



## Is Middle Management Ready For Social Media?

Much discussion has been promoted by Lynda Gratton's recent HBR [article](#) entitled *The End of the Middle Manager*, which questioned the future of the middle management role in light of the implementation of new technology, the attitudes of Generation Y, the introduction of self-managed teams and the increasing complexity of today's enterprises.

The implementation of enterprise systems has substituted much of the monitoring and reporting role of middle managers, and attention has been given to developing the capability of managers to use the systems as an aid to performance management and decision-making. Organisations have used the implementation of enterprise systems to improve effectiveness and drive efficiency, often through headcount reduction. However, there is little evidence that the traditional middle management role has changed; they are still acting as a span breaker translating top-down direction into action plans, telling their people what and how to deliver, managing performance and then reporting results upwards.

Meanwhile Generation Y is entering the workplace and they bring a new set of attitudes and capabilities into the working environment. This generation are used to, and therefore expect, permanent connectivity and collaboration technology. They are networked, used to collaborating with peers, and sharing knowledge and information to solve problems in virtual teams that cross boundaries. When we employ them we get the benefit of their entire network, which they bring to work with them every day. Not introducing collaborative technologies into the work environment is only putting off the inevitable; banning or blocking them is denying the organisation the benefits of a valuable set of capabilities.

However, we know from research that has been conducted on Generation Y that they will not respond well to the traditional 'tell and monitor' role of a middle manager, so if this is what middle managers continue to do the benefits of collaboration will not be realised. The role, mindset and capabilities of middle managers need to change to create a working environment in which Generation Y will thrive and create value for the organisation. This change of both

## Social Media is Creating the Social Business

The term 'social business' is increasingly replacing E2.0 as the term used to describe the transformation of business through the use of collaboration technology and social-media tools. [Harold Jarcho](#) believes that business leaders need to be ready for the significant changes this will bring to their operating models.

Harold believes 'social business' is about a shift in how we do work, moving from hierarchies to networks. The highest value work today is the more complex stuff, or the type of work that cannot be automated or outsourced. It is work that requires creativity and passion. Doing complex work in networks means that information, knowledge and power no longer flow up and down. They flow in all directions.

To read Harold's blog article, click [here](#).

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## When the CEO Gives iPads to All

Last summer the CEO of KLA-Tenco, a Silicon Valley semiconductor equipment maker, was so pleased with company performance that he rewarded all 5,400 employees with a shiny new iPad.

To read Tom Kaneshige's article on how the CIO coped, click [here](#).

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mindset and capability is not going to happen overnight; for middle management this will be long learning journey, which will only happen through experience.

If the real benefits of collaborative networked teams are to be realised middle managers need to begin a well-designed and guided experiential learning journey. The journey needs to begin before collaboration technologies are introduced; it must help them understand the changes the new technology will bring and give them an opportunity to learn and practise the new capabilities they will need as they 'manage' teams in the new world.

Organisations that do not invest in developing their managers will, I fear, find that Lynda is right – it will be the end of the middle manager; they will be seen as a dying breed of dinosaur that can be bypassed and ignored.

To read my full article, click [here](#).

I welcome your thoughts.

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## Parting Thought

“Enjoy the little things, for one day you may look back and realise they were the big things.”

Robert Brault, American writer