

A Forrester Consulting Thought Leadership Paper Commissioned By Research In Motion

# Enterprise Social Networking And Smartphones: A Perfect Union For Professional Services Firms

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FORRESTER

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## Executive Summary

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The benefits of smartphones to consultants, lawyers, engineers, and accountants are clear and powerful: staying in touch with people and information while away from the desk. What's less obvious until you've experienced it is that smartphones and social networking are as powerful a combination as a keyboard and mouse. Social networking technology connects employees to the information and expertise they need to be successful; smartphones deliver that capability directly into employees' hands wherever they are. It's a perfect union.

For professional services, smartphones and social networking reinforce each other, something that employees are already exploiting themselves by deploying Facebook and LinkedIn applications on their smartphones.

It is precisely the value of this technology combination that has made smartphone-wielding Facebook members the driving force of that community. According to Facebook, as of February 2010, there were more than 100 million people actively using Facebook from their mobile devices every month.<sup>1</sup>

That same powerful combination of social networking and smartphones is available to professional services firms that deploy enterprise social networking and collaboration applications on business-ready smartphones. Employees can find experts and expertise, log their contributions, collaborate with teammates and customers, and push projects forward faster and from any location if they have social tools directly in their hands. Social networking on smartphones also makes employees productive during the downtime "crevices of their day" as one knowledge professional at a Canadian professional services firm says.

Firms need both enterprise-ready social networking applications and an end-to-end smartphone platform that provides the security and management assurances that customers and regulatory bodies insist on. These applications and platforms are available today.

### Smartphone And Social Networking Benefits Coalesce For Professional Services Firms

Forrester's study of 150 IT decision-makers at professional services firms reveals that:

- **Smartphones and social networking are on parallel paths in professional services firms.** Smartphones and social networking go together. Employees remaining productive away from their desks are also the same employees using — and wanting to use — enterprise social networking to collaborate, push projects forward, and work more efficiently as teams.
- **Connection benefits — staying in touch or finding experts — multiply when smartphones and social technologies are combined.** The killer opportunity is to combine these two technologies — deploy enterprise social networking on smartphones so that employees can tap into the connection benefits of smartphones from any location. This combination has the immediate benefit of helping employees remain productive and keep multiple projects moving forward from any location at any time.

To provide an enterprise-ready alternative to Facebook on smartphones, firms have an imperative to deploy enterprise social networking tools on a smartphone platform with the right security and management capabilities.

- **Facebook and LinkedIn are already supported for work purposes.** Some firms do allow employees to use consumer social networking sites for work purposes. Because of the limited business functionality and tie-in to business directories and systems, these products are most likely used for customer research and perhaps customer messaging and contact information.
- **Security and information risk are the most worrisome for IT professionals.** The biggest barriers to smartphone and especially social networking deployments are concerns over security and risks associated with providing access to sensitive or proprietary information outside the office. The right solution to this concern is an end-to-end security and management solution that delivers the right enterprise social networking applications onto smartphones that can be centrally managed and secured for protection.

## The Value Of Smartphones And Their Connection Benefits Are On The Rise For Professional Services Firms

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Forrester recently surveyed 150 IT decision-makers in professional services firms. These IT professionals are responsible for collaboration investment decisions and could speak knowledgably about smartphones, social networking, and collaboration tools. The survey results illuminated an important finding: that social technologies and smartphones align beautifully to make each other a more powerful contributor to enterprise success. This paper walks through the findings in five sections, with each one adding a layer to the analysis of the link between smartphones and social networking.

The first set of findings reinforces something that most of us already believe: that the need to be productive away from our desks is increasingly important (see Figure 1).

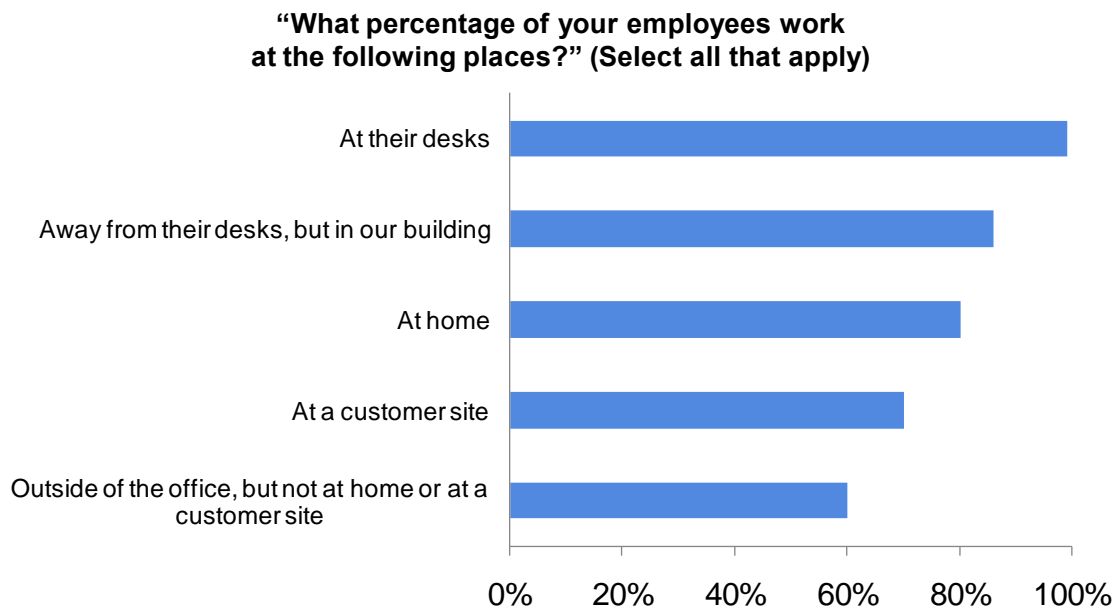
- **Employees at every professional services firm must be productive away from their desks.** The results are remarkable, really. It's no longer sufficient to sit at a desk and work. Instead, almost every company we surveyed has employees working from multiple locations, including in conference rooms, at home, at customer sites, or in transit.
- **Smartphones are on pace to be more prevalent and important than desktop computers.** It's no surprise, then, that the ubiquitous desktop is on the wane and mobile devices, particularly smartphones, are on the rise. By 2012, more firms will have given employees smartphones than desktops. And for customer-facing employees, the ratio will be even higher — many more smartphones than desktop computers.
- **The connection benefits of staying in touch and productive are paramount on smartphones.** Employees need smartphones in order to keep projects moving forward, bringing in experts and expertise, and accelerating the core customer and project decisions that comprise the beating heart of these firms' workdays.
- **Different types of professional services firms seek and find different connection benefits based on their business needs.** Because each industry and of course each firm has a unique opportunity and set of business requirements, it's important to recognize that smartphones bring different benefits to each

industry. In consulting firms, bringing in experts is almost as important as staying in touch. In law firms, accelerating decision-making is at least as important as capturing contributions from everywhere.

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**Figure 1**Professional Services Employees Are Getting Work Done While On The Go

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Base: 150 IT decision-makers

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Research In Motion, May 2010

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## Enterprise Social Networking And Collaboration Tools Also Create A Connection Advantage

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The next finding and second layer in the analysis is that social networking and collaboration tools bring material benefits to the firms that adopt them.

Maximizing collaboration within a professional services firm means finding fellow employees who are experts through their blogs or enhanced profiles. This is critical in industries where expertise is the primary value offered. Building communities of practice in intensely technical organizations, such as tax codes, nanomaterials, cloud computing development, or compliance regulations, can mean the difference between aligning the firms' resources to win new business and complete projects and failing to “know what you know” and, thereby, losing a proposal or inefficient workflow. Creating project workspaces that employees, customers, and partners can

use to work efficiently and creatively as a distributed team is much better than using attachments and endless threads to coordinate work.

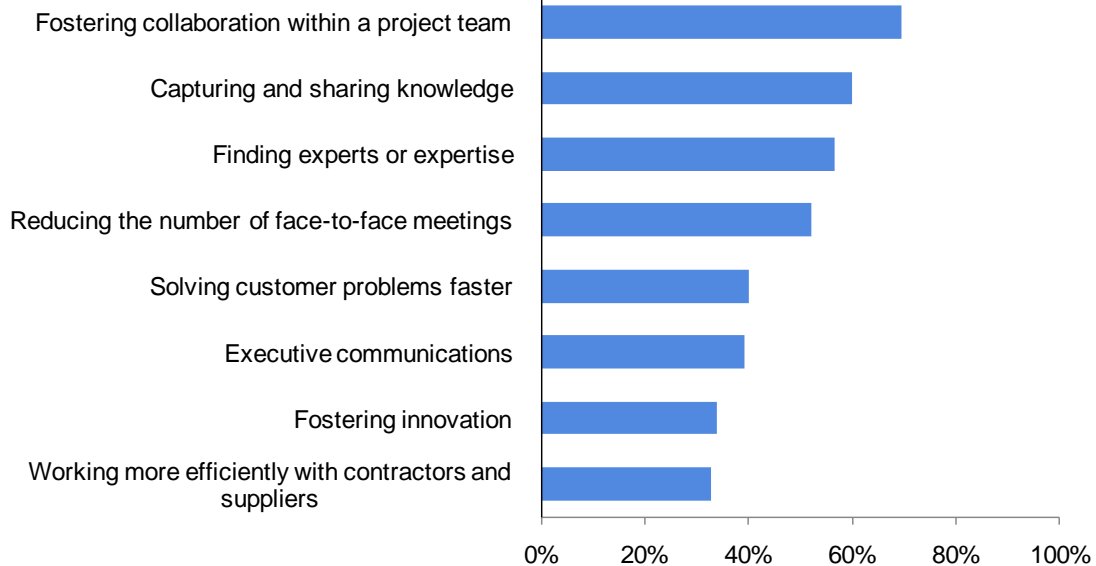
These are all benefits of better and stronger connections between people, information, and each other derived from enterprise social networking and collaboration applications. The study results show that (see Figure 2):

- **The connection benefits of social networking mirror those of smartphones.** Social technologies, particularly enterprise social technologies, give employees in professional services firms the tools to work more closely and effectively on project teams. This collaboration benefit rises to the top of a long list of business benefits of social networking: capturing knowledge, finding experts and expertise, and reducing the need for face-to-face meetings.
- **Social networking and collaboration tools are teed up next on smartphones.** Basic messaging and collaboration tools like email and calendaring are found on both computers and smartphones today. But advanced tools and, particularly, enterprise social and collaboration technologies are common on computers but much less so on smartphones today. It's time to push these advanced technologies out to smartphone-wielding employees so they can achieve these benefits from every location.

**Figure 2**

Collaboration And Knowledge Sharing Are The Most Common Social Networking Benefits

**“What business benefits does business (internal) social technology on computers provide?” (please select all that apply)**



Base: 150 IT decision-makers

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Research In Motion, May 2010

## Deploying Social Technology On Smartphones Is A Perfect Union

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It is the union of smartphones and social networking that lies at the heart of this analysis. Smartphones make social and collaboration technology more valuable precisely because the connection benefits — and the user populations — overlap and reinforce each other.

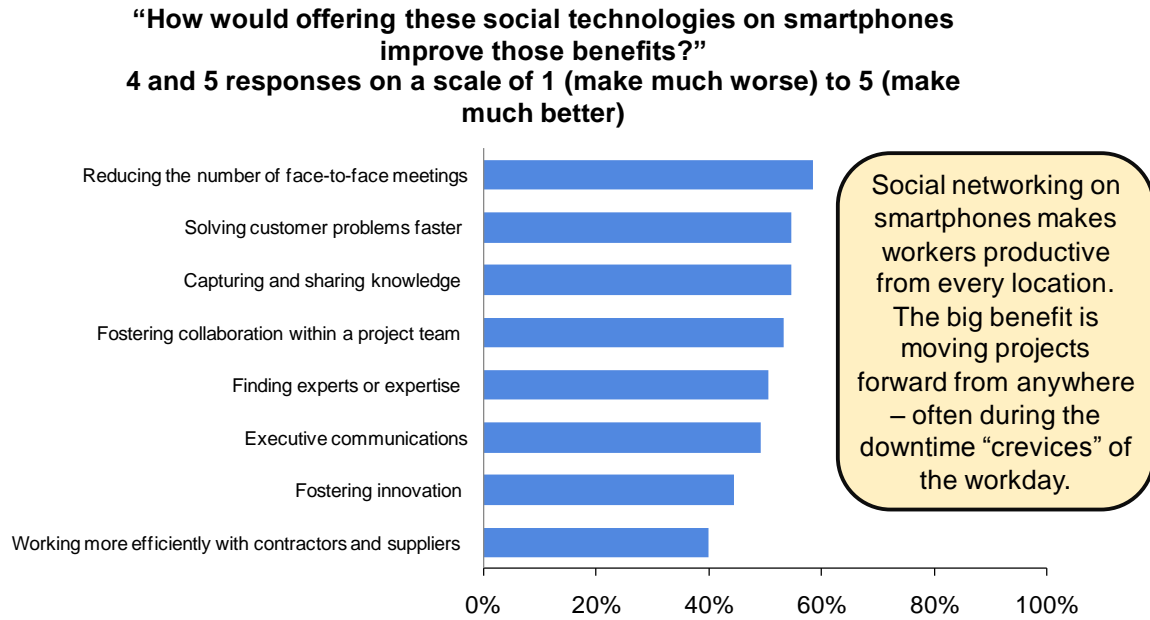
Smartphones make people productive away from their desks, while at a client site or in a project meeting. Social networking is valuable because employees can more easily find and share the information and communicate with the people they need to make better business decisions and foster client feedback. This is a particularly important force in professional services industries like consulting, legal, engineering, and accounting where the nature of the work is information-intensive and where being productive equals being client-centric.

Deploying enterprise social networking and collaboration technology on smartphones adds the power of smartphones to make employees productive from anywhere to the benefits of social technology. The survey respondents were bullish and enthusiastic in the force multiplier benefits of the social-smartphone combination (see Figure 3-1):

- **Smartphones bring significant new value to social connection benefits.** When we asked IT decision-makers about the potential impact of enterprise social networking on smartphones, the results were resounding, “let’s do it.” A majority of firms expect that this combination will pay off in reducing meetings, faster customer action, and better collaboration. With so many employees working away from their desks, having these applications on smartphones just makes sense. To not do so is a lost opportunity to improve productivity and efficiency.
- **Larger firms find even more compelling benefits for social technology on smartphones.** Breaking down these results by firm size shows another important outcome. Larger firms will get more benefit than smaller firms by deploying enterprise social applications on smartphones. The reasons are direct and obvious: Collaboration is harder in larger firms, where teams are distributed and experts are often far away from each other. Enterprise social technology and smartphones bring small-firm agility to large firms by enabling mobile collaboration (see Figure 3-2).
- **Employees in every department are ready for social applications on smartphones.** Employees in every department are getting value from smartphones and from enterprise social technology. Customer-facing departments like sales and service delivery teams are big adopters of both technologies, as is IT. Senior executives are the biggest users of smartphones but are lagging in their use of social technology today. Putting social technology on smartphones will make this highly mobile group even more connected and productive.

**Figure 3-1**

Smartphones Will Significantly Improve The Business Benefits Of Social Technology

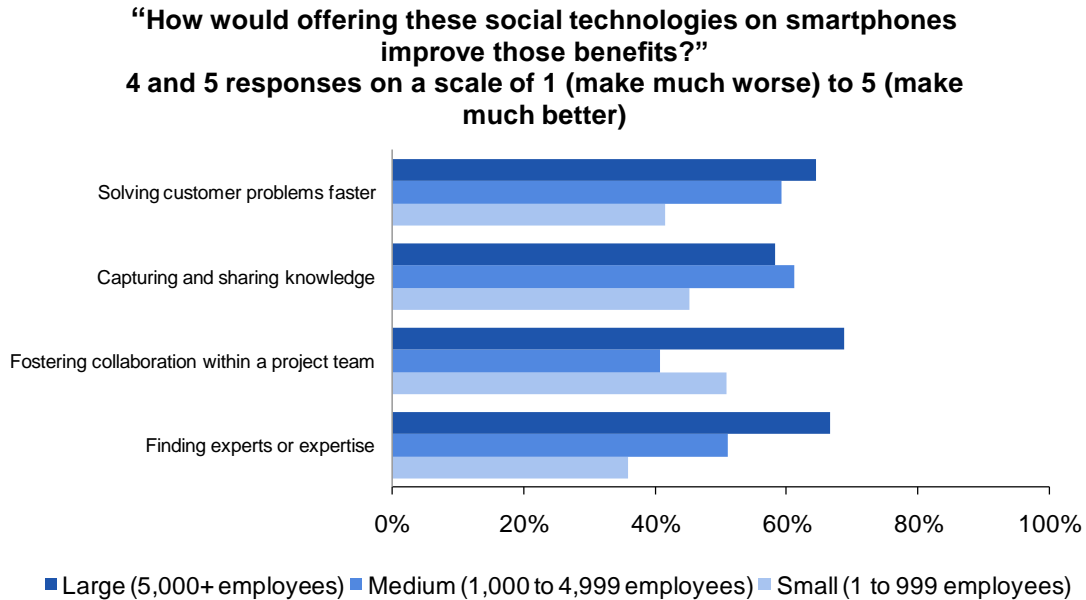


Base: 150 IT decision-makers

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Research In Motion, May 2010

**Figure 3-2**

Larger Firms Expect To See Even More Benefits From Social Software On Smartphones



Base: 150 IT decision-makers

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Research In Motion, May 2010

## Solutions To Practical Concerns Are Within Reach: Security, Management, Appropriate Use

The perfect union that is social applications on smartphones could turn into a perfect nightmare without the right investments in security, device and application management, and appropriate use policies. Many IT organizations have raised concerns over social technologies, particularly on smartphones, because:

- **Smartphones introduce more risk of information loss and security exposure.** Any application on a smartphone introduces risk. Whenever information is stored on an endpoint outside the controlled corporate network, it's at risk and must be secured. This is not a new concern and is one that an end-to-end smartphone platform provider will address. Securing the data from the corporate server, through the network, and onto the device eliminates many of these concerns.
- **Social technology also introduces risk of information loss and security exposure.** Putting social technology on a computer brings new information security and compliance risks. These risks can be best mitigated by deploying enterprise social networking applications that are tied into the corporate security services.

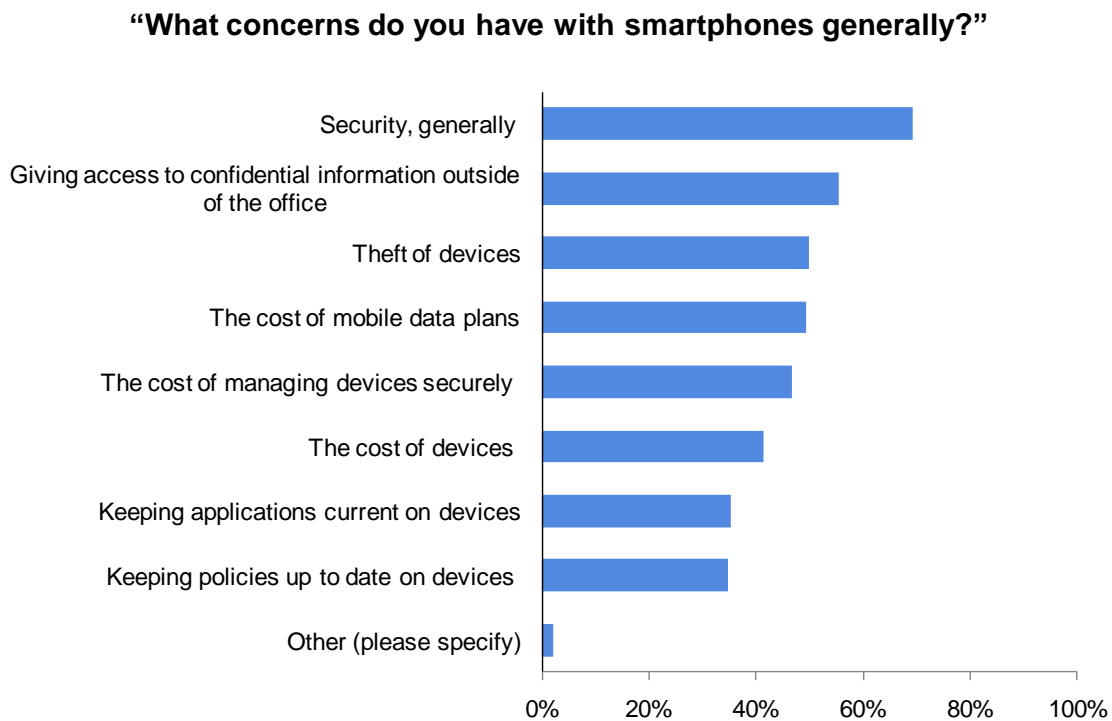
For example, these tools allow firms to use group policy to control access to internal community sites or hide search results from prying eyes.

- **Deploying social technology on smartphones amplifies those risks.** The risks could potentially increase when social applications are deployed on smartphones. While enterprise social networking is a necessary and important first step to keep information secure and in compliance, the solution must be integrated with a smartphone solution that protects information on the device and on the network. Fortunately, these solutions exist today.

These concerns are entirely appropriate. Even well-intentioned smartphone-wielding employees are taking valuable business information with them where they go. And if that information includes the kind of rich text and customer data that's often found in social and collaboration applications for expertise location or project management, that risk is compounded. But the risk is also entirely manageable — with the right investments in appropriate use policies and training for employees, the right focus on enterprise social networking tools, and investments in end-to-end device security and management (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4**

Security, Access, And Theft Lead The List Of Smartphone Concerns



Base: 150 IT decision-makers

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Research In Motion, May 2010

## How To Implement Enterprise Social Networking On Smartphones

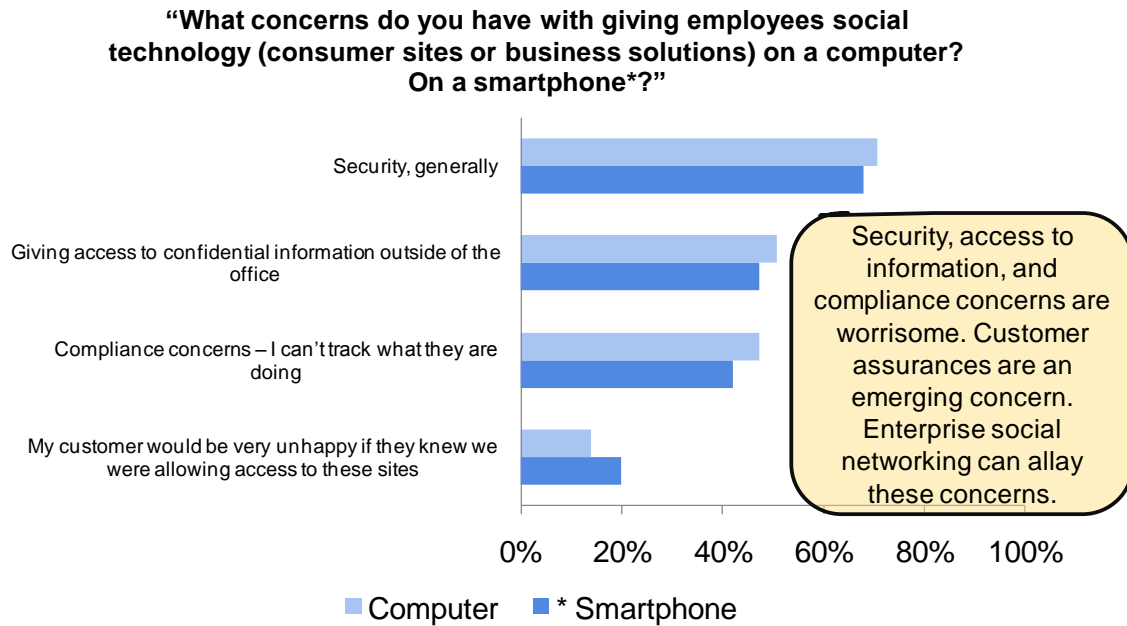
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In our study, we also found that employees are using public social networks and sites to get work done, sometimes in violation of the firm's policies and the best interests of the firm and its clients (see Figure 5). While this bottom-up adoption reveals the need for better social and collaboration tools, it often comes with too much regulatory and security risk. To provide a safe alternative to these consumer social networks, firms must step up to implement enterprise social networking and collaboration on smartphones. Use a four-step checklist to build the right support and get started in the right direction:

1. **Find business sponsors with a problem — and a passion to fix it.** It's not enough just to offer social technology on smartphones and hope employees use it. Instead, tune into the problems that your business is having, and find someone with a problem — and the passion to resolve it. You might find this person in a likely spot — in a customer advance team, for example, where the need to quickly find and secure project resources is important. Or you might find her in an unlikely spot — in a sourcing and procurement team, for example. But make sure the person understands the problem and the opportunity before starting.
2. **Build a social application, not just a social networking tool set.** Employees need more than a basket of tools to harness the power of social networking; they need an application that pulls together the materials they need and provides the resources to accomplish the task and the tools to execute. For example, that customer advance team, whose job is to assess the current situation and find people and expertise to assemble a project team, needs access to the corporate skills directory, a project team site for collaboration and information capture, and possible instant messaging access to quickly bring in an expert during an intake process. Together, this is a customer onboarding application.
3. **Choose enterprise social networking and collaboration applications with smartphone clients.** This sounds like an obvious point, but to bring features like profile search, status updates, presence, and document retrieval to a smartphone requires a native application or a redesigned mobile Web site. The power of an installed dedicated mobile application, particularly if it's integrated with other smartphone applications for contact management, email, or calendar, will put the social interaction into a broader collaborative context.
4. **Revisit your smartphone management and security policies and protocols to make sure they handle the new risks.** In order to safely deploy social applications on smartphone, your device security and management systems — and policies — must be robust and tuned to the additional sources of information risk. In particular, the devices should be remotely wipeable and able to automatically receive data and application updates and new policies over the air.

**Figure 5**

Concerns Over Social Technology On A Computer Are The Same As On A Smartphone



Base: 150 IT decision-makers

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Research In Motion, May 2010

## Appendix A: Methodology

In this study, Forrester conducted an online survey of 150 IT decision-makers in consulting, engineering, accounting, and law organizations in North America to evaluate the benefits and concerns of deploying enterprise social technology on smartphones. Survey participants included decision-makers in IT familiar with collaboration and smartphone purchases. The study began in March 2010 and was completed in June 2010.

## Appendix B: Supplemental Material

### Related Forrester Research

“Best Practices For Introducing Social Technologies,” Forrester Research, Inc., March 2, 2010

“The Forrester Wave™: Mobile Device Management Solutions, Q2 2009,” Forrester Research, Inc., April 27, 2009

“Collaboration Needs Will Fuel A Smartphone Surge,” Forrester Research, Inc., January 6, 2010

## Appendix C: Firmographic Data

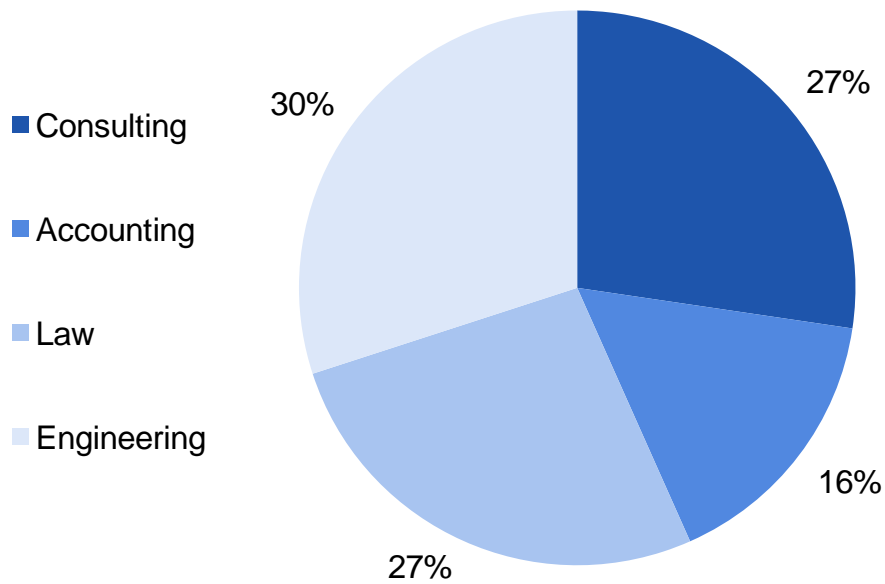
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**Figure 6**

Respondents Are Balanced Across Professional Services Industries

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**“What, specifically, is your organization’s primary type of business at your location?”**



Base: 150 IT decision-makers

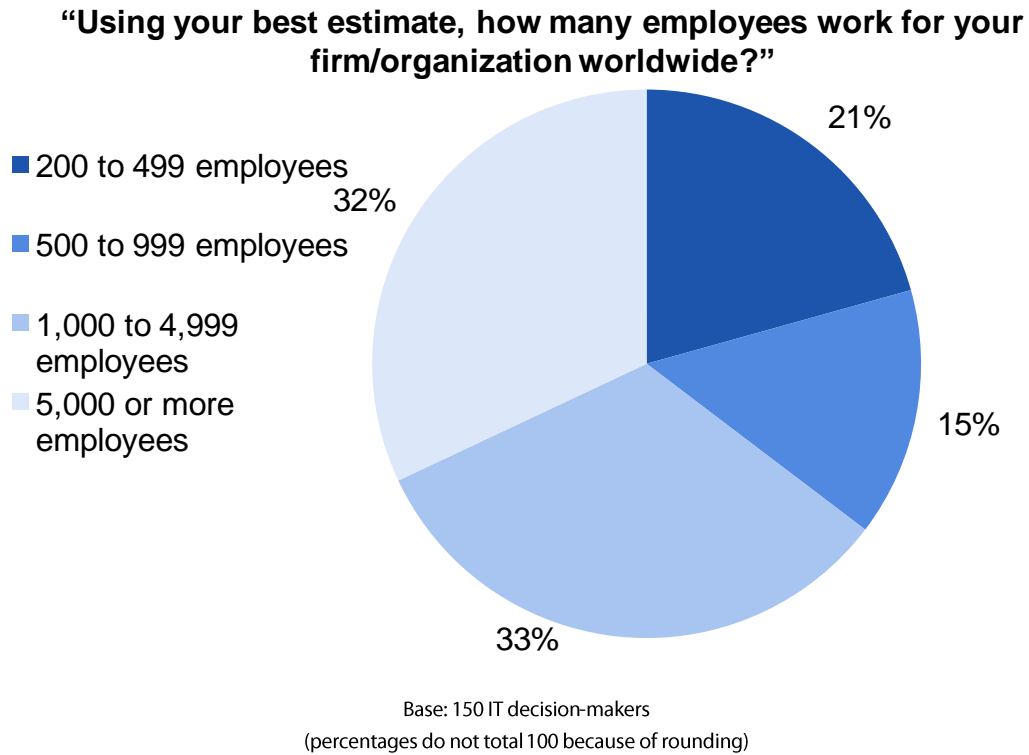
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Research In Motion, May 2010

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**Figure 7**

Respondents Included Small, Medium, And Large Professional Services Firms

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Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Research In Motion, May 2010

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**Appendix D: Endnotes**

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<sup>1</sup> Source: *The Facebook Blog* (<http://blog.facebook.com/blog.php?post=297879717130>)