

OneNet: UniCredit's Journey through Internal Social Networking

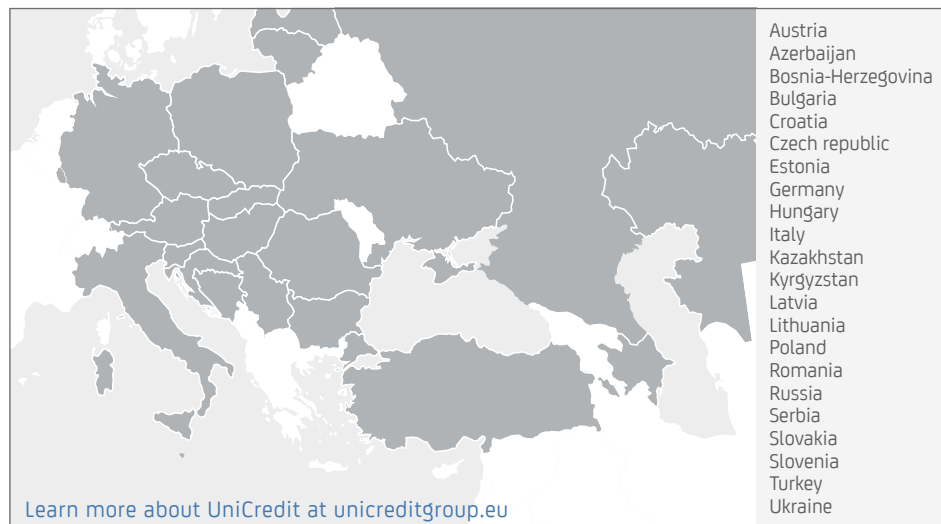
While the debate about pros and cons of social media drags on in the executive suites of corporations around the world, a leading European bank chooses internal social networking to spot value, support day-to-day work and drive business.

The word integration when associated with the banking sector has always been synonymous of larger markets, streamlined operations and combined strategies.

In our era of interconnectedness it also means being able to **create value by linking employees' innovative ideas and turning their joint knowledge into competitive advantage.**

UniCredit has answered this challenge by creating OneNet, an internal social networking platform, which was launched in 2009 and has become a powerful ally in attaining a number of strategic goals.

UniCredit, one of Europe's largest financial groups, employs 158,000 people in 22 countries from Italy to Kazakhstan. It runs 9,398 branches serving 33 million customers. Total assets under its management exceed € 954 billion.



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Based on a work at: www.unicreditgroup.eu

The Group is the result of a wave of mergers of several Italian banks that went on for more than a decade in the 1990s adding banks in Germany, Austria, and Central and Eastern Europe.

After so much change and as part of an effort to create one single intranet that would be available in different languages to employees throughout the Group, the search was on for a tool that would help them share knowledge while giving management the opportunity to drive that change, get to know their staff and support business activities.

“Take our operations centre in Iași, Romania” says Paolo Cederle, CEO of UniCredit Business Integrated Solutions¹. “The average age there is 27. Many of its 200 employees have more than one degree, speak more than one language and are eager to contribute to the development of an international bank”. “My worry had always been to capture the value generated by them”, continues Cederle.

“ If each one of them comes up with one good idea per year, it means that I have 200 new solutions! ”

OneNet is people-centred and was created with the needs of staff in mind.

“We had been witnessing the popping-up of more and more internal platforms used for sharing information”, says Patrizio Regis, head of Group Internal Communications, which together with the Online Community team headed by Stefania Todisco within UniCredit Business Integrated Solutions has been in charge of the launch and management of the internal network.

“ OneNet can help us reduce the effort necessary to coordinate the information flow within the company and can simplify our colleagues’ day-to-day work. ”

Because of its history, UniCredit is a combination of identities, legal entities, divisions, lines of business and country-specific practices. The challenge has been to mobilize staff around a single commercial banking strategy for Europe. An internal platform is a way for the Group to show that it is open to approaches that defy hierarchical structures. “The tool becomes the message,” says Regis, “The simple fact of having to take down the fire wall for the staff of a particular country to interact with the rest of the Group demonstrates a desire to change and a new way of operating.”

Proximity has always been a strong value of UniCredit, one that is tightly connected with its identity of a commercial bank. “Our brand is international but we have a strong local presence. We pride ourselves on being able to understand what our customers really need”, says Cederle.

“ Our global culture integrates local cultures by respecting them. A tool like OneNet helps to turn local value into a resource the entire Group can capitalise on. ”

¹ UniCredit Integrated Business Solutions, the Group global service company, provides services in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Operations, Real Estate, Security and Procurement. It includes the Group Operations and ICT Factories Unit.

The network also gives employees the opportunity to become more visible and draw attention to their skills and expertise. This happens at different levels. UniCredit has used OneNet to conduct exercises asking young employees in call centres for new ideas on how to deal with customers. “These are people who work at the front line, in constant contact with the public, listening to their complaints day in and day out”, says a super-user. “OneNet is a unique way to involve them and make them feel that they are adding their voices to the bank’s quest for innovative ideas”.

OneNet is enabling UniCredit to address a wide array of strategic issues ranging from building a common culture to detecting local value to supporting day-to-day work processes. Its style, truly ground-breaking for the financial sector, reflects the approach the bank has been taking externally by introducing social networking in their dealings with customers.

Three Core Features

One of the main dilemmas corporations face when embarking on an internal social networking experience is choosing its population.

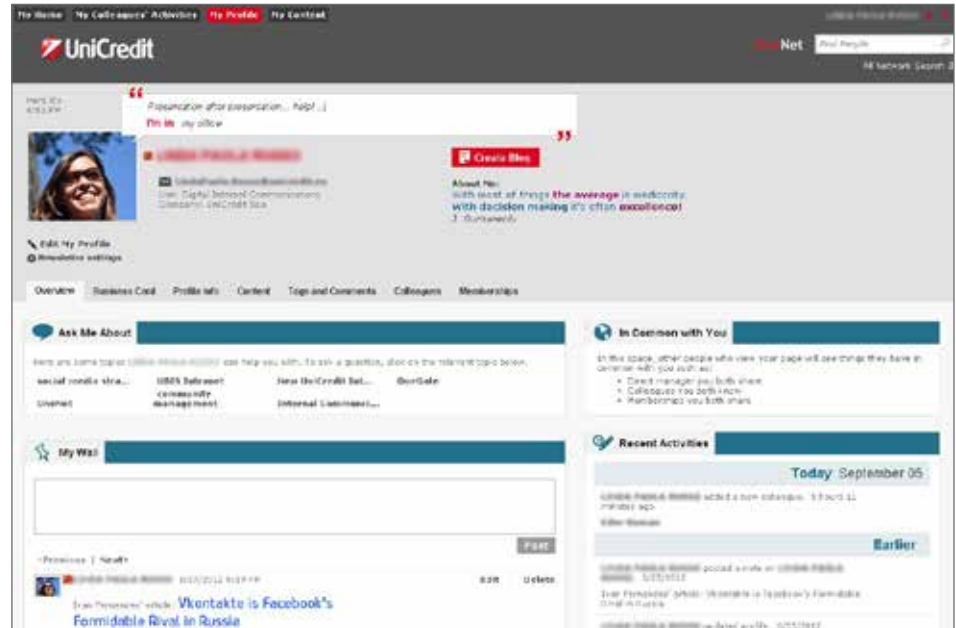
UniCredit used a dual approach to OneNet’s launch in the autumn of 2009. It first invited **a group of 12,500 employees as a pilot**. This included staff who had already volunteered to join Group-wide activities like UniCredit’s Women International Network (UWIN), a programme promoting women leadership, as well as the employees of selected entities including UniCredit Business Integrated Solutions. This service company designs IT projects and has therefore played a key role in the creation of OneNet. After the pilot phase, access has been granted gradually and on a case-by-case basis to employees invited to be part of OneNet’s communities and to those involved in projects that require a high amount of knowledge sharing and contact.

Communities are one of the network’s three main features and a key driver of interaction. OneNet has 55 at the moment. Staff joins mainly by invitation.

These online rooms serve different purposes. They might give a sense of identity to a group of employees, create networks focused on business areas or help staff exchange information. They are also used to collect ideas for a project or to solve a specific problem.

OneNet communities are managed by owners who have the task of filling them with content, monitoring their activities and stimulating online interaction among members. They have different features (e.g. Calendar of activities, Blogs, Document Library, Media Gallery, Discussions) which can be activated from a standard template according to the owners’ objectives and choices.

The other core element of OneNet is My Site, an area where employees can upload and share both personal and professional updates.



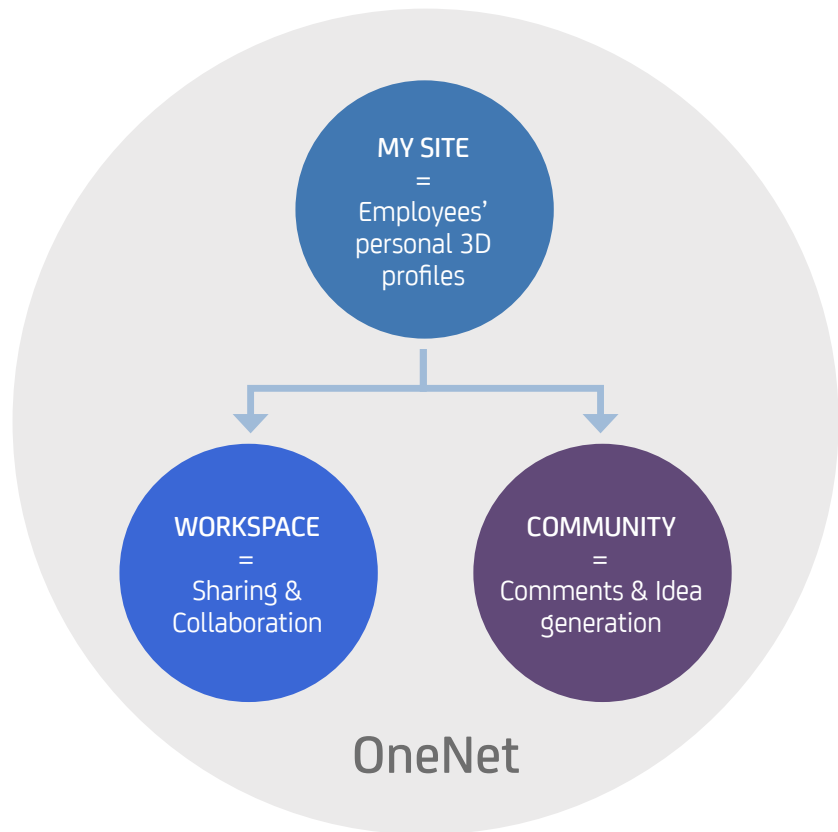
My Profile is My Site's central page. Designed as a virtual business card, it enables employees to introduce themselves, add information about their background and create blogs. It also provides contact fields and a series of keywords – such as the “Ask me about” list - that allow faster online searches. **Employees have been using these features to learn about their colleagues' experience and query them about their skills.**

My Home is the space where users can view news and information about the communities they belong to. My Colleagues gives employees the opportunity to “follow” colleagues in a Twitter-like manner. Similarly to the popular micro blogging platform and unlike Facebook, following another user does not require their confirmation. It is up to them if they want to “follow back” a colleague. The My Colleagues' Activities page operates a feed with updates from the people followed by a user.

My Site also includes other features such as a repository, where employees can store documents they can easily access when attending a meeting rather than saving them on a memory stick.

Because the My Site function does not focus on collaboration and communities are mainly meant for interaction within a wider group, OneNet also offers a third main feature. The **Workspace is a virtual room with access restricted to groups of users where colleagues can share, archive and update documents.** This tool is going to replace all previous e-collaboration sites and online repositories within UniCredit. It is a standard template with essential functions - such as a calendar and libraries – that can be easily reached from My Site and does not require specific management or animation.

OneNet is currently used by 60% of the staff invited to be part of it. The plan is to extend membership to all 158,000 in the Group in the long term.



Animating the Network

While UniCredit has always supported the creation of an internal network, after OneNet's launch it was quick to discover that **corporate social media is not always second nature to its users**. In this new environment, people are asked to use communities to help them reach new demanding targets. Developing communities forces them to gain new expertise including moderation skills, how to involve colleagues and how to use the right tone of voice. Such skills are essential for the creation of a new culture of collaboration and to promote a wide and effective adoption of social networking. With this challenge in mind, the **bank has set up a community management team with the task of helping to translate plans into web 2.0 initiatives as well as providing solutions tailor-made for users' needs**. This competence centre is also in charge of assisting community owners and promoting the exchange of best practices. It is a clear expression of the bank's attitude towards social media. OneNet's features are designed to foster a climate of knowledge sharing and accelerate work processes like, for instance, the search for innovative solutions.

Following this direction, only one year after its launch, UniCredit began **using the platform to involve staff in management decisions**. In September 2010, the Group Operations & ICT Factories Business Unit, which has now become UniCredit Business Integrated Solutions, organised a crowd sourcing exercise with 80% of OneNet users. They were asked to come up with ideas for engaging people within the unit and helping with its integration. The participants uploaded some 1,100 posts and discussed more than 150 topics. Organisers added an offline element in the form of a committee in charge of analysing the ideas contributed and choosing ten actions for each topic discussed. An online survey was then set up to address the original contributions, this time with the task of voting for the action they wanted to see implemented first. The Group Operations & ICT Factories Business Unit experimented with a different kind of exercise in the spring of 2011: an online contest with a two-day training course in UniCredit's New York office as prize. Users were asked to come up with names for the new company that would become UniCredit Business Integrated Solutions and would combine in a single entity 16 companies within the Group. **Employees embraced the “Find the Name” contest with enthusiasm and contributed more than 4,000 names**. “Some were in line with our brand guidelines, others were totally off-the-wall,” says one of the organisers. “People knew we won’t be able to use those, but they still wanted to participate and have fun”.

Driven by Communities

Communities are OneNet's main entry point. They are the reason why employees join the network and become part of its activities. They are an integral part and a distinctive feature of UniCredit's unique approach to internal social networking.



A community for 570 employees involved in financial education.

Here are some examples of communities and the ways in which they animate discussions and organise work on the platform.

A Hub for Volunteers

IN-Formati is the first community to bring together part of the staff working in UniCredit's 4,500 Italian branches.

It serves the needs of 570 employees involved in a financial education program. As part of its commitment to local communities, UniCredit organises free courses in schools, chambers of commerce and similar organisations. Anybody can attend and learn about financial products and the way in which a bank operates. The initiative is in line with UniCredit's mission and its aim to be perceived as a bank "easy to deal with".

The courses are given by branch managers and other experienced staff on a voluntary basis after office hours.

“ It is a way to take the bank outside the bank ”

explains a community user. The program, which was launched in 2011, currently covers 62 cities throughout Italy. When it was first set up, the IN-Formati community experienced a slow start. Users were looking for ways to help it take off. The internal communication team came to the rescue and developed a plan. Members were invited to a virtual inauguration. The event was streamed live on the network and served to welcome staff to the community, thank them for the courses they had already given and collect their first impressions. Following this initiative, **community owners were encouraged to develop an editorial plan for the first six months which would include two posts per week in the form of articles, reports and photos.**

The IN-Formati educators were also asked to post comments on their materials and short summaries after each course. The idea is to collect feedback to improve the program and turn the best stories collected during classes into cartoons to be published in a book at the end of the year.

Harnessing Internal Expertise

Another community connects 650 people in four countries (Czech Republic, Germany, Italy and Romania) working on card payment solutions, including design, production, IT and back office. It was created to give a common identity to a team operating out of different locations and legal structures. "In interviews I used to hear from employees about the impression of belonging to a business area that was not considered first league," says Giulio Carmignato, Head of the Global Products Business Line at UniCredit Business Integrated Solutions. **"We wanted to change this perception and give them a sense of being part of a world that is innovative and cutting-edge."**

An online contest to exploit 17 new ideas from staff working on mobile payments solutions which saved the bank 300,000 Euro.

When the community was first set up, the owners organised a contest asking members to send in photos of cash machines located in funny, unusual places. In came the photos of a solitary cash machine in the middle of a field in Iceland or that of an employee sitting inside a giant cardboard box in a branch dispensing money to explain how ATMs work. Although members found the idea entertaining, only 44 photos were submitted. The experience taught a lesson to UniCredit: “Games that are completely disconnected from someone’s daily job don’t work”, says Stefania Todisco, Head of Online Community. “If people want to play games, they go to Facebook or other public platforms.

“ You’ve got to make it relevant for their work and appeal to their sense of pride and professional expertise. ”

That’s what the team did with a second contest organised in 2011. Members of the community were asked to submit business cases for innovative solutions in the area of payments through mobile phones. “Employees might have had these ideas for some time, but would have kept them in their drawers for fear of showing to their bosses something that might have been considered too outlandish”, says Carmignato

“ By organising a contest, we demonstrated that we were taking a relaxed approach to innovation and we encouraged dialogue. ”

The exercise was demanding as members were required to prepare a proper business case as if they were talking to an angel investor. A total of 17 business proposals were presented. A steering committee composed of experts met and reviewed the ideas. “The bank is serious about implementing the best idea”, says Carmignato. “A contest is a great way to harness internal expertise. If we were to buy this kind of ideas on the market it could cost us as much as € 300,000.”

An offline brainstorming session with 20 colleagues provided a successful crowd-sourcing of ideas that were presented to senior management.

In Listening Mode

Innovation at UniCredit means focusing on disruptive ideas that go beyond normal incremental growth. It is about concentrating on the medium to long term, on projects that staff, busy with their day-to-day work, don’t usually have time to think about.

This was the context for the creation of the Innovation Community, a group that brings together 800 people from various departments and business lines in UniCredit and aims at including employees from all over the organisation interested in innovation.

“We inform and facilitate cooperation”, explains Gianbattista Piacentini, Head of the Innovation Department at UniCredit Business Integrated Solutions.



To begin animating the community, the Innovation team organised an offline brainstorming session in September 2011. Twenty young colleagues from UniCredit's contact centers and branches were invited to come together for a day and discuss how to improve customer experience. More than 30 ideas were collected.

Participants were then asked to continue discussing them online for two more weeks in a section of the community designed for this purpose.

"What at the end of the brainstorming day was a simple line became a series of answers" explains a community user.

The Innovation team moderated the discussion, collected the five best ideas and brought together a jury of experts to select the winning team. Visibility was their prize. The winners were invited to present their ideas to the Innovation Table, a body composed of senior managers from UniCredit Business Integrated Solutions and the bank's retail division. Another award was given to the employee who contributed most to the online conversation. "We thought of this second prize because we wanted people to comment on all the ideas put forward, not only those they had worked on during the offline day", points out Claudia Chiaraluce, head of Innovation Enablement. The second winner was also invited to present to the Innovation Table.

The target group chosen by this community for its first event shows how OneNet can be used as a vehicle to learn about the bank's market and its customers' needs. Like any other project with strong interactivity, internal social networking is a journey. **Social media can serve as a bridge between what goes on inside the bank and its external challenges.** After the initiative that launched it, the Innovation team has been focusing on guaranteeing continuity: "We want to send a clear message: we are not about discussing innovation only once a year in a closed context". That's why they created the Idea Box, a virtual suggestion box and an important feature of the Innovation Community. It invites members to post new ideas. "It shows that we are always in listening mode", says Piacentini.

A tool to connect over 500 employees in 30 different locations to help them network and share knowledge.

The community could also be used to respond to senior management's specific requests. "If they are looking for a new type of credit card or a new concept for a branch, we could pose our members the question and run a contest", says a community user.

A Sense of Belonging

The Leonardo Community serves the members of UniCredit's real estate unit and was set up with the aim of giving a sense of belonging to employees who might be working out of an office located near the real estate they are managing with limited contact to their colleagues operating in similar settings in other Italian cities.

“ It's a way to lower barriers between people and learn about issues you would not have been able to share in the past ”

Fast uptake in the development of a community.

says a super-user and adds, "coming from real estate, I need to learn what other parts of the bank are doing. Before OneNet, I did not know anything about the card payments division. I am now following the innovation part of this business".

An Online Dimension

UniCredit's Women International Network (UWIN) has been using OneNet to support its activities that are still mostly offline. Established in 2007, UWIN promotes women leadership within the Group and brings together 3,200 women mostly in Italy.

When women sign up for UWIN, they are also invited to join the UWIN Community, a space where female employees of UniCredit can share experience and information and get updates on the network's initiatives, which include workshops, conferences and book presentations. This space also offers the opportunity to focus on inspiring success stories and provide a form of online coaching.

The community features sections like a calendar and press reviews with regular updates on UWIN activities and women-related case studies. It also offers more interactive spaces with news from the media and blogs, where users can leave comments, and a discussion forum where they can share ideas.

130 experts in 17 countries share best practice.

A community to encourage staff to submit discussion topics and interact with senior management.

Adding Speed

Central and Eastern Europe is a highly competitive region. In this environment, a bank can only face competition if it is present, fast and knowledgeable. With operations in 17 countries and a strong tradition in the region, UniCredit has both an extensive presence and a deep knowledge of the business, what it felt it needed was to **capture the full value of the organization and respond more quickly to changes and challenges.**

This is the reason why the Central and Eastern Europe Global Transaction Banking Coordination Team based in Vienna, Austria, decided to build a community. Today this online room is open to 130 employees active in this business in the region. “Connecting these people will enable us to strengthen team spirit and awareness, and, above all, communicate faster which will help us close more deals,” says the community’s main owner. “Trade finance is an advisory business. The more you understand regional trade flows, the more you can reduce clients’ risks.”

The community’s communication plan includes a blog with posts focused on different aspects of the team’s business strategy. **“One week we talk about a product while the next we discuss a specific process,”** explains the owner. “This is how we show people the real value of the community.”

On the Same Wave Length

When Gabriella Golfré, UniCredit Business Integrated Solutions’ Country Manager for Romania, heard about OneNet, she was intrigued by its potential to appeal to young employees. “It is not easy for a manager in her 50s to reach out to staff with average age 25”, says Golfré,

“ I needed a tool that would put me on the same wave length. ”

She began by designing her community on paper and used the experiences made by colleagues in other parts of the Group. Membership in Come On Romania was first limited to a group of 350 who joined voluntarily. When requests began to “rain in”, the bank opened up the community to all 1,080 employees working in the country.

Golfré calls it a community of engagement. “When you involve people, they become much more interested and motivated and you can see the impact on business.”

In preparation for senior management’s visits to Romania, employees are asked to post topics they would like to discuss with them. “If you start by posting one or two questions on the community, people join in”. Some of the questions are then addressed to the managers visiting. “In a three-hour meeting, there is never enough time to answer them all.

We sometimes organise a follow-up video conference or we use the community to cover additional questions”.

Come On Romania has been in existence for less than a year, but Golfré has already noticed the impact it has had on the way people communicate. “In the past employees would be afraid to speak up, to say something that might have been considered out of line, they are now much more open. When I meet them face-to-face, they talk about how I responded to comments on my blog. **They are no longer afraid to ask our senior managers questions**”. In a country still partially suffering from the legacy of 50 years of strict hierarchical structures, such change is no small achievement.

Golfré also noticed that her staff was interested in discovering the personal side of their colleagues. That’s when she began to write a blog. In her post on “Motivation and Passion”, she talks about being in Milan and attending a theatre performance by a colleague who in her spare time is active in a theatre group. “Susi had just visited us in Romania where she gave a course on finance,” remembers Golfré. “I wrote about her having a demanding job and a family but still being able to find the time to act on stage because she feels passionate about it. I used this example to show that when we are passionate about something, anything is possible. I then asked readers to tell me about their passions.”

Another topic the country manager has been discussing is leadership and the challenges associated with becoming a manager at a young age. “Our Romanian managers tend to be very young and it is not easy for them to lead colleagues that up until yesterday were at university with them”.

In her blog, she doesn’t shy away from controversial issues like women and the glass ceiling or the Internal Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women celebrated every year in November.

Golfré also uses the community to pass on information including articles she reads in the papers and to share presentations on topics she is interested in. One of these is mentoring. “I wrote about meeting with my mentee and uploaded a presentation about mentoring for those who are not familiar with it”. In her work for Come On Romania, she is assisted by **a team of seven colleagues** who meet on a regular basis **to plan content and develop topics**. As community owner Golfré has chosen a member of her immediate team with a good overview of what is going on in the bank.

She believes in the strategic importance of OneNet as a recruitment tool in a young job market like Romania. It shows candidates that they are about to join a bank that is using advanced tools.

“ OneNet has the potential of connecting 160,000 employees and giving them the opportunity to talk to people all over Europe and beyond. It stretches people’s horizons and sends a strong message about how international we really are. ”

Five Lessons for Community Managers

- 1 Define clear goals and concrete outputs for your communities. Use quantitative and qualitative KPIs linked to business value.
- 2 Each community is aimed at a specific target group. Choose features that match that target.
- 3 Use community sponsors and/or leaders to boost adoption
- 4 Reach out to community members with activities, tasks and information that are relevant to their day-to-day work and can help to improve or change it.
- 5 Develop a plan for your social networking activities and... facilitate, facilitate, facilitate!

The Right Tone for Blogging

Few would disagree that blogging is an essential part of the social networking experience. **Experts however still argue whether internal blogs share the same rules of engagement as public ones.**

Going by the experience of Paolo Cederle, who heads UniCredit Business Integrated Solutions, we would tend to agree that they do, certainly as far as personal touch and colloquial tone are concerned.

His blog, launched in the early days of OneNet in September 2009, was first written in a corporate tone and focused mostly on business topics. Take this post, for example, about “The power of listening to the customer”:

Dear all,

We will have time to share more deeply some of the contents of the last Group Management Team in the next days; today I would like to share with you some impression and thoughts from the meeting.

GMT is the quarterly event gathering the top 100 executives of our Group in Turin. Despite all the issues, constraints and open questions on the table in these days, it was fully dedicated in listening to our customer.

We invited 40 customers from different countries and with a different profile. We asked them their experience with our Group and their suggestions about our services and we were obliged to not answer their criticism, but only listening and questioning them and after that extract some lessons learned.

It was a very rich day.

[...]. The rule of “no reply” adopted in Turin enabled us to extract a lot of value from the meetings with the customers. And they said that it was one of the rare occasions in which they felt being really important for us. For that reason they were very open and direct.

This and other posts remained for a long time without any comments. What made Cederle’s readers switch and start interacting with him was **a change in tone and approach.**

After being stranded in London during the ash cloud crisis that brought most of Europe’s air space to a standstill in the spring of 2010, Cederle wrote a post. He wrote about having to find a car and embarking on a 17-hour trip back to Italy and coming to the realisation that Britain is “completely surrounded by water and difficult to escape from if you can’t fly!” The post featured a picture of Cederle and his travel companion, another stranded colleague, smiling after having finally crossed the Channel and arrived safely at Calais.

The “Volcano experience” post became a turning point. Readers began leaving comments and went back to previous posts to do the same. “I needed a tool that would put me on the same wave length”, says Cederle.

“ Blogging requires you to enter into a personal relationship with the reader. When you are writing, you have to imagine you are talking to one single person, not thousands ”

While in the past, visitors to Cederle’s blog tended to read and remain passive. His posts are now getting a good level of interaction with an average of ten to twenty comments per post.

“When Paolo Cederle answers a comment I left on his blog, **I feel that I am talking directly with management**, I am more than a simple employee of the Group,” says a super-user.

Cederle often uses personal topics to draw the reader into professional subjects. In one of his posts, he talks about the change experienced by his family following his daughter’s departure to university and goes on to discuss change in a corporation:

Dear all friends... I AM BACK.

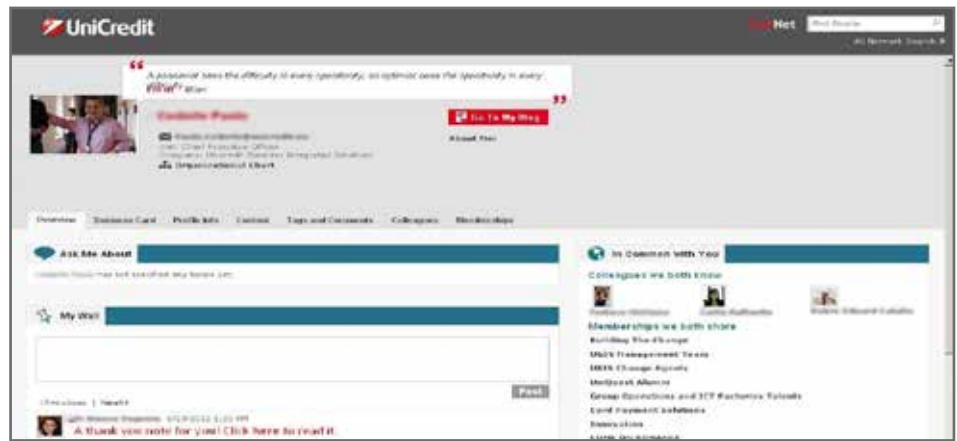
I do apologize for this long silence but it was a really changing time in my life therefore I had a lot of time constrains.

In particular a big change happened to me and my wife in the last 3 weeks as our first daughter (she is 18) had the opportunity to apply for the International Medicine School of Bucharest that is well known in the international medical world.

[...]Another week and a half of trouble activities (trip, exam, waiting) and thoughts and, at the end, the positive exam results arrived. And just after 4 days ... she left with her suitcases full of her future life and dreams. My wife, my younger daughter (I have also a son that is spending his 4th high school year in London), myself and our little dog looking at her to the airport leaving

[...] I am trained to manage changes, but every time is a different situation and when these changes affect your family it is more difficult to apply all the known techniques.

[... Is it much different from the role of a manager at any level? Can we really “train” ourselves to face all the changes? Or we can only believe that positive journeys are planned for us even through difficulties and that living them with passion (and faith) is the only way for us?



The post attracted seven comments and various answers to Cederle's question, like this one:

In what regards your questions in the end, I would say that we cannot train ourselves for the changes, it's exactly the other way around: one by one, past changes train us for facing and coping with the ones to follow. And by coping I don't necessarily understand agreeing. In this approach, I remember that during a road show of UniCredit Business Integrated Solutions' management held in Bucharest, our CEO said something that I currently use as favourite quote on my OneNet profile: "It's better that people oppose to a change than do the change just for the sake of the change."

Cederle makes a particular effort to leave comments on blogs written by colleagues.

“ This adds value to my blog and makes what I write more credible. Blogging is not about sending a message, it is about sharing. ”

An exciting journey, but never plain sailing

OneNet's teething troubles include generational and perception issues, accessibility and cultural barriers.

Employees over 45, who don't use social media in their private life, find OneNet testing. They might perceive it as a waste of time.

“ Explaining from the very start what the network and its communities can do for them is key ”

points out a super-user. For this purpose, in addition to the conventional customized online help function, assistance to OneNet users is provided through the Tips & Tricks blog on technical and editorial issues written by a member of the Online Community team. This technical blog is an opportunity to start a dialogue with users and offers immediacy and interactivity.

Connecting OneNet with other internal platforms employees are already familiar with is another way to make use less daunting. Indeed the Group is experiencing the process of linking its intranet with the social network. “This improves user experience,” says Fabio Delton responsible for Digital Internal Communications and OneNet is becoming part of their day-to-day work”. UniCredit is also looking into developing and testing access from mobile devices like phones and tablets, to offer executives, who spend a large amount of time travelling, the opportunity to contribute regularly to the platform.

Cultural barriers might include the way in which relations between management and employees are legally and traditionally structured in a particular country. Some works council and legal departments were sceptical about the introduction of a new channel of communication and co-operation like OneNet. Detailed analysis and inclusive debates were used to get these stakeholders on board.

Languages are another aspect of the OneNet world that requires coordination. A total of 20 languages are spoken in the Group with English, Italian and German being the most common languages. Several blogs, including Paolo Cederle's and Gabriella Golfré's, are written both in English and Italian. Language coordination has proven essential during exercises of crowd sourcing. Organisers were able to involve a number of super-users who would identify hot topics and translate them into their respective language so that they could all be available in English, German and Italian.

Loss of control is often an issue associated with the adoption of social media and is the reason why many corporations have been reluctant to embrace both external and internal networking.

“When we launched OneNet we were in the middle of 2009 financial crisis, we felt a little anxious”, recalls Regis.

“ But we decided to trust people. ”

Internal communication had learned from past blogging experiences that **it's quite rare for an employee to write aggressive or offensive comments. When that happens the online community intervenes to balance it off.**

“ We call this social control! ”

The only incident Cederle can recall is the case of an employee using an hostile tone during a crowd sourcing with 6,000 participants. “We replied to his comment and did not hear from him again”.

A Unique Approach

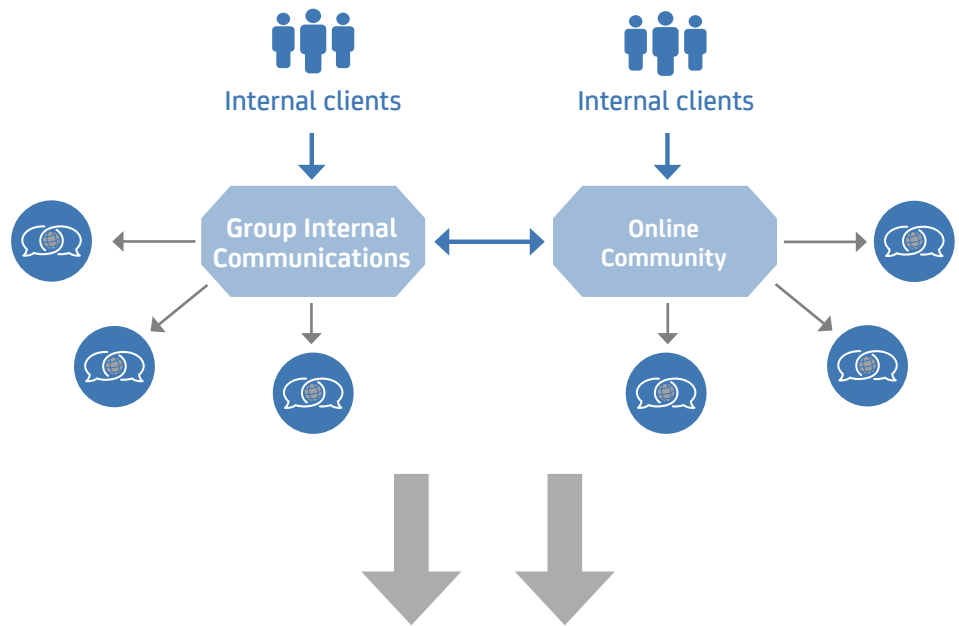
Ownership of a new internal platform is often a source of dispute in organisations. OneNet is the result of a co-operation between communicators, IT specialists and experts in community management. It was not born as a standard solution, but rather as a tailor-made response to the needs of internal users. “OneNet is an example of joint leadership”, says Delton.

“ This kind of projects can only work if IT and internal communication work well together. ”

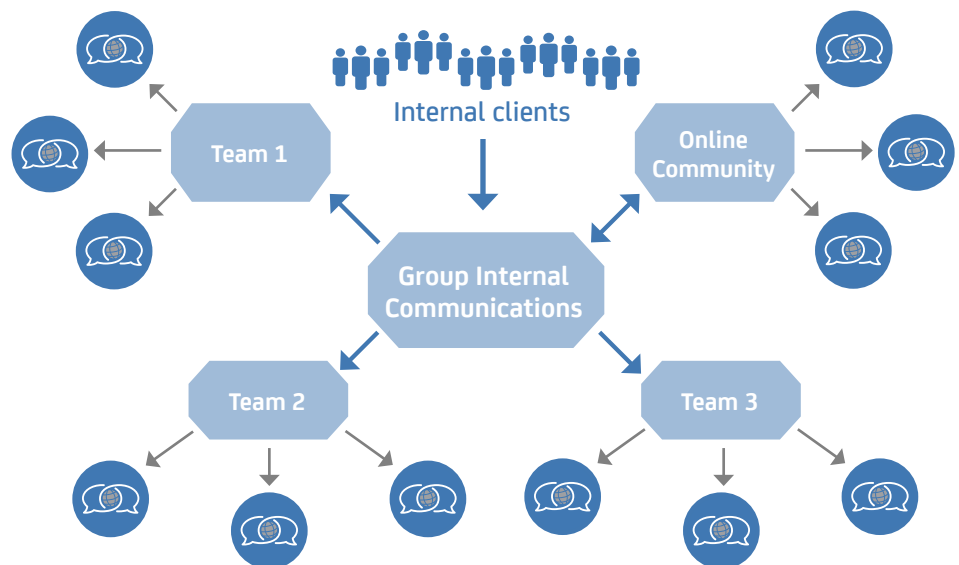
The adoption and growth of the network is also supported by a governance model that reflects the needs of the organisation. Take, for example, how communities are created. At the beginning requests were handled by a core team composed of ICT specialists and communicators. This model provided for a certain level of consistency in the design of the network and helped monitor its pilot phase.

The bank has since moved to a ‘hub & spoke’ system centred around two hubs. The Online Community team is responsible for setting up new communities supporting UniCredit Business Integrated Solutions, the service company, while Group Internal Communications deals with requests coming from other legal entities.

Hub & Spoke



Multiple Hub & Spoke



In the future, this system will turn into a 'multiple hub & spoke' model. Responsibility for supporting the communities will be delegated to the communication departments of the different countries and business units. Group Internal Communications will remain a central port of call and continue to co-ordinate the evolution of the platform.

The fact that Internal Communications with the support of UniCredit Business Integrated Solutions took the lead accelerated the adoption of a web 2.0 culture which has made **OneNet a crucial tool to convey business needs and address some key communication priorities.** But the development of a network also requires time planning, deployment of resources and sustained

activity through animation. For communities to work successfully, they need clear objectives and planning.

The other essential part of a winning formula is community management that supports the development of new skills within the organisation.

This is why UniCredit Business Integrated Solutions decided to create a team dedicated to assisting and nurturing OneNet's communities, a method that was proven successful given the development of the platform.

Six Lessons from OneNet's Success

- 1 Clear objectives tied to the bank's day-to-day work and business needs
- 2 Identify and commit the internal resources needed for the project
- 3 A strong partnership between IT, internal communications and other departments (including HR and legal)
- 4 Invest in the development of community management skills
- 5 Design and launch an effective, target-specific internal marketing campaign to promote the network.
- 6 Start with a pilot, listen to users and collect their feedback.

UniCredit's approach is influencing the way corporations view the use of social networking. **It is helping to shift perception in the corporate world of how valuable Web 2.0 is as a business tool.**

It is experiences like Eduard's that bring the spirit of corporate social media to life. While working in operations in Bucharest, Romania, he was spotted after writing posts and comments and being particularly active on OneNet. Eduard now works at the bank's headquarters in Milan helping the Online Community team with the management of the platform.

This is an example of what the network can do for career management. "In my old office, I used to tell colleagues that it would be good for them to join OneNet," says Eduard. "They didn't understand what it would do for them. After I was offered this new job, a great opportunity, 90% of them got on the network and created their profile. With OneNet you can really show what you are good at".

At a time when many organisations are still experimenting with internal platforms and strategies for managing online communities, UniCredit's learnings are worth studying. They cover all important aspects of corporate life, from governance and assistance to online communities to the role of internal communication and IT to linking social networking to the bottom line. More than anything else, they are a strong testimony to the logic behind OneNet's creation.

“ We have chosen OneNet because we believe in it.
It was not imposed on us by the Group CEO or by fashion. ”

| says Cederle

“ It is the response to a concrete business need. ”

By Silvia Cambié

About the author

With a background in financial journalism and business communications, Silvia Cambié is an authority on social media and what it means for large organisations.

A former contributor to *Euromoney* and *Handelsblatt*, she is the author of “International Communications Strategy – Developments in cross-cultural communications, PR and social media” published by Kogan Page.

The Web 2.0 campaign Silvia created for the European Training Foundation, an agency of the European Union, has won the International Association of Business Communicators' Gold Quill and EMerald Awards 2011.

Silvia has worked on digital strategies for such organisations as Unilever, Deutsche Bank, Royal Bank of Scotland and the United Nations Development Program.

She is a recognised public speaker and has addressed audiences worldwide including the US, Malaysia, Russia, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Spain and the UK. Silvia has lectured at the Sorbonne University (Paris), London Metropolitan University and San Sebastian University (Santiago).



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