

Alcatel-Lucent

The 2.0
Adoption
Council



Using E2.0 To Level-Set An Organization

Greg Lowe, Collaboration/Social Media Strategist

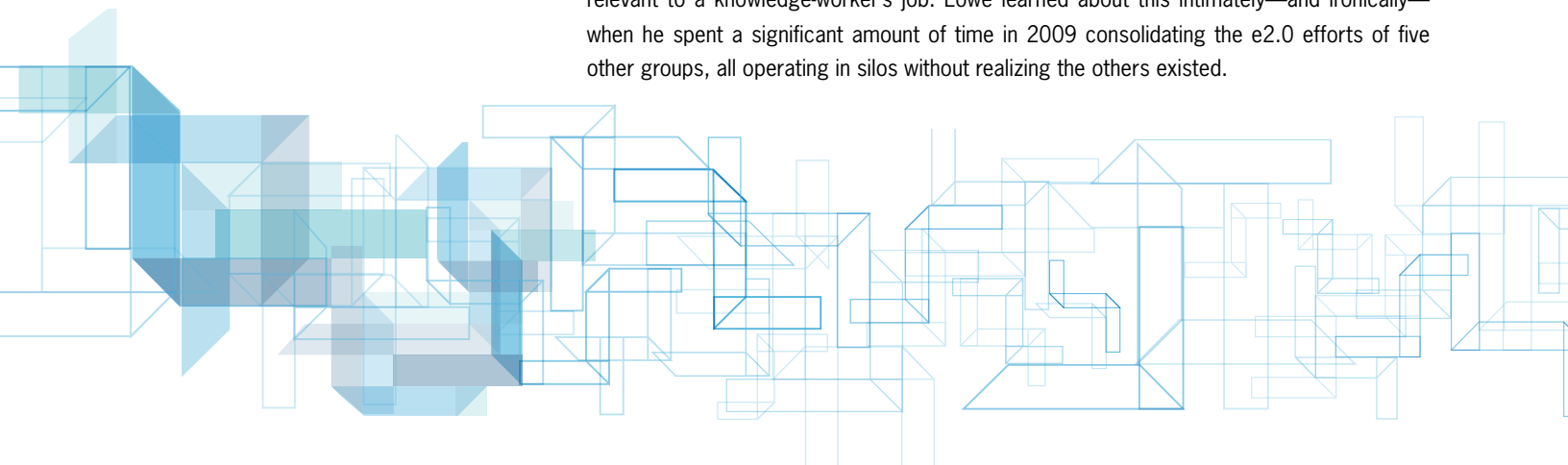
With more than 77,000 employees and over \$15 billion in yearly revenue, Alcatel-Lucent is a major player in the global telecommunications industry, an industry that is driven by innovation and technical expertise. And like any large company in any industry, it grapples with the challenge of ensuring that institutional knowledge is retained and that all employees are kept up-to-date on projects that are of interest to them.

“Change is part of business today.” In the fall of 2008, Greg Lowe became the fourth person at Alcatel-Lucent to sign up for the micro-blogging tool Yammer; the other three were in Italy, Romania, and France. Within minutes, Lowe found himself collaborating with employees across the globe. It didn't take much longer for him to realize how Enterprise 2.0 (e2.0) technologies could change the way employees collaborate and share knowledge.

“Change is part of business today. Companies merge, spin off, acquire and reorganize as they adapt to the market, and that can make it challenging for individuals to know where the expertise resides within their own company, sometimes hampering its ability to fully use its own assets,” Lowe said.


In 2006, Alcatel-Lucent itself was formed by a merger of two major players in the telecom industry, and has acquired smaller companies since that merger. Due to the structure of its large and global workforce, the company is still evolving—and the potential for future mergers and acquisitions is always present. Lowe realized that when these changes occur, employees often have a difficult time finding co-workers who have certain skill sets and levels of expertise they need. If employees leave as a result of this situation, they often take valuable knowledge with them.


It's also nearly impossible to keep track of projects in other departments that might be relevant to a knowledge-worker's job. Lowe learned about this intimately—and ironically—when he spent a significant amount of time in 2009 consolidating the e2.0 efforts of five other groups, all operating in silos without realizing the others existed.



“The benefits of social software are difficult to quantify.” To solve these problems, Alcatel-Lucent deployed a community-based solution in April 2009. This initiative took social to a new level within the company as many more employees could relate to the concepts of discussion forums, blogs, and wikis as opposed to micro-blogging. Today, both communities (micro-blogging and the community-based solution) are thriving and each are providing unique value to the company.

The benefits of social software are difficult to quantify as they do not lend themselves naturally to metrics and measurements. Lowe focused on “soft” benefits when presenting his case to executives. He highlighted how e2.0 tools could help with knowledge retention, how the tools could ensure multiple groups weren't working on similar projects, and how much time employees could save by being able to collaborate more efficiently. Alcatel-Lucent —just like any large company—could reduce costs by increasing employee efficiency and eliminating extraneous efforts. Ultimately, it was this message that resonated with senior leadership and helped Lowe secure the continued support and investment from top leadership for 2010 and beyond.

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