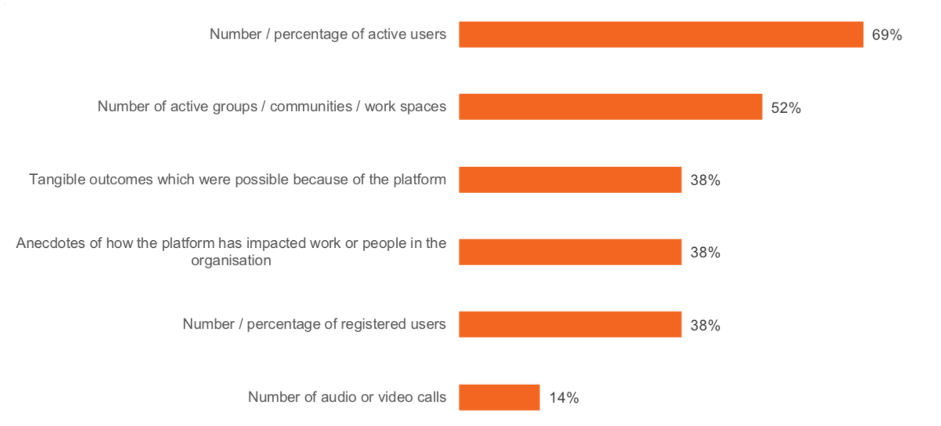


Figure 12: Indicators used to measure the platform's value

Organisations seem to be more actively looking at data to understand the way employees use and interact with social technology:

- there are only 2 organisations not monitoring any indicators
- organisations are much more aware of how employees are using the platform to seek and offer help (see chart 24 in Employees section) - the number of organisations that do not know how employees use the platform almost halved (30% to 16%) compared to last year.

OBJECTIVES FOR THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

When looking at their objectives for the next 12 months, the difference in priorities reinforces the image painted by other questions. Increasing the number of employees using the platform is no longer a big priority. Instead, organisations are now more focused on boosting the number of teams using the platform to support their work.

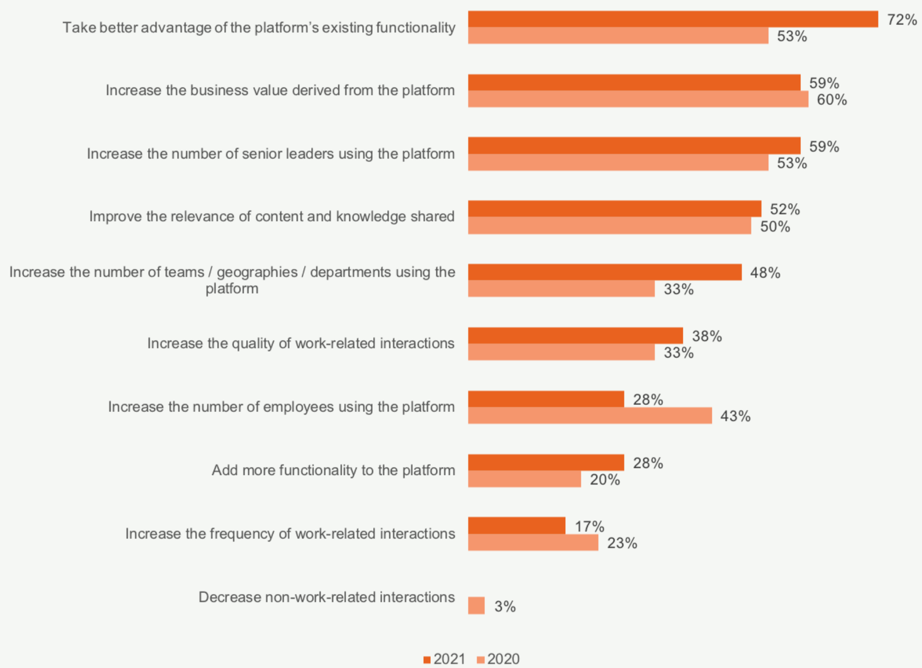


Figure 13: Organisations' objectives for next 12 months

The increased and intensive use in the last year has allowed organisations to realise how much functionality they are still not taking advantage of (72%, a 19% increase from last year), as well as their technology's limitations, making them keener to invest in adding new functionality (28%). Increasing the number of senior leaders using the technology is now also more important (59%). The goal pertaining to knowledge sharing remains in fourth position (52%).

Figure 14: The relationship between what organisations' perceive to be the value of the platform and the goals organisations have set for the next 12 months. Out of the organisations that consider the platform to be valuable, 100% want to take better advantage of its existing functionalities.

When relating the perceived value of the platform with the goals for the next 12 months, organisations that consider the platform most valuable are the ones still invested in taking better advantage of it.

Two striking findings:

- the main goal for those organisations which can no longer function without the platform is to increase the number of senior leaders using it
- out of the organisations which consider the platform a nice thing to have, none shows interest in increasing the quality of work-related interactions or in improving the relevance of content and shared knowledge.

INSIGHTS

"The main goal for those organisations which can no longer function without the platform is to increase the number of senior leaders using it". Does this deconstruct the idea that the success of internal communication and collaboration platforms depends on senior leaders' support and engagement? Does this not send a strong message to leaders that this will happen despite them? Shouldn't senior leaders be careful not to stay behind and miss out?

For those organisations which can no longer function without the platform the main goal is now to increase the number of senior leaders using it

LEADERS

Social technology can be a powerful leadership instrument. When used well it can activate employees around key company topics, increase focus, increase the pace of change, and help drive employee engagement. However, most leaders have not learned to engage employees digitally. Like last year, most of their activity focused on talking to them instead of conversing with them. Talking to people (broadcasting) makes them passive and reluctant to change. As a result, leaders do not feel this technology helps them achieve their goals.

Used well, social technology:

- helps leaders get employees more engaged with business objectives
- helps leaders clarify direction and priorities
- increases the focus and speed of the organisation
- broadens leaders' visibility over what employees are identifying, doing, discussing, worried about, as trends or opportunities, etc.
- raises leaders' profiles, extending their reach
- narrows the gap between leaders and employees.

OrangeTrail's Social Collaboration Maturity Model defines 3 stages of maturity for how leaders use social communication and collaboration technology. More advanced stages return more value to leaders, more employee engagement, and, therefore, more value for the organisation.

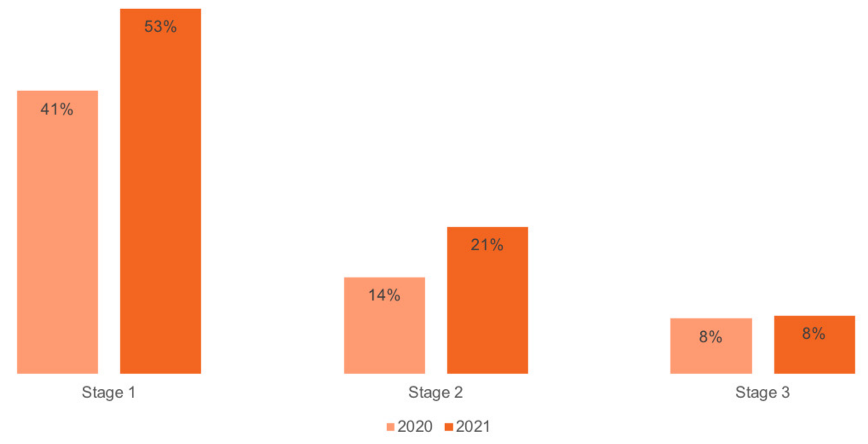


Figure 15: Average percentage of leaders at each of the 3 maturity stages across participating organisations

In the organisations that completed the Scan, an average of 53% of leaders are using the platform in the simplest way. This simultaneously implies that 47% of leaders do not use the platform at all.

The last 18 months have seen a significant increase (12%) in the number of leaders using social technologies.

There is also an increase in the percentage of leaders demonstrating stage 2 activities. Interestingly, the percentage of leaders at stage 3 remains the same. Less than 10% of leaders are using social platforms in a purposeful, structured, and strategic way.

INSIGHTS

As we will see further ahead in this report, more than 50% of organisations indicate that they are losing touch with employees. Social communication technology offers a very real opportunity to invert the situation. We expected more leaders to realise the power of social platforms to connect to employees.

Leaders still see communication at scale too much as a unidirectional activity. Every professional knows that this type of communication has limited effect.

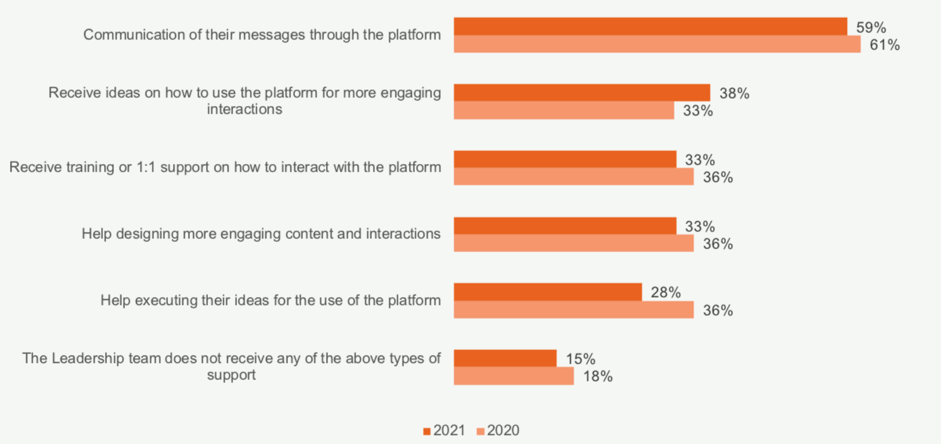


Figure 16: Type of support the Leadership team receives in regards to the platform

The 2021 figures are largely the same as last year's. Approximately a third of leaders receive training or 1:1 support on how to use the platform. Almost 60% of leaders have someone writing their messages for them.

This year, more leaders are receiving ideas on how to use the platform (38%) than those getting support executing them (28%) or with the design of more engaging content and interactions (33%).

This may represent leaders' increased autonomy and confidence in using the platform. It could also be a result of the less convenient context for ad hoc, on-the-fly support, more prone to happen when leaders are in the same physical space as their support staff.

THE EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC

When asked how the usage of social technology was influenced by the pandemic, 64% of organisations indicated that their leaders have increased the use of social communication platforms because of lockdowns.

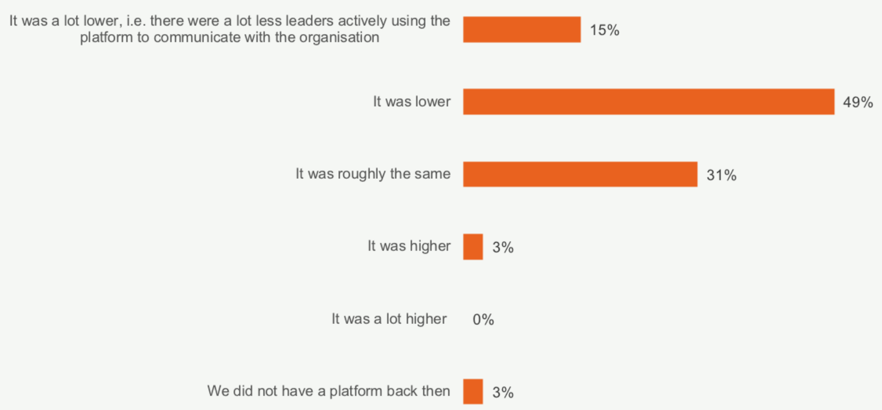


Figure 17: How leaders' usage of the platform changed since the beginning of the pandemic

STAGE 1 - REACHING PEOPLE

Leaders at this stage use social technologies to inform and make announcements. They:

- share links and write posts about things that interest them
- typically look back on past events in the form of announcements
- may take advantage of (live) video broadcasting (if platform permits)
- may go as far as giving insight into their personal lives
- look around the platform, and like and respond to content they see.

These activities are mostly done on an ad hoc basis. Although they may improve leaders' visibility and extend business awareness, they fall short in terms of helping leaders achieve their goals. They are only slightly more effective than the old methods as they are still based on the same principles as before – talking to employees.

Leaders have not embraced these platforms on a large scale: 53% of leaders actively use the platform to share information, teams' and personal achievements, and updates. These numbers are up by 12% from 2020. In our dealings with organisations, we see that this uptake is largely due to leaders having to turn to these platforms to ensure communication and collaborative work during lockdown periods.

INSIGHTS

Given the exceptional reach social communications platforms can have, we are surprised that not more leaders have resorted to using this technology during lockdown.

Many current leaders have reached their position without the use of these communications tools. We hear many senior leaders voice concerns over the use of social communication platforms – they see them as distractions or noise. Fully embracing this type of technology might require a new generation of leaders.

STAGE 2 - BECOMING SMARTER

Leaders in stage 2 understand the power of the network, involving employees in strategy definition, innovation, and problem-solving. The gain comes both from people's contributions to business problems or new ideas and from employees' increased engagement and alignment with the organisation's future.

Leaders at this middle stage scan the platform for activity in line with business priorities and valued behaviours. They then spotlight and endorse it to amplify and scale that type of activity. Smart leaders look for a community manager or ask their personal assistant to help with regularly scanning the platform for these exemplary behaviours.

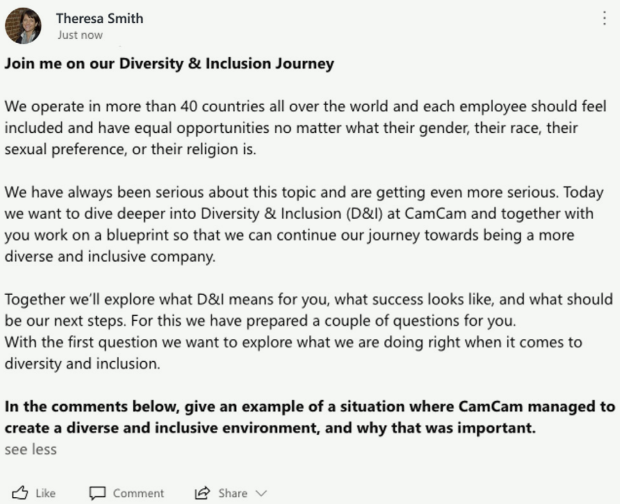


Figure 18: Example of a senior leader starting a dialogue on a key organisational topic. In doing so, this leader will not only get ideas to improve Diversity & Inclusion, but she will also simultaneously push a clear description of where the organisational culture is heading. These dialogues can take place in short 1-hour jams or over a few weeks for more complex topics.

On average, each organisation has 21% of leaders in Stage 2. This is up from 14% – a 50% increase. However, 21% also means that 79% of leaders have not yet discovered how to use social technology to engage and activate employees around key business topics, or how to use the power of the crowd to generate insights and solve problems.

INSIGHTS

79% of leaders (and their supporting communications departments) are sticking to the old habit of broadcasting to employees. Broadcasting plays a role in informing audiences, but that is all it does. Broadcasting and announcing models breed passivity and often lead to resistance because people do not feel part of the journey.

Social technology can boost engagement and connection. We know it, we see it, and many organisations are aware of it as they have indicated in the goals section of this report. This, in fact, is one of the main reasons why social platforms are purchased. Unfortunately, and as data also shows, they end up being used in the same way traditional intranets are used: as broadcasting tools. With the same type of use, we should also expect the same results we used to get on intranets and the same low engagement.

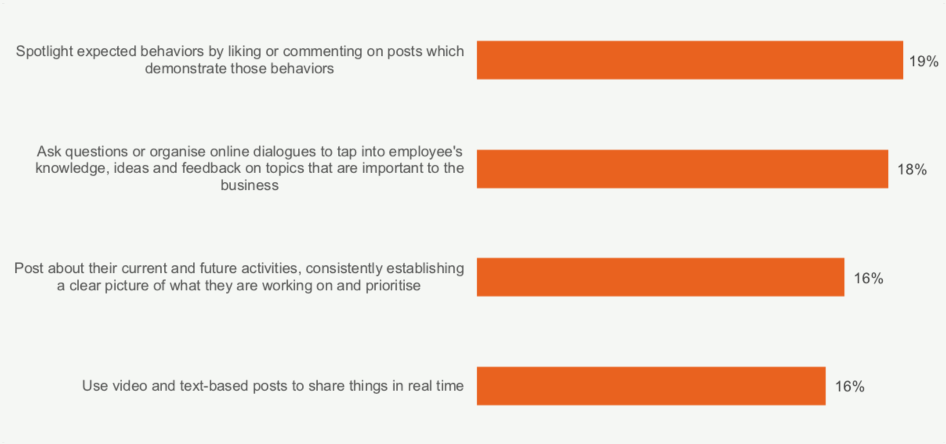


Figure 19: Percentage of leaders executing each of these actions on their organisation's platform

Only 19% of leaders are amplifying and endorsing good behaviors. If leaders are well supported in these activities by community managers that flag content worthy of amplification, the activity requires little investment and has significant impact on engagement.

The best way to engage employees with important topics is to involve them. This is barely happening – 82% of leaders are not using this powerful communication technique. On average, only 16% of leaders use the platform to talk about current and future activities, consistently establishing a clear link to the organisational goals and business priorities. Despite the undeniable value of the traditional 'reporting style' of most leaders, simply informing about past events does not engage employees with the future nor does it promote a proactive attitude.

Figure 20: Example of a leader (Quynh) encouraging desired behavior change example

Only 16% of leaders are reporting in real-time what they are doing or the decisions they are making.

Quynh Ngo
Jan 14

Next Wednesday I am meeting Neelie Kroes. She used to be part of the European Commission, is member of the board of Uber, and has been in the Forbes list of worlds' most powerful women several times. She is also a big influencer in the field of equality of women in the workforce.

As diversity and inclusion is one of my 3 priorities for this year, I'm going to pick her brain and see what we could do better. I will talk to her about setting better goals and collecting data to be able to measure success and I will ask her to tell me about some success cases and some names in the field that I can also talk to.

Are there any questions I could ask on your behalf? Put your questions in the comments and I'll try to squeeze some in.

Figure 21: Example of a leader Working Out Loud. In this example, a CEO who has Diversity & Inclusion as a top priority reports on an upcoming meeting with a former member of the European Commission and a great ambassador to women in the workforce.

Only 16% of leaders are reporting in real-time what they are doing or the decisions they are making

STAGE 3 - FASTER AND MORE AGILE

As leaders start to see the positive outcomes of asking smart questions and the resulting interactions, they start to strategically plan interventions on the platform that will help them achieve their goals.

The platform helps them:

- make people aware of a changing context to which the organisation will need to adjust
- turn that awareness into readiness to change
- communicate the change and have people understand the impact on them personally
- get people to help and inspire each other to make the change
- refocus the organisation on its core
- align the organisation around its key priorities.

These intervention plans consist of several big dialogues (JAMs) and more tactical interventions that align with a leader's meeting agenda. The result is a dialogue plan for several months that contains a small number of big interventions (JAMs), a larger number of smaller interventions around meetings or decisions, and a small number of more personal or ceremonial posts that show the leader's social side.

Just 8% of leaders have reached the third stage of maturity. They have a structured and strategic approach for sharing information about future activities, relating content to business KPIs, and mobilising employees' combined knowledge through a combination of posts, live streams, comments, and JAMs. They are the leaders who are maximising the social platform's value.

The participating organisation with the highest percentage of leaders at stage 3 has seen only 38% of its leaders reaching this maturity level.

INSIGHTS

The percentage of leaders exhibiting a high maturity, high-value use of social collaboration platforms remains the same as last year: low. Some leaders from a few organisations are doing very well but most leaders are just getting started or failing in their attempts.

Overall, leaders (and the supporting communications departments) have low levels of maturity using social communication and collaboration platforms. Most view the platform as another broadcasting channel instead of a way to close the gap and engage employees. This is in line with what we see in our consulting practice.

In last year's report, we predicted that the COVID-19 pandemic would make it necessary for leaders around the world to build digital leadership skills. Digital skills may have been strengthened, but data and current work with clients show us that digital leadership skills are still massively lacking.

EMPLOYEES

Social collaboration and communication technology is the biggest innovation for knowledge workers since the coining of the term "knowledge worker". Up to now, all innovation has had the form of efficiency. We are still typing on a (virtual) piece of paper on a typewriter that is far less noisy. We are still putting documents in filing cabinets but now we call them folders. We still run meetings all day, but now connected through cameras and screens. And, besides the fact that pigeons did not have Reply all, CC, or BCC, we are still putting messages in virtual envelopes.

Social collaboration and communication technology brings with it the real potential for innovating our work practices. Some examples are:

- instead of long update meetings, we can work out loud to keep each other in the loop
- instead of email bombs, we can run document revision processes in easy-to-read and less intrusive threaded conversations
- we narrate our work to ensure that others can see what is going on, it can be used at a later stage, and we capture our decision-making process
- we have the eyes, ears, and brains of thousands of colleagues at our disposal to gather information, get insights, or solve a problem - nobody is as smart as everybody.

The key skills we need to develop are asking questions, working in the narrative, and helping others progress.

In the journey to become digitally literate, we see employees go through the following maturity stages:

- use the platform to read and share news and success stories - often the content has a social nature
- discover the power of the collective brain but use it ad hoc
- make use of the collective brainpower in a structured way and contribute to the collective to help others succeed.

On average, 89% of each organisation's employees have accounts on the enterprise social platform. This is approximately 8% higher than last year. The average percentage of employees using social collaboration technology is 85%, 26% higher than last year. This increase surprises nobody with the surge of remote work due to the lockdowns.

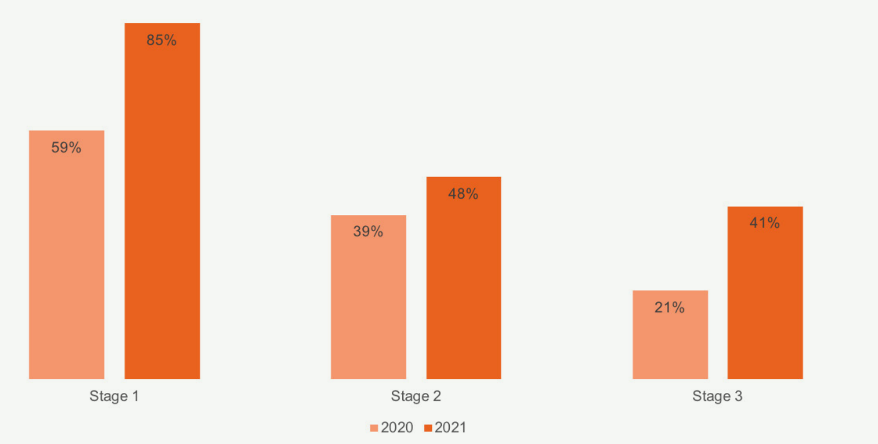


Figure 22: Average percentage of employees at each of the 3 maturity stages across participating organisations

The Scan revealed that 48% of employees use the platform to find information relevant to their work, get help from peers, or help peers with their work, and 41% do this in a structured manner. These figures represent a rise in stage 2 and 3 activities but they are still comparatively low. Despite that, the doubling of active employees at stage 3 is impressive.

STAGE 1 – REACHING PEOPLE

Employees at stage 1 consume broadcast content from internal communications, leadership, support functions, teams, or projects.

Employees' posts are often of a social or self-promotional nature. They distribute content from different sources and their reactions to other content frequently take the form of likes or comments such as "congratulations", "great work", etc.

This stage is like an online watercooler: it plays a very important role, but no business is sustainable with employees standing by the watercooler all day.

In 2020, there was an average of 59% of employees using the platform to get a sense of what is happening in the organisation, to promote themselves and their work, or for social interactions.

This basic level of activity has risen to an average of 85% in 2021. This higher percentage is most likely caused by so many people working predominantly from home during the pandemic lockdowns. It will be interesting to see if the number remains this high for 2022.

STAGE 2 – BECOMING SMARTER

At stage 2, employees use the platform to search for content to support their work and ask questions to colleagues or in topic-focused communities. They respond to questions from colleagues, contribute ideas for innovation, and participate in dialogues started by leadership.

Employees start to understand the power of the connected organisation. Employees Work In the Narrative (WIN) albeit still with a predominant focus on past events and finished deliverables. Usage is ad hoc and opportunistic.

In 2020, we saw that 39% of employees used the platforms for the above-mentioned activities. In 2021, this rose to 48%. This is a significant rise in employees using the technology for activities that help them or their colleagues get work done.

Below is an overview of the underlying activities and the average percentage of employees performing these activities on their organisation's platform.

Figure 23: Percentage of employees executing each of these actions on their organisation's platform

On average, 35% of employees contribute their knowledge, ideas, and experience to posts from leaders. With only 20% of the leaders engaging in dialogue (see Leaders section), this figure is not very surprising and will only rise when more leaders start using the platform to engage employees with topics that are important to the company.

An important measure of the platform's value is the number of employees using the platform to source information and knowledge to get their work done. A positive answer is indirect but convincing evidence that the platform is considered a valuable resource. In 2020, more than 50% of organisations indicated that less than a quarter of their employees were doing this. This year, an average of 59% of employees are going to the platform to find the information and knowledge they need to do their work. That is a significant increase.

When employees start using the platform to ask other employees questions and to answer other people's questions, the platform starts to unlock knowledge and experience from across the organisation. This is usually the most cited benefit of enterprise social networks. We see that a little over half of employees (52%) are asking questions on the platform and 45% are also helping colleagues. Last year, less than 25% of employees were active in this way.

Figure 24: How employees use the platform to answer questions and help colleagues outside their own teams and silos

However, employees are now using more private channels (chat) to seek and offer help.

INSIGHTS

Before COVID-19, many of the employees actively using the social collaboration platform were enthusiasts, the early adopters. These are people who want to experiment, embrace new opportunities, and are less afraid of erring. The pandemic pretty much imposed the use of these platforms on everyone in the organisation. Even those more afraid of making mistakes, less comfortable with showing their weaknesses, and more resistant to change. These are most likely the people using the private channels, which explains the increase in help being offered through private messages.

This year's Scan introduced a question asking organisations how they support employees in becoming better at remote collaboration. Figures support our hypothesis that new forms of collaboration are slow to be picked up because organisations are not giving enough attention to the impact they have on employees. Click training is twice as popular as sharing ideas and recommendations for improving work practices by taking advantage of the platform.

Many organisations are also focused on teaching employees how to run online meetings. As a result, Microsoft reports that the number of meetings has increased by 13% since lockdowns began. This is leading people to complain about too many (online) meetings and is certainly leading to the reinforcement of meetings as the most relevant work instrument.

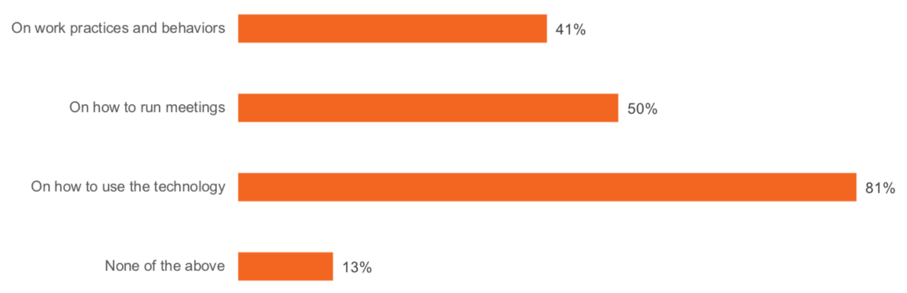


Figure 25: Training or recommendations organisations offer to support employees in becoming better at remote collaboration

STAGE 3 – FASTER AND MORE AGILE

Employees understand the platform's power to make their lives easier and improve the quality of their work. They are better connected to colleagues regardless of time and location. They have made agreements with their teams to work in the narrative and have adjusted their ways of working to structurally incorporate social collaboration in their daily routines.

The platform is THE place where work gets done.

In 2020, only 21% of employees were at stage 3. This number has almost doubled in 2021 to 41%. A lot more people are bringing structure to their online activities.

Almost half the employees have made team agreements and see the platform as THE place to get work done. The percentage seeing it as their responsibility to help others is lagging behind, most certainly influenced by cultural factors.

Figure 26: How employees see their organisation's platform and how it is used to support their work

THE EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC

66% of organisations believe that there are now more employees using the platform than there were before the COVID-19 pandemic.

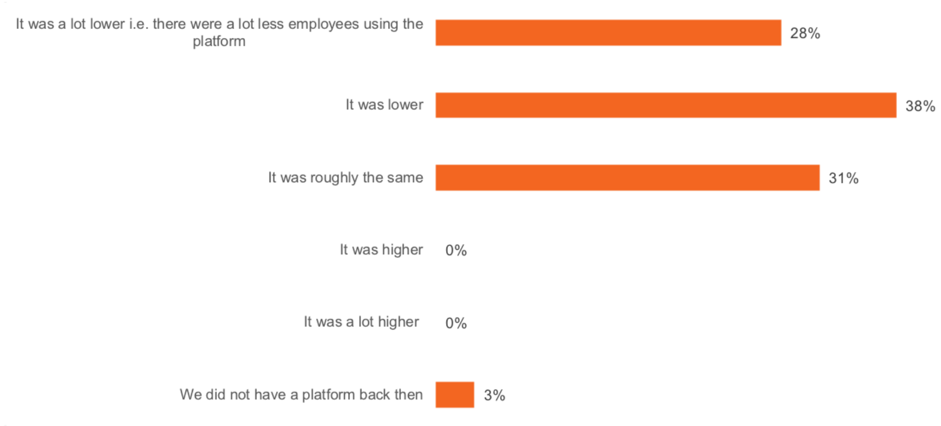


Figure 27: How employees' usage of the platform changed compared to the beginning of the pandemic

INSIGHTS

Usage numbers and the quality of usage have risen significantly over the past year - especially the structured use to get work done, which has doubled. This is impressive; however, it is still only at 41%.

We see a substantial rise in the number of people using the platform to find information to do their work. That is an indication that the perception of the quality of the content on these platforms is on the rise, otherwise, people would go elsewhere.

Data confirms our fears that not enough attention is being given to new ways of working when driving adoption. Only 41% of organisations guide people there, and these respondents were mostly our clients, suggesting that the market numbers are likely worse.

We see a surge towards using chat. Chat is starting to be seen as one of the most intrusive communication forms, worse than email. Therefore, the rise of chat usage is unlikely to help productivity.

52% of employees are using the platform to ask questions and 45% to help colleagues

TEAMS

Teams are the engine of the success of social technology, just as they are the engine of the organisation. If your teams are smart and fast, your organisation will be equally so.

The big promise of social networks is that they can be an important driver and catalyst for teams to become smarter, faster, and more agile.

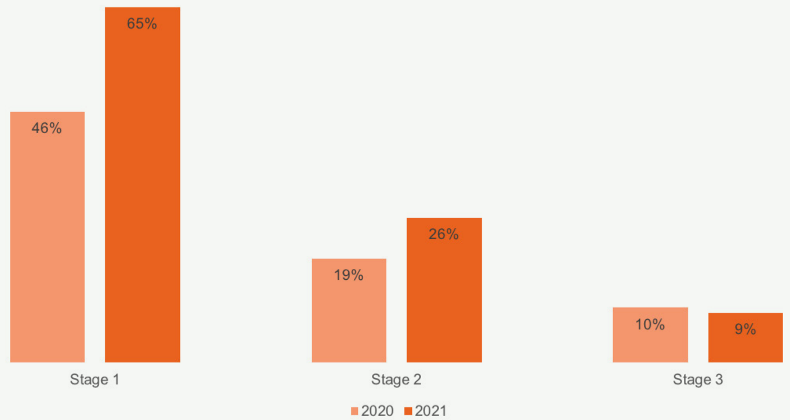


Figure 28: Average percentage of teams at each of the 3 maturity stages across participating organisations

There has been a significant increase in the average percentage of teams using social collaboration platforms: from 46% to 65%. The number of teams also using the platform for regular activities like document review cycles, voting, or simple brainstorming has increased in 2021. There is no growth in the percentage of teams really structuring their work to make best use of what social collaboration platforms have to offer.

STAGE 1 - REACHING PEOPLE

At the lowest maturity stage, teams use social networking technology for ad hoc communication. The platform gets used for chats and video calls, and for team members to share team news, successes, articles they come across, documents they created, and social content (e.g., pictures of team off-site gatherings).

At this stage, content on the team space is:

- mostly of a social nature
- often shared by a small number of individuals
- not very useful to get things done
- of little business value.

Teams that do not get past this stage often do not report significant benefits from using the platform, and eventually, stop using it or only use it for video conferences and chat messages.

On average, 65% of teams are using the platform for team-focused communication. This includes chats and video calls, document sharing, online get-togethers, etc.

STAGE 2 - BECOMING SMARTER

As teams become more mature using social technology, they turn to the platform for regular team activities like document review cycles, voting, or simple brainstorming. Many of these activities have a big impact when it comes to the reduction of emails, time spent in meetings, and using the teams' collective intelligence.

Teams also start connecting their document libraries to their social networks and have conversations around documents. The combination of documents and conversations helps teams build a record of their decision-making process, retain critical knowledge, and add to the collective memory of the organisation.

According to the Scan, 26% of teams use social collaboration technology to optimise the way they work, maximise the impact of their work, and benefit more from each person's knowledge and experience.

Figure 29: Percentage of teams executing each of these actions on their organisation's platform

The number of teams using the strengths of social collaboration platforms to tap into the knowledge of others and work together on documents remains low. Sharing what you are working on, also called Working Out Loud, boosts the alignment in teams and reduces the need for meetings and calls. This practice is present in only 22% of teams.

Asking questions outside your team helps to make sure you benefit from the knowledge of the whole organisation. It also contributes to reducing work duplication as people often find out about similar work underway or already completed in other parts of the organisation. Less than one-third of teams seek knowledge and experience from outside their own boundaries.

Discussing past projects is a powerful instrument for identifying knowledge gaps, process weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement. Doing this on a collaboration platform means that these findings remain on the platform as organisational memory. Only 18% of teams are in the habit of doing this.

Sharing finished work with colleagues is a nice way to engage all team members with the teams' broader achievements. It also contributes to the shared organisational memory and might help someone in the future. Approximately one-third of the teams share finished work.

Working collaboratively in documents can truly speed up the work of a team. This practice does not come naturally to many people as, for many years, people were used to working individually and only sharing finished work. Less than 30% of teams practice collaborative document editing.

STAGE 3 - FASTER AND MORE AGILE

At stage 3, teams are masters of working in the narrative (WIN). WIN means sharing updates and discussing ongoing work. Individual topics or deliverables are structured in threaded conversations which host status updates and interactions meant to help advance and improve the work being done. WIN embraces the fact that work - projects, document-creation, decisions, ideas - is a series of events that can be narrated to create a living organisational memory.

The main benefits of WIN are that it:

- creates the path towards zero email
- captures the context of why things happened
- captures knowledge applied and created in the process
- increases alignment
- speeds up problem-solving
- creates more opportunities for innovation and continuous improvement
- increases awareness of what others are working on.

Only 9% of teams are truly getting the benefits of social collaboration technology. They have structured and organised their work to make maximum use of the technology; they are working in the narrative (WIN), consistently sharing what they are working on, asking each other for help, and helping other team members.

THE EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC

Of the organisations that took part in this year's Scan, 84% indicate that, since the COVID-19 crisis started, more teams are using the social collaboration platform.

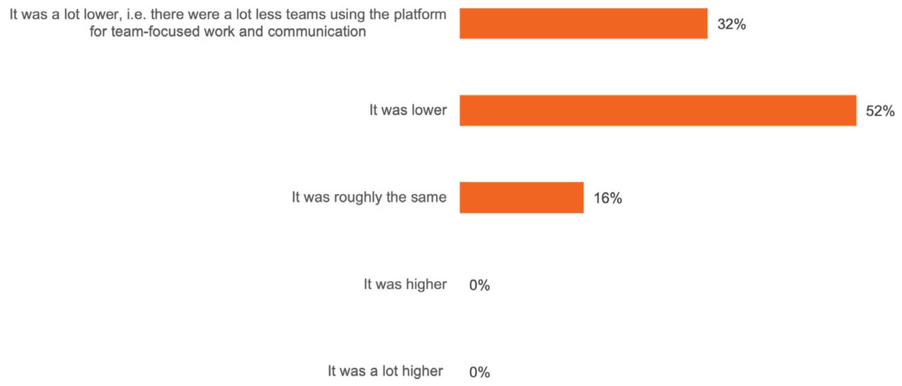


Figure 30: How teams' usage of the platform changed compared to the beginning of the pandemic

INSIGHTS

This data confirms what we see in the field: there has been a large uptake of collaborative software in the last year. However, teams mainly use the collaboration tools for (video) calls and chat. The type of use remains relatively basic, with only 26% of teams at stage 2 and 9% at stage 3.

This is more problematic than it might seem at first. Microsoft released data showing that, since the pandemic crisis started, people are spending 1 hour a day more in meetings and those meetings have 13.5% more people in them. There are also increasing complaints about the disruptive nature of chat. Recent reports state that the burnout rate is up significantly. We believe that, because organisations have not sufficiently adapted the way they work to the new hybrid and remote models, they have actually increased the frequency of the activities that people were already complaining about before lockdowns.

In addition, when these new ways of working have not been adjusted and adopted, the return to the office will likely see people reverting to their old habits. This will make the hybrid model increasingly difficult to implement, and hybrid or truly remote models will become models for the elite organisations.

Organisations and teams need to focus on adapting their ways of working to being more distributed and making better use of modern collaboration tools and methods.

Less than 30% of teams practice collaborative document editing

COMMUNITIES

In the context of this Scan, communities are groups of people who discuss a specific practice or theme with the purpose of improving the skills and general practice of the members. Communities are different from teams as they do not follow the formal organisational structure and they usually bring together people from different teams. Examples could be 'Design Thinking', 'Project Management', 'Administrative Support', 'Total Quality Management', 'Agile', etc.

This Scan shows that, in each organisation, an average of 54% of communities do not use social technology to connect, share knowledge, or learn together.

In the last year, there has been a minor increase in the number of communities using social technology to support their activity. The percentage of communities using the platform in more mature and valuable ways remained pretty much the same.

INSIGHTS

We expected that the impossibility of live events would lead to an increase in the use of communities to bring people together on certain topics. However, there is little growth in the uptake of communities.

This is a lost opportunity because, as data shows, organisations with more communities at stage 3 noticed a lot less negative impact on employees' connection with colleagues in other teams (see figure 52 in the final section).

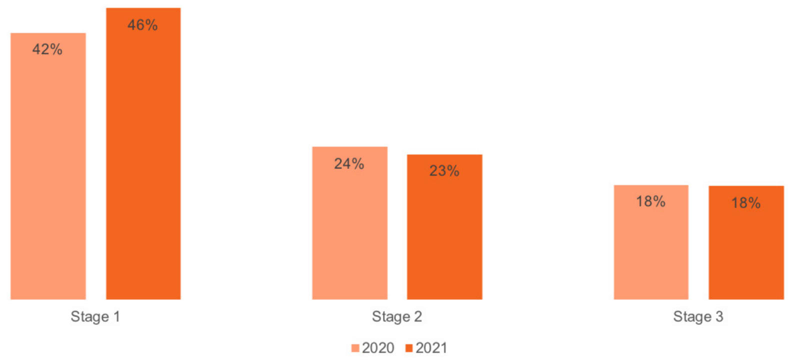


Figure 31: Average percentage of communities at each of the 3 maturity stages across participating organisations

STAGE 1- REACHING PEOPLE

At the lowest maturity stage, communities use the platform mostly to share articles and success stories among members. In the beginning, enthusiasm is high, but the relevance of the content to people's work diminishes fast and the communities become silent.

The Scan reveals that 46% of communities are at this stage.

STAGE 2 - BECOMING SMARTER

Members of stage 2 communities appreciate the audience. They post their own work (often referred to as best practice) and other forms of self-promotion. There is no problem with this type of content, as long as it stays proportional (no more than 20-25% of total content).

Members start to see the value of the community in getting work done and developing organisational knowledge. Members involve each other in solving problems by asking questions in the community. The extent of this type of interaction is a good indicator of the health of a community and the value it creates.

This year's data shows that less than a quarter of communities use the platform to support focused discussions that benefit the group as a whole.

Figure 32: Percentage of communities executing each of these actions on their organisation's platform

Less than 30% of communities engage in activities that clearly benefit the community members. This leaves a massive resource of knowledge and experience unused in the organisation and is a lost opportunity for the organisational memory.

Only 24% of communities have their members ask questions to tap into each other's knowledge and expertise. This may be a consequence of a dominant corporate culture that keeps reminding people they were hired not to ask questions but to know what they are doing. This can stop employees from asking questions.

INSIGHTS

Especially in the times of lockdowns, it would have been helpful if new employees could use communities to connect online with colleagues they were not able to meet in person. We have to conclude that most organisations have not invested in this onboarding instrument.

There could be another factor justifying the reduction of communities displaying these more mature practices. During the lockdown and the extended period of working from home, many reported longer work hours, an increased number of meetings, and long hours facing the screen. It could be that employees lacked the energy to invest and even benefit from the existing communities.

STAGE 3 - FASTER AND MORE AGILE

A mature community has an agreement on a topic agenda. Members have agreed to collaborate on specific pieces of knowledge over specific periods of time. For example, a community of production managers might co-design a good practice to keep inventory levels low, moving on to then reflect on ways of developing another aspect of the production process.

Having an agenda ensures there are clearly set priorities, there are valuable deliverables, and that the community stays focused.

Only 18% of communities use the platform in a structured way to serve the wider organisation.

THE EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC

62% of organisations indicate that, since the lockdowns began, there are more community interactions in the platform.

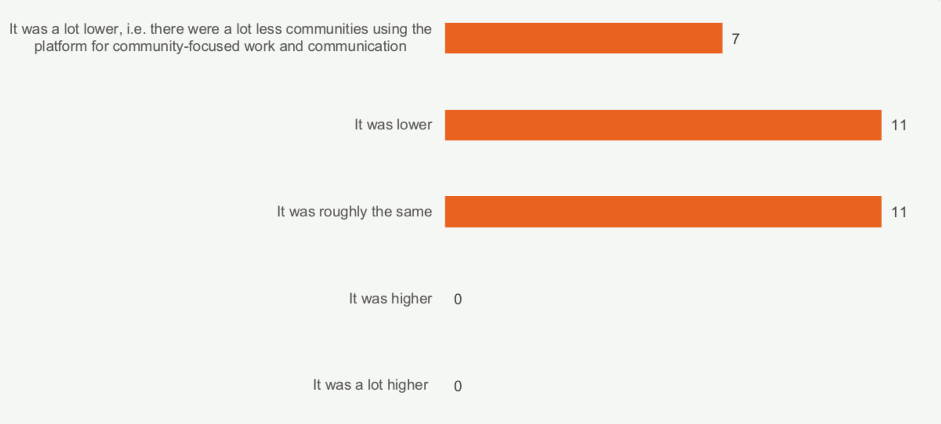


Figure 33: How communities' usage of the platform changed compared to the beginning of the pandemic

At first glance, these numbers seem to contradict the stability mentioned above. However, it is important to note that the numbers above represent the percentage of communities while this question looks at the volume of interactions.

This data suggests that the percentage of organisations using social technology for communities has remained the same, but organisations that are using them are doing so far more heavily.

Only 18% of communities use the platform in a structured way to serve the wider organisation

SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

In the context of this survey, support functions are those internal functions that support the business (e.g., Finance, Procurement, IT, HR, etc.). Respondents were asked not to consider Internal Communications and Innovation in this section of the questionnaire as those two areas have their own dedicated sections.

Human Resources, Information Technology, and Learning / Training remain the support functions that most embrace the platform as an instrument to deliver their services and communicate with the organisation.

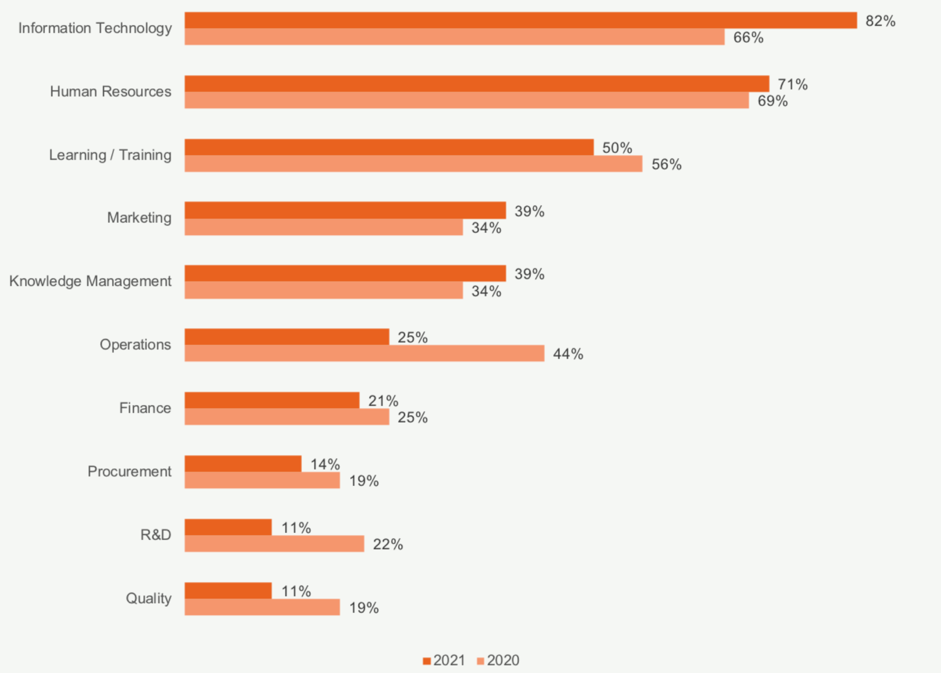


Figure 34: Percentage of organisations where each of the 10 listed supported functions is actively using the platform

There has been a substantial increase in the use of the platform by the Information Technology teams (from 66% in 2020 to 82% this year). Inversely, usage by R&D, Quality, and Operations dropped significantly.

The use of social technology by support functions is low: only 42% are using it and only through basic practices. In addition, the maturity of the support functions practices using the platform has even dropped in the last year.

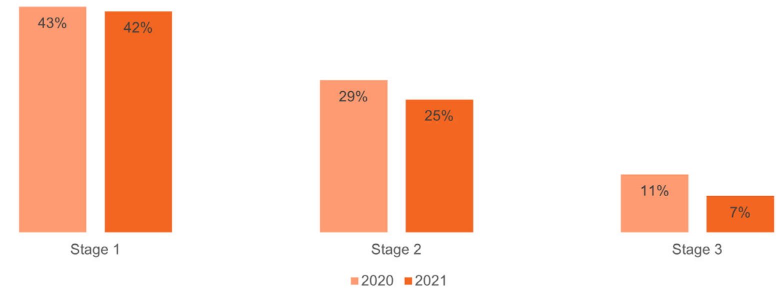


Figure 35: Average percentage of support functions at each of the 3 maturity stages across participating organisations

STAGE 1 – REACHING PEOPLE

Stage 1 characterises support functions using the platform as a vehicle to communicate about important information and initiatives to support the organisation and its employees.

On average, organisations have 42% of their support functions using the platform to share news about their work and accomplishments. This is mostly the same as last year.

STAGE 2 - BECOMING SMARTER

At stage 2, support functions explore the platform to interact with their internal clients, offering support, and fulfilling their needs and requests. The first contours of service channels take shape in the social platform.

Only 25% of support functions are at stage 2. This is less than last year.

STAGE 3 – FASTER AND MORE AGILE

At stage 3, support functions have a structured approach for using the platform to serve their internal clients. They have connected the platform to back-end systems (e.g., ticketing systems, HR systems) which add efficiency to the whole process. They may be using bots to automate certain internal client interactions.

Just 7% of support functions are at this stage. This represents a 37% drop from last year's 11%.

INSIGHTS

We believe that support functions have been so busy enabling employees to keep working during the lockdown that they did not invest much in new forms of service in the last year.

THE EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC

The forced "work from home" situation caused a significant increase in interaction between Support Functions and employees: 82% of respondents say the platforms are used for service more than before the pandemic.

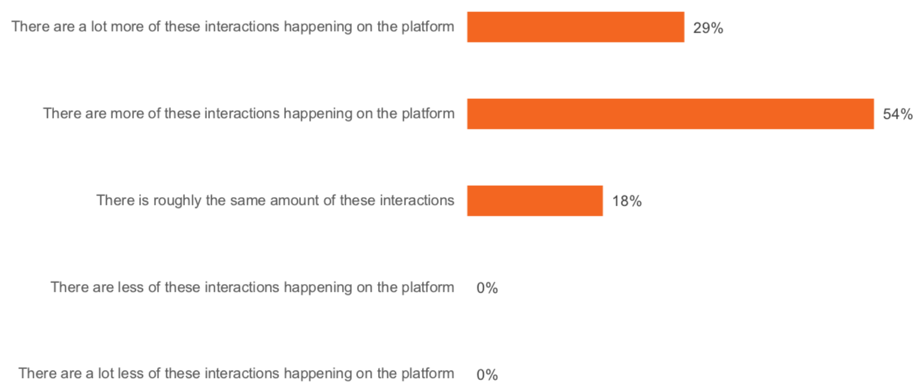


Figure 36: How support functions' usage of the platform changed compared to the beginning of the pandemic

As in the case of communities, this percentage seems to contradict the usage numbers which show a reduction. The numbers above represent the percentage of support functions while this question indicates the volume of interactions around those organisational areas.

INSIGHTS

This data suggests that the percentage of organisations using social technology for service has declined, but the organisations that are using them are doing so more heavily.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

The maturity stage for internal communications can vary between 0 and 3. In 2021 the average maturity stage for communication activities is 1.71, a 3% improvement from 1.66 in 2020.

1.71 **is the average maturity stage**

A large percentage of organisations (90%) use social technologies for basic activities that used to be done on the intranet - like broadcasting content. A smaller group (72%) are also using the platform in more sophisticated ways to drive engagement by asking questions to activate employees on certain topics. Just 16% of the organisations are using an advanced mix of activities like dialogues, Q&A sessions, and working out loud, in a structured way to drive awareness and engagement with key organisational topics.

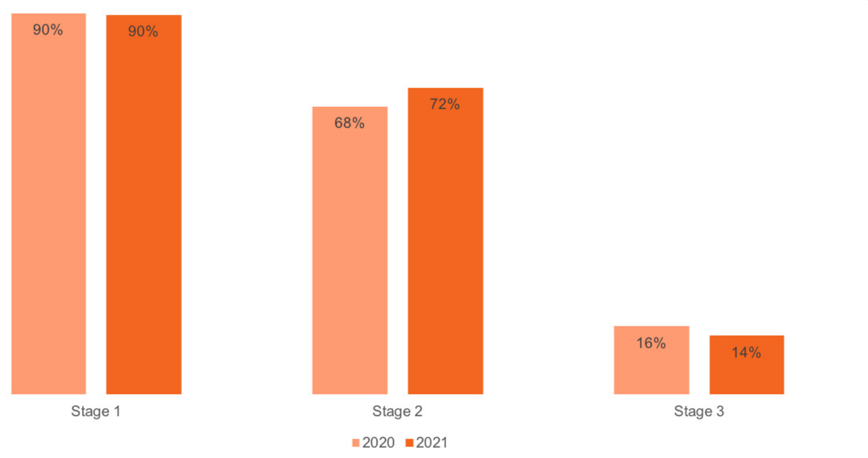


Figure 37: Percentage of organisations at each of the 3 maturity stages when it comes to using the platform to improve internal communications. An organisation which has reached stage 3 is also considered to have reached stages 1 and 2.

INSIGHTS

Many communication departments are the owners of internal social networks. They introduce them because of the promise of increased reach and employee engagement. However, the key distinguishing factor of social networks is that they allow for interactions between their members. This is the key to the reach and engaging effect they have.

Most communication professionals have been trained and gained experience in a world where broadcasting was the only way to communicate at scale. Their paradigm has been that their work was complete once a piece of content was published.

With social networks, the show starts once you post – people will start to interact with the post. Often the dialogue has much greater power than the piece of content that triggers it. It requires a new set of skills for communications professionals to plan for dialogue: what does the dialogue need to produce or accomplish and what should the trigger be?

The fact that communications departments still do not reach high levels of maturity with the platforms is likely the key reason for the general modest success of these platforms.

MEASURING SUCCESS

A communication department is meant to ensure that employees are aware of, understand, and stay committed to the key organisational narratives. Therefore, their indicators should relate to those narratives, and their success measured on that.

Almost 70% of organisations measure success by looking at the number of post views. Although there is nothing wrong with measuring activity, it is based on the traditional broadcasting mindset. It is only a measure of reach which neither provides a sense of engagement, nor of business value, and should never be looked at on its own.

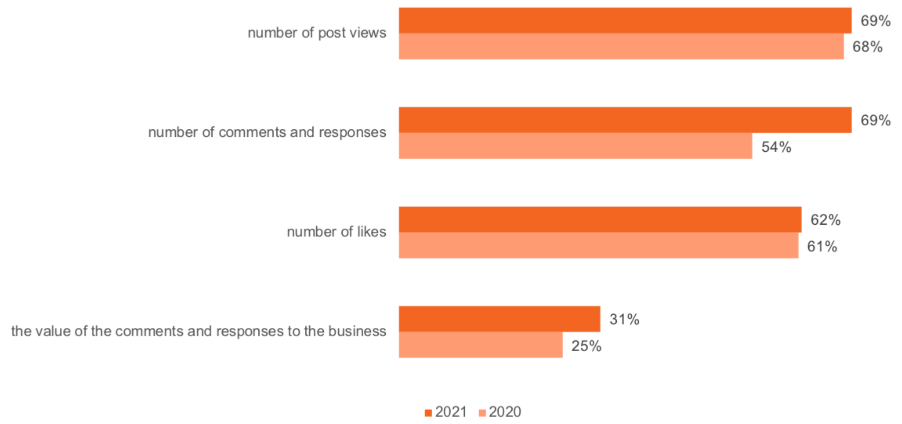


Figure 38: Percentage of organisations using each of these indicators to measure the success of the content created by internal communications for the platform

The number of likes (62%) and comments (69%) are the next most popular ways to measure success. These are better indicators of engagement with content, but they may be misleading because posts with the most likes are often 'social' in nature. Examples are job appointments (especially to senior positions) and celebratory posts.

The number of comments and responses as a metric of success increased from 54% last year. This is a positive sign and, considering that these metrics are not easy to track on some enterprise social platforms, it may indicate an increased investment in data analytics and evaluation tools.

POSITIONING OF THE PLATFORM

Most communication departments (52%) use the platform in parallel with other channels and some (31%) have chosen the platform as the primary communication channel.

There is no clear right or wrong between these two approaches. Organisations can successfully use other channels to increase reach and awareness, while primarily using the social platform to build understanding, engagement, and commitment.

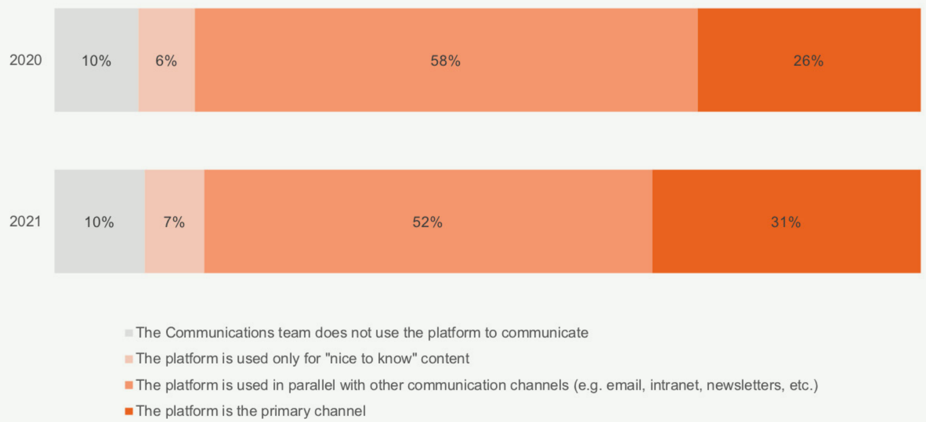


Figure 39: How the platform is used (or not used) by communications departments (% of organisations)

Responses to the Scan indicate that 7% of organisations only use the platform for 'nice to know' communication and 10% do not use the platform for communication at all. These organisations should be mindful of the platform losing relevance and dying over time. In fact, data shows that the percentage of employees interacting with the content created by internal communications is a lot higher if the platform is the primary communication channel.

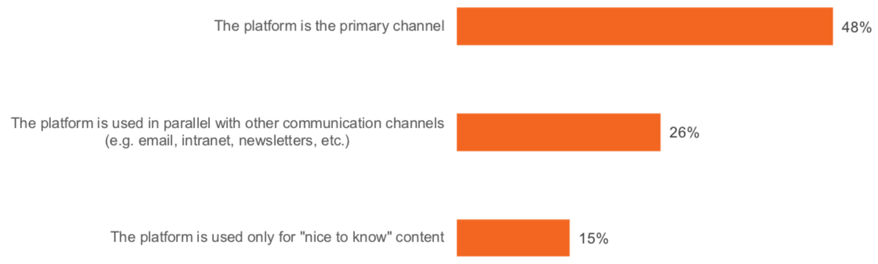


Figure 40: Relationship between how the communication departments use the platform and employees' engagement with the content. The bars indicate the average percentage of employees who engage with the content in each of the three cases.

STAGE 1 - REACHING PEOPLE

Communication departments in the first stage of maturity use the social platform to push content to people. Often, large groups are formed to receive that content that used to be broadcasted via newsletters, the old intranet, or all-company emails. Engagement is measured in number of views and likes.

There needs to be a healthy balance between broadcasting and more interactive forms of communicating. Every company should have activities at stage 1 but if communication departments do not move past this maturity stage, they will see reach and engagement levels drop over time.

When it comes to internal communications, an overwhelming 90% of organisations are performing activities characteristic of stage 1.

23% indicate that they use the same content formatting as used for other channels. Typical examples are long articles or PDF-based newsletters. This is a missed opportunity because, as data clearly shows, employees respond much better to more attractive and engaging content, like images, video, or live streaming.

In any case, in 2020, 36% were repurposing the same formats. It seems that organisations are starting to be more open to experiment and explore new formats.

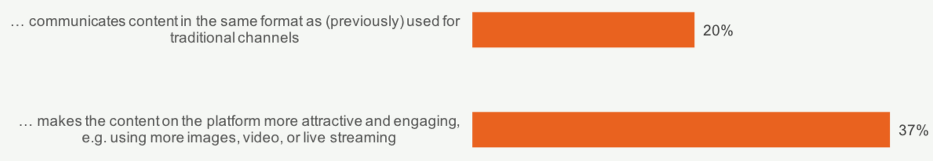


Figure 41: Relationship between the formats used by communication departments on the platform and employees' engagement with the content. The bars indicate the average percentage of employees who engage with the content in each of the two scenarios.

STAGE 2 - BECOMING SMARTER

In stage 2, communication departments start to make better use of the technology to transform their content and present a richer experience. Activating elements, like video or polling, are used to create more engagement.

The content starts getting more traction in the form of likes and responses. Responses generally take the form of compliments, people showing that they agree, or people sharing opinions. This traction often misses business value and too much of it can lead to 'social engagement fatigue' on the platform.

In 2020, 68% were at maturity stage 2. This year the percentage has gone up to 72%.

The Scan shows that 77% of organisations tailor the internal communications content to the platform. All the organisations that indicate having high levels of engagement with their content tailor their content to the platform.

On average, 33% of employees engage with the content. This is up from 25% in 2020 and is likely due to the increasing number of organisations adjusting the content to fit the platform.

Of the 65% of organisations which run dialogues on the platform, 19% do so purely to drive engagement with the content they create and not to support the business strategy or change programs. Of the organisations that run dialogues, 46% do so to drive organisational change and engage employees with key organisational topics.

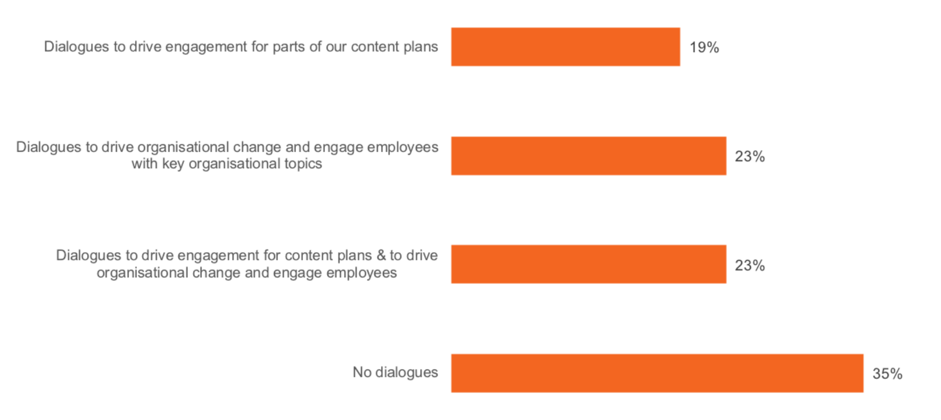


Figure 42: How internal communication departments use, or do not use, the platform to run online dialogues

The Scan reveals that 35% of organisations are not using dialogues as an instrument to engage employees. They are likely not getting any better results than they used to get with their old intranet.

This is a missed opportunity as it is clear that the percentage of employees engaging with the content more than doubles when organisations invest in running dialogues.

Figure 43: Relationship between the use of dialogues and employees' engagement with the content. The bars indicate the average percentage of employees who engage with the content in each of scenarios.

STAGE 3 - FASTER AND MORE AGILE

At this highest stage of maturity, communication departments understand the power of dialogue when compared to traditional content publishing. Although the need to publish content will always remain, communication departments will combine that type of activity with the facilitation of meaningful dialogues. Organisations at this stage of maturity see a fast, dramatic increase in employees' engagement with key topics.

In 2021, the number of organisations in the highest maturity level is lower (14%) than it was in 2020 (16%).

31% produce content and organise engagement activities according to a plan that reinforces organisational culture and keeps employees engaged with business goals.

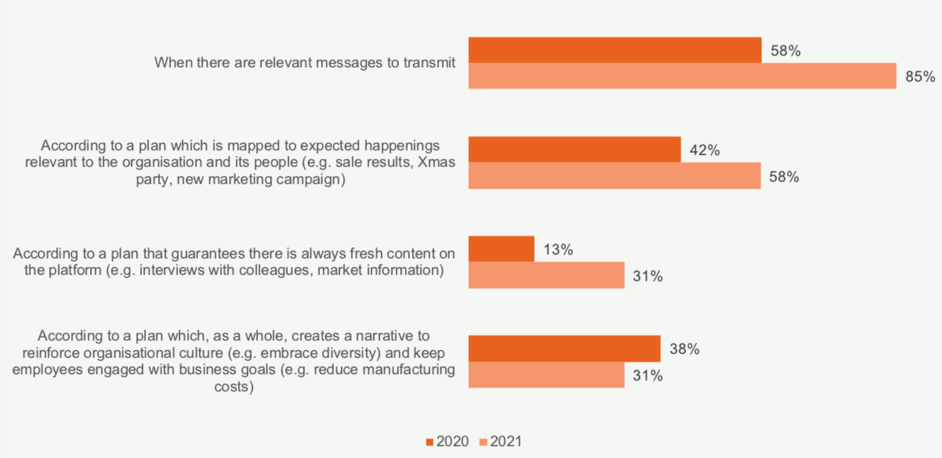


Figure 44: Internal communications approach to producing content and organising engagement activities on the platform

INSIGHTS

The past 18 months did not bring much progress to how communication departments use social communication technology. And yet we will see further ahead in this report that about 50% of the organisations have seen employee engagement drop. Have they been battling this with good old broadcasting approaches? They should have invested in high maturity activities as those have the most impact on restoring engagement.

With many organisations seriously looking at the hybrid work model, we hope communication departments will up their game, so engagement does not slip further down.

INNOVATION

Social communication and collaboration platforms have a significant potential to make organisations more innovative.

There is often a strong correlation between the innovativeness of an organisation and the maturity stages it reaches with regards to its use of social technology. The more innovative an organisation is, the better it understands the network effect and the wisdom of the crowd. Nobody is as smart as everybody!

Organisations that get the most value from platforms are the ones that have a structured manner to support the steps of their innovation process. They collect insights and ideas on specific topic areas (e.g., "What special types of coffee do you see your teenage kids consume?") and they involve employees in testing concepts or prototypes (e.g., a supermarket would have headquarter employees taste new fresh products to save costs on market research and to decrease time to market).

Note: Last year, we were surprised with the high percentage of organisations at Stage 3 of maturity in the use of the platform to support innovation (45%). This was far from the reality we were seeing when working with clients and conversing with professionals around the world. We got the sense that the survey questions for the innovation focus area were not sufficiently detailed to capture the activities and gradients which characterise stage 3. We reviewed the questions associated with Innovation: we reworded some, deleted others, and we added new ones. We feel that the results are more accurate but this change means that, when it comes to innovation, we cannot truthfully compare data from the 2020 and 2021 Scans.

1.86 is the average maturity stage

When compared to other focus areas, the use of the platform for innovation is high (86%). Furthermore, 76% of organisations use the platform for ad hoc activities supporting one or more of the innovation stages. Not many organisations (14%) are structurally using the platform for innovation.

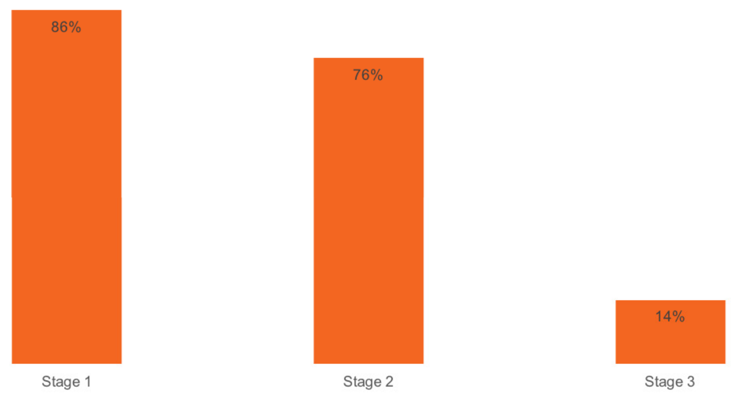


Figure 45: Percentage of organisations at each of the 3 maturity stages when it comes to using the platform to support innovation. An organisation which has reached stage 3 is also considered to have reached stages 1 and 2.

STAGE 1 - REACHING PEOPLE

Organisations where innovation is handled by a small group of people often use social platforms to communicate about innovation. Like in other low maturity areas, they share success cases and innovation news. The employees are not involved in the process and, therefore, stage 1 organisations are not using the platform to build a strong innovative culture.

We also see organisations use the platform to collect random ideas; just like the old days when there was a box in the cafeteria for employees to leave their ideas. On the face of it, these activities may look engaging. However, we see that the output of such activities is very poor and because not many ideas come to fruition and the process is not very transparent, these activities have an adverse effect on employee engagement. Hence, we qualify this activity as low maturity.

86% of respondents are at stage 1 in the innovation focus area. When it comes to communication about innovation, there has been a decrease since last year.

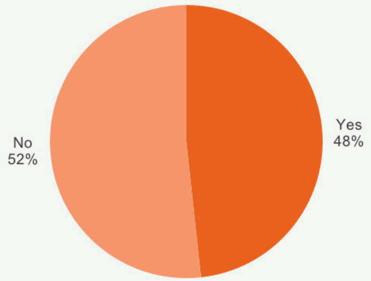


Figure 46: Percentage of organisations using the platform to collect random ideas in a bottom-up way - just like the idea box that used to hang or still hangs in the canteen

48% of organisations use social technologies to collect random employee ideas thus creating digital proxies to the traditional idea boxes.

INSIGHTS

There is a drop in usage for communication about innovation in 2021. We believe that this might be caused by the pandemic as many organisations were in survival mode, more than in innovation mode.

Many organisations do not use these platforms at all in their innovation process. That is interesting as it is well known that crowdsourcing is an immensely powerful instrument to make an organisation more innovative.

STAGE 2 - BECOMING SMARTER

A more mature usage understands and builds on the power of engaging employees in the innovation process. Organisations understand that employees are effective in giving input or feedback in several stages of the innovation cycle. In this phase of maturity, organisations access this collective wisdom in an ad hoc way.

Almost half of the organisations use platforms to get feedback on current products and for ideation on specific challenges. Platforms are less popular to support the middle stages of innovation - conceptualisation and prototyping.

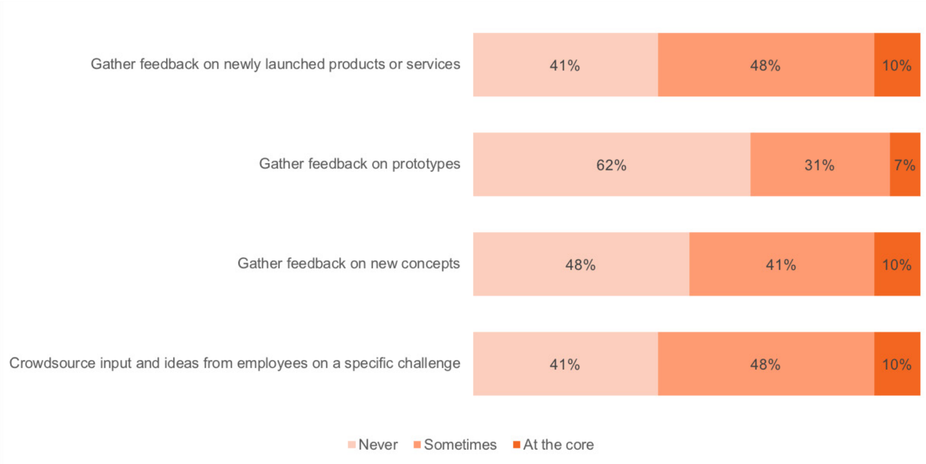


Figure 47: The role of the platform in supporting the stages of the innovation process. Only 7% of organisations have the platform at the core of how they gather feedback on prototypes.

STAGE 3 - FASTER AND MORE AGILE

The most mature innovation practices are very much aligned with the strategic leadership agenda. Innovation has a calendar to continuously collect insights around business objectives, challenges, and opportunities. Employees are at the core and engaged at all steps of the innovation funnel: ideation, concepting, prototyping, build, launch, and even evaluation.

Only 14% of organisations use the platform in a structural and structured way to support the innovation process.

INSIGHTS

Innovation is branded as a top priority in many organisations. Therefore, it is disappointing to see so few organisations in the higher maturity stages.

Weaving innovation-focused activities into the enterprise social platforms moves innovation towards the core of organisational life, contributing to reinforcing the importance of innovation and the key role of all employees in the process.

IMPACT OF COVID-19

It is noticeably clear that the lockdowns due to COVID-19 have caused an uptake of collaboration and communication technology across the board. The use of these platforms by teams and support functions increased in more than 80% of organisations. More than 60% of organisations are registering a higher volume of interactions to support communities, employees, and leaders.

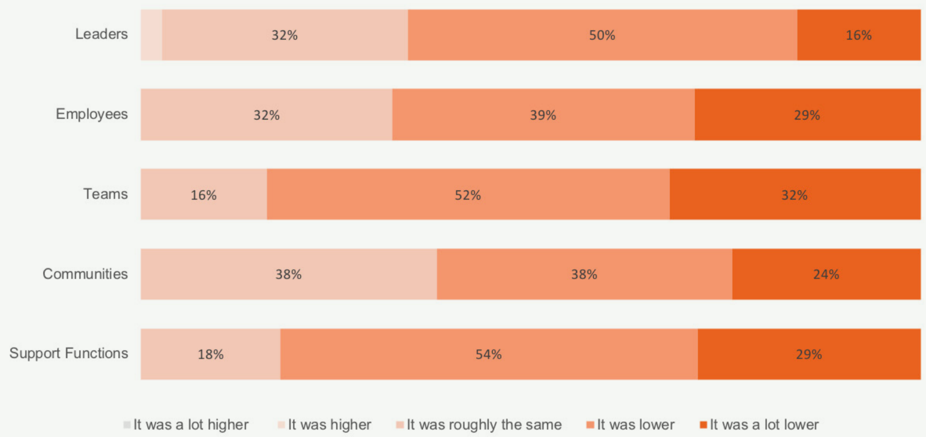


Figure 48: How the usage of the platform changed compared to the beginning of the pandemic by each of these 5 groups. Teams have seen the largest increase - 84% of organisations state that there are now a lot more team-driven interactions on the platform.

Half of the organisations report less connection of employees with the organisation; half see no difference.

Within the group of organisations that see deterioration, most use the platform to address the issue.

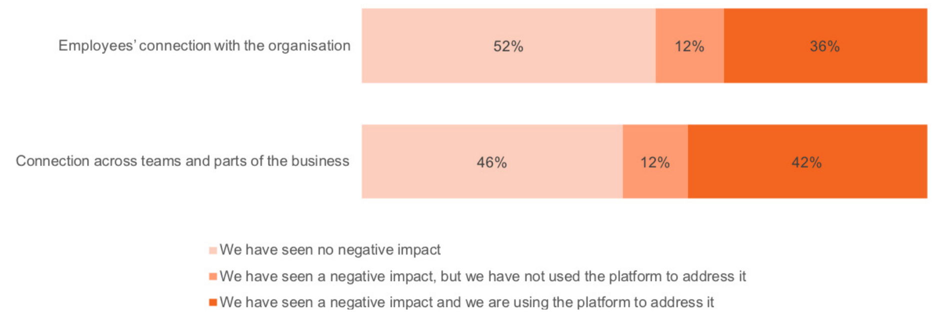


Figure 49: How connections were impacted after COVID-19 struck. 52% of organisations did not see a negative impact in employee's connection with the organisation; 54% did see a negative impact in connection across teams and parts of the business.

INSIGHTS

Are the organisations that report no difference aware of the level of engagement in their organisation? Not knowing might also lead to the answer that engagement has not suffered.

The evolution of results since last year's pre-pandemic benchmark report varied from one focus area to another. Except for employees who seemed to have made social technologies a lot more central to the way they work, stage 3 behaviours have hardly become more prevalent. In effect, there are now the same or fewer leaders, teams, communities, and support functions displaying stage 3 behaviours.

Data makes it extremely clear that the impact of working remotely was heavily related to the organisations' maturity when it comes to using social technologies.

In organisations that noticed a negative impact on employees' connection with the organisation, the average percentage of leaders on Stage 3 of maturity is 5%; in organisations that noticed no impact, that percentage is 14%. It is clear that organisations in which leaders embrace social platforms to reach out to their teams, keeping them informed and seeking out their inputs, have suffered significantly less during the lockdowns in terms of employees' engagement with the organisation.

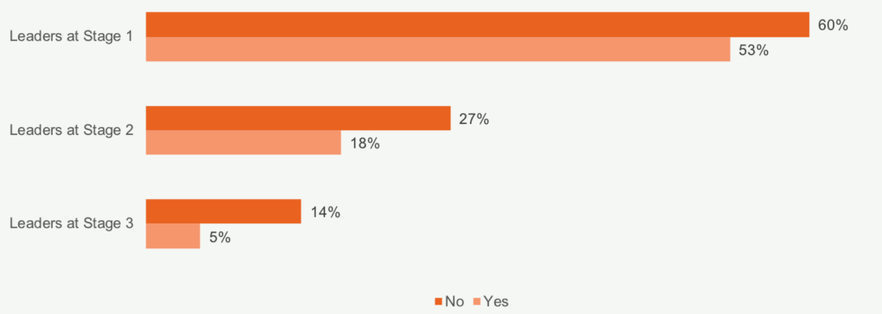


Figure 50: Relationship between the impact of the lockdowns on employees' connection with the organisation and the percentage of leaders at each stage of the maturity model. Organisations which have seen no negative impact on employees connection with the organisation have an average of 14% of leaders at stage 3; those which have been negatively impacted only have an average of 5% of leaders at the highest stage of maturity.

The same is true for employees' connections across teams. Higher maturity levels result in less loss of connection across teams.

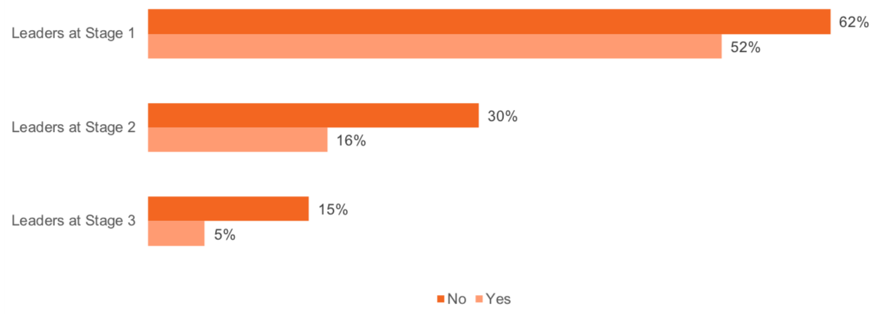


Figure 51: Relationship between the impact of the lockdowns on employees' connection across teams and the percentage of leaders at each stage of the maturity model. Organisations which have seen no negative impact on employees connections across teams and parts of the organisation have an average of 15% of leaders at stage 3; those which have been negatively impacted only have an average of 5% of leaders at the highest stage of maturity.

The impact of remote work on employees' engagement is also heavily dependent on employees, teams, and communities' use of the existing platforms.

Another area that has a profound effect on connecting people across the organisation is communities of practice. The communities are a place where people connect around topics that are of interest or importance to them. It is logical that higher levels of maturity within communities would also lead to higher levels of connection across teams.

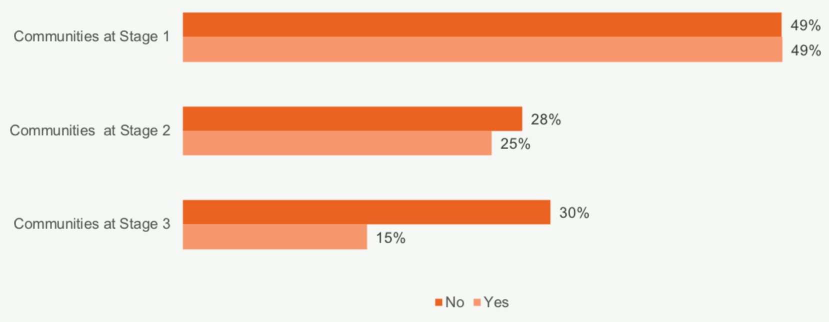


Figure 52: Relationship between the impact of the lockdowns on employees' connection across teams and the percentage of communities at each stage of the maturity model. Organisations which have seen no negative impact on employees connections across teams and parts of the organisation have an average of 30% of communities at stage 3; those which have been negatively impacted only have an average of 15% of communities at the highest stage of maturity.

Those organisations which did not observe a negative impact have an average of 30% of communities at stage 3 - this is double the percentage of communities on organisations that have been impacted.

Overall, data also shows that organisations that do not report loss of engagement with employees have higher maturity scores. This supports the maturity model's basic idea that more mature activities contribute to higher employee engagement.

Figure 53: Relationship between the impact of the lockdowns on employees' connection with the organisation and the stage of maturity of internal communications. Organisations which have seen no negative impact on employees connection with the organisation have their internal communications departments at an average 2.12 stage of maturity; the internal communications departments of those organisations which have been negatively impacted are at an average stage of 1.73 of maturity.

A FEW FINAL WORDS

As expected, basic usage of social collaboration and communication technology has gone up significantly due to the worldwide pandemic pushing office workers to work from home. However, we were not surprised to see that valuable usage has not risen accordingly across the board. In our practice we see most people using social technology only to chat and make video calls.

From our practice we now see organisations asking about ways to start working smarter as they realise that some of the changes imposed by the pandemic will become the norm. Distributed and hybrid work will become more prevalent parts of the way organisations work. It is key that organisations adjust their practices to optimise individuals, teams and overall performance.

For the next 12 months, 72% of organisations are aiming to take better advantage of the platform's functionality. This is a 19% increase from last year: evidence that organisations are now more open to embracing the possibilities offered by these digital platforms.

It is essential that activating and exploring new technical functionality is accompanied by the necessary digital skills and an openness to change current working habits.

Leaders and Communication departments remain in low stages of maturity. They still seem stuck in the broadcasting and command and control paradigms. Most of them have not discovered the immense power of inclusive communication and leadership. Go out and involve your employees more in the important organisational topics: ask them good, important questions; listen carefully to what they say; show how you have taken their input into consideration; and say "thank you".

ABOUT KNOWMAN

Knowman is a consultancy company specialised in designing and implementing strategies, plans and activities to improve collaboration, knowledge sharing and retention, and organisational learning.

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SOCIAL NOW

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ABOUT ORANGETRAIL

OrangeTrail helps organisations leverage technology to improve employee engagement, make the company smarter and faster, and to accelerate organisational learning.

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Give us your feedback

We would love to hear your thoughts about this Benchmark report. Give us your feedback and your organisation may be chosen for a free 1-hour webinar.

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