

## NEWS

4<sup>th</sup> Ajilon's BNIQ ranking for IT and communications companies

# Talk up business with 'enterprise social'

Social networks are edging their way into business as the power of collaborative communication is realised.

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A PERTH information technology consultancy is urging businesses to become more social as a way of becoming more productive and, hence, more competitive.

While managers may frown at the thought of employees scrolling through Facebook during work hours, advisers at Velrada say similar social network technology could be a game changer if applied to business communication.

Over the past two years the company, which was named one of *Business News*' Rising Stars this year, has developed expertise in consulting on what it describes as 'enterprise social' technology.

That technology includes platforms such as Yammer, which is based on social networking communication for use within businesses. It was bought by Microsoft for \$US1.2 billion in 2012.

Other platforms have also emerged that enable the same sort of communication with customers, such as Jive.

Velrada executive director Jennifer Evans told *Business News* that clients that were, in particular, diverse both in the scope of their work and geographically, were benefiting from using social networking-style communication.

"If you can imagine organisations that are quite diverse and are working on large capital projects across the world, someone's

already done something in one region that could be applied to another region, but the knowledge is usually stuck in siloed systems," Ms Evans said.

The anticipated benefits from the use of social networking tools within a business include claims of up to 15 per cent increase in productivity and as much as a 24 per cent drop in staff turnover.

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- Jennifer Evans

Director Cecily O'Neill is championing Velrada's enterprise social consulting.

She said organisations had begun to introduce certain types of social media technology, such as blogging tools, but that was



**ALL TWEET:** Cecily O'Neill (left) and Jennifer Evans are making strong ground in advising clients on the benefits of 'enterprise social' technology. Photo: Attila Csaszar

creating another form of an 'information silo'.

Instead, the likes of Yammer and Jive are enterprise-wide platforms, which integrate with existing systems in a business.

"Initially there was fear, especially at a board level, in that Twitter or Facebook was something that their kids did and didn't need to happen within an organisation," Ms O'Neill said.

"But where we've seen enterprise social networking technology really come into play is providing a platform across the organisation so that you're not actually creating another information silo."

The Commonwealth Bank is one example of a company that has implemented the technology - it has used Jive to create its Women in Focus online community.

Meanwhile, PwC uses Jive internally and hosts collaborative

'jams' with staff to get feedback on ideas and issues.

Another Perth-based IT consultancy, Ajilon, uses Yammer as a collaborative communication tool for consultants in different locations.

General manager of Ajilon's Go-to-Market and Solution Centre Holger Kaufmann told *Business News* the introduction of Yammer had a range of benefits, including building a strong sense of community and enabling crowd-sourcing to garner ideas and innovation.

"Being a consultancy, the majority of our consultants are based on client sites rather than in the office, and were geographically diverse. This raised a number of challenges around how we brought our people together," Mr Kaufmann said.

"[Yammer] is an easy tool for consultants to use to stay in touch, isn't time consuming and adds a social element to our knowledge management and sharing."

Advising on and guiding businesses through the deployment of such technology has grown, so it accounts for a significant portion of Velrada's income.

Ms Evans said that while clients and a specific percentage could not be disclosed, it was certainly in the "double digits" and the company's client base was made up of multinational resources companies and government.

It's all helping Velrada achieve a 30 per cent year on year revenue increase, with the company having expanded to about 105 staff across Australia in just five years.