**The Power of Social Media**

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The social web and mobile technologies have accelerated the rate at which relationships develop, information is shared and influence takes hold.

People now use social technology to help shape the world's events and culture.

Facebook has taught us new ways to communicate and collaborate through features like feeds, profiles and groups. At the same time, smartphones and tablets provide mobile and instantaneous access to information from any location.

Together, these have redefined consumer computing.

We have seen the power of social media and its effect on society.

From the Arab Spring to the global Occupy movement, citizens of all nations are more empowered than ever before.

Connected individuals have rallied crowds, created vast audiences and toppled political establishments by communicating their message through social networks.

We've also seen the impact of the social revolution on business.

**Business decisions**

When Netflix announced it was changing its pricing structure, its customers revolted, posting 82,000 negative comments across its blogs and on Facebook and Twitter.

Within months the company lost 800,000 customers and two-thirds of its market value.

That's the speed of social - everything happens faster than ever before.

Rather than fear this shift, we must use it to stay closer to customers, connect to them and engage with them in entirely new ways.

The companies that will be successful in the future recognise the need for fundamentally changing the way they engage with their customers, and are transforming themselves into social enterprises and radically altering the way they manage their businesses.

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 Marc Benioff, Salesforce.com

For example, Burberry is putting social at the heart of its business and creating a digital end-to-end solution called Burberry World, which connects customers, suppliers and vendors to the brand.

As Burberry's visionary CEO Angela Ahrendts recently told me: "You have to be totally connected to anyone who touches your brand. If you don't do that, I don't know what your business model is in five years."

KLM, one of the world's largest airlines, has also unleashed the power of social. The company understands that connections - not impressions - matter.

It engages customers on the social web where they can ask questions, check in for flights, and have conversations about travel.

In one innovative campaign, KLM surprised passengers who had checked in on Twitter at the airport with a small personalised gift - something to enjoy on their trip.

The endeavour generated a phenomenal amount of good feeling that will translate into customer loyalty and there was a powerful ripple effect: the KLM Twitter feed was viewed more than one million times during the month of the campaign.

**Plug and play**

Becoming a social enterprise isn't just about hiring a few people, and giving them free rein on your company's Twitter feed, or allowing your employees to access Facebook.

To be transformative, social can't be an add-on. Social must be a strategy that is integrated into business processes across the organisation.

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They are frustrated by antiquated software systems that were built long before Mark Zuckerberg was even born.

Image caption Marc Benioff believes companies must have an integrated social-media strategy

They want to collaborate with the best people across their organisation and to have real-time access to information, just like they have in their personal lives.

Social business apps allow users to follow the people, data and documents that matter to them at any given time.

Updates are displayed in a social feed - a knowledge funnel of information that matters most to that individual user. Online groups of specific employees help teams get organised, share information and collaborate.

Work itself is fundamentally social, so why can't our business apps be social, as collaborative as Facebook, as transparent as Twitter, and as engaging as Zynga's social games?

Managing and motivating employees is maybe the most important job for a management team. Yet today's HR systems were built with a command-and-control framework of the past. They don't represent how today's workforce wants to be managed.

Social business apps change the way people relate to performance and objectives, coaching and feedback loops at work.

This allows for true meritocracy, where people are measured on results, not politics. As a result, employees will be more aligned, efficient and effective in meeting the company's business goals.

In fact, according to McKinsey, companies that adopt social technologies can see a 50% increase in customer satisfaction, 48% increase in business leads, and 24% increase in revenue.

With these kinds of results, the social revolution will become the biggest paradigm shift that we have ever seen.

Companies that adopt these trends - companies that transform themselves into social enterprises - will connect with everything that is important and lead us into the future.