

Better decision making with IBM social business solutions

Taking collaboration and innovation to a whole new level



IBM social business solutions

The old adage, “It is not what you know, but who you know,” is taking on a deeper meaning in business where the use of social tools is becoming the norm. We live in a people-centric world. To get the job done, we need to find the **right** people with the **right** information ... or they need to find us.

One of the best ways to make those connections is by taking advantage of *social context*—your sources for people and information with the use of social business tools. Social business tools help you determine what and who is relevant—and the best way to reach out to them. These social business tools help you complete a transaction or a process, close an issue, discuss new ideas or make a business decision.

IBM has a comprehensive portfolio of social business tools to take advantage of social context. This paper is designed to show how social business tools from IBM work together in the “real world” to help you connect to the right people faster. It also features case studies on how companies are using IBM social business solutions to make better decisions that ultimately increase profitability.

IBM Sametime and IBM Connections

IBM offers the social communications platform IBM® Sametime® as well as social tools such as IBM Connections.

IBM Sametime lets you communicate instantly through chat, voice and video, and then meet through online meeting spaces. It helps organizations save time, increase communication effectiveness and save on the costs involved in bringing groups together physically.

Sametime includes:

- **Instant messaging.** Allows two or more users to quickly communicate and share information interactively.
- **Voice and Video Chat.** Launches voice and video calls with colleagues with one click for quick, real-time discussions when chat is not enough.
- **Online meetings.** Helps facilitate meetings with multiple users at once. It enables teams to collaborate using high-definition continuous-presence audio and video without having to bring everyone together, face to face. Users are able to make presentations, share resources and work together in real time.
- **Community broadcast channels.** Allows users to broadcast announcements, poll groups of users and interact with experts to find answers quickly.
- **Chat rooms.** Provides a real-time system of record for secure conversations. Chat rooms feature individual file repositories and the ability to export chat transcripts as FAQs into a dedicated database.

IBM Connections provides business-oriented social networking tools that reduce redundant work with a consolidated, customizable overview of a user’s social network. It promotes fast action around projects—allowing users to access status updates and content changes from their network.

Connections provides tool such as:

- **Profiles.** Find the people and expertise needed quickly. Information about members of an organization is stored and can be used to search for people with the desired knowledge and skills.
- **Communities.** Form communities of interest among groups of users to share common interests—exchanging and sharing information and ideas.

- **Social analytics.** Receive personalized, smart recommendations for the people, communities and content that users would likely want to follow.
- **Ideation.** Gather new ideas from a group and merge duplicates to streamline and organize categories of ideas.
- **Metrics.** View reports and dashboards to monitor adoption and community vitality. Receive a comprehensive set of metrics of all Connections services and page view.
- **Media Gallery.** Upload images and videos for viewing on-line or store uploaded images and videos into the Files repository for easy download.
- **Events.** Use a built-in event calendar for a central place to plan and coordinate team events.
- **Activities.** Manage coordinated work efforts through tasks and shared supporting documents. Gather the emails, IM chats, documents, messages and other information that a team needs to accomplish a project.
- **Files and Documents.** Share, edit and publish documents, spreadsheets and presentations collaboratively— without sending large attachments through email. Users spend less time searching for information.
- **Bookmarks.** Bookmark any web page and track bookmarks for quick access—all in a single place. Surface popular bookmarks and see what topics are trending.
- **Forums.** Start discussions, exchange ideas, brainstorm and collect feedback.
- **Wikis.** Edit team content collaboratively in a central place. Easily post, share and comment on content.
- **Blogs.** Write articles and share knowledge with the whole organization using a web log or online journal.

Another important feature of Connections is the ability to tag or categorize all the content within it—making information easier to find. It also has a plug-in to allow users to access Connections directly from Microsoft Windows Explorer and Microsoft Office.

These solutions can be delivered on-premises or through the Cloud using **SmartCloud for Social Business** and **IBM MobileFirst Collaboration Services**.

Together, IBM Connections and IBM Sametime give you a stage to tell the world:

- **Who** you are, who is in your network and things you may have in common.
- **What** you like, what you think and what projects you are working on.
- **Where** you are located at any given time.
- **Why** you may be important for others to know.
- **How** others can contact you.

Integration of IBM Sametime and IBM Connections

Integration with Sametime gives Connections access to a large set of real-time communication channels.

For instance, save chat transcripts to Activities or Community forums, view Activities from Sametime and view Profile information from a buddy list. Build communities of experts in either Connections or Sametime and then synchronize those communities. A Connections community user can send broadcasts to members of a Sametime community for assistance and vice-versa.

The Profiles feature of Connections can be integrated with Sametime to provide online awareness within a user's Profile entry. With this feature, a user can see who is available online and can initiate a chat directly with that person. The Communities feature of Connections can also consume RSS feeds from external sources.

You are also able to go from a business card on Connections to a Sametime chat session. From there you can go to voice chat, to video chat or a phone call using the Sametime soft phone.

Key features of IBM Sametime

IBM Sametime makes it easy to reach someone. It provides real-time communication channels through a variety of devices beyond the soft phone. When Sametime is integrated with your telephony service, the Sametime softphone can call out to phone

numbers. Sametime Unified Telephony can then route calls to the device that is most appropriate. Thanks to Sametime Unified Telephony's multi-device support and intelligent call routing, users can be reached on their preferred device when a caller dials their unified number. (See Figure 1.)

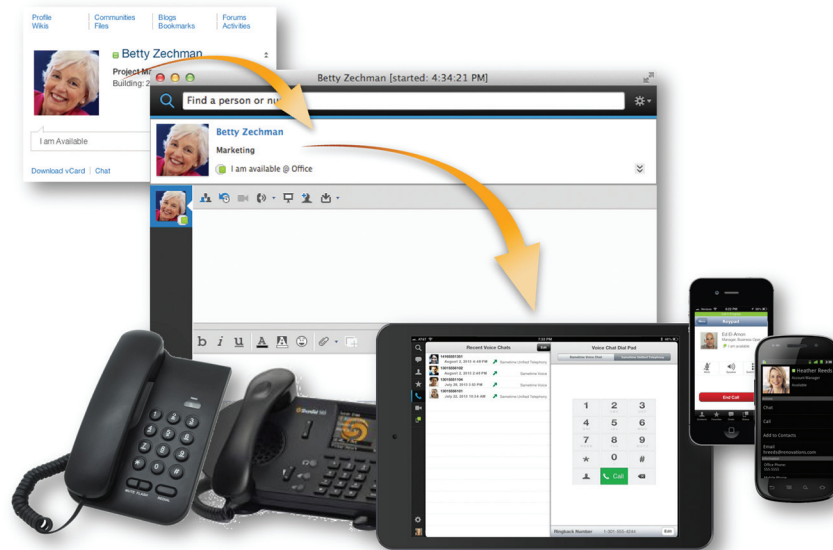


Figure 1. IBM Sametime provides real-time communication channels through a variety of devices beyond the soft phone.

Sametime's rich media channels also include Sametime's enterprise-class audio and video—as well as integration with third-party systems. When voice is not enough, you can always jump to a video call. Or chat first and then collaborate in an online

meeting room to finish a project. You can also join an online meeting room using the Sametime Connect client desktop application—from your Web browser or Android or iOS mobile device. (See *Figure 2*.)



Figure 2. IBM Sametime provides enterprise-class audio and video as well as integration with third-party systems.

Find out what you have in common with others through IBM Connections using **Tags** and **Things in Common**. Use **The Board** to access recent posts in communities, files, blogs, bookmarks, forums and activities. Under **Profiles by Name**, you can find people by name, expertise or by keyword.

Who Connects Us? and **Report-to Chain** helps you get a sense of where someone is in the organization, who they are associated with and how they relate to you. Under **Experiences** you can check out someone's experience, skills and past projects.

By checking **Network**, you can reach out to others from a person's network. Under **Organization View**, you can look people up in the organization hierarchy and decide whether to ping them, based on where they are and on their availability status.

With **Broadcast Communities** you can also find people through announcements, broadcast chats, using Skill Tap or even launching a poll asking for answers. (See Figure 3.)

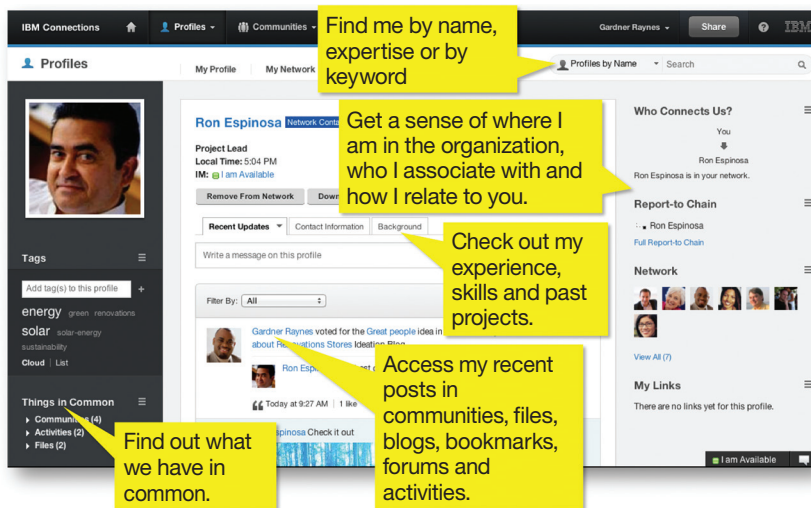


Figure 3. IBM Sametime has a variety of ways to find people who likely have the specific expertise you want.

If you decide a person is relevant to what you are doing, you can check their availability. If their presence indicator is green, you can send them an instant message to see if they can chat, talk, meet or join an ongoing conversation—even a video call.

Sametime lets you decide whether you want to be available to them as well. In addition to the Sametime availability status, you can set a descriptive status message to provide others additional information. (See Figure 4.)

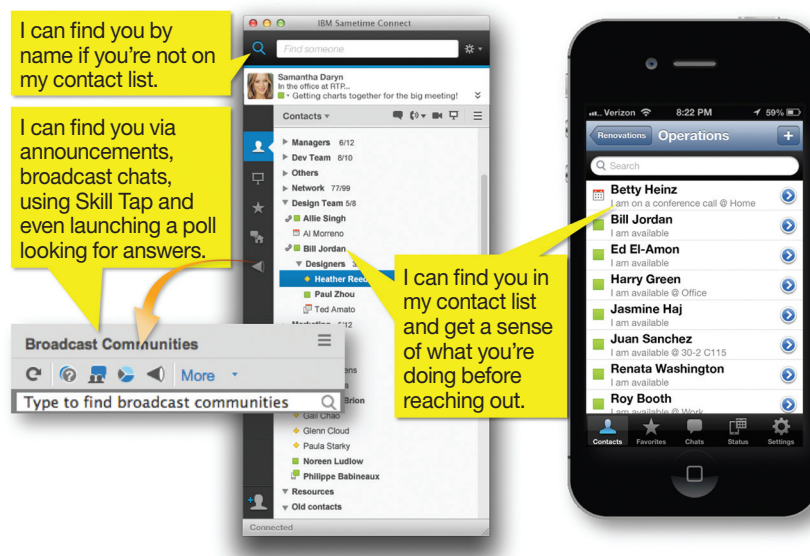


Figure 4. Once you have found the appropriate people, IBM Sametime has a variety of ways to contact those individuals.

Key features of IBM Connections

A key feature of IBM Connections is **Communities**. It can be used as a gathering place to share knowledge, ideas and interests. It is a common context for working together and innovating.

Use Communities to get to know people you have not met yet. Even if you have not met someone, you already know you have something in common with them. Communities can make introductions easier and creates an environment for better collaboration. You can check their availability status to connect in real time. Or click on a community member's business card to learn more about them. You are able to reach out to community

members directly from their business cards. You can access IBM Communities information directly from the Sametime Connect client. If you need to go deep into the organizational tree, or ping multiple people at once, Sametime has plug-ins for that purpose.

Organization View helps you locate people based on their standing in the organization's hierarchy. **Persistent Chat Rooms** allow you to capture knowledge and insight just by keeping the conversation alive. Send announcements, questions, alerts and polls to all community members at the same time in real time through **Broadcast Communities**. (See Figure 5.)

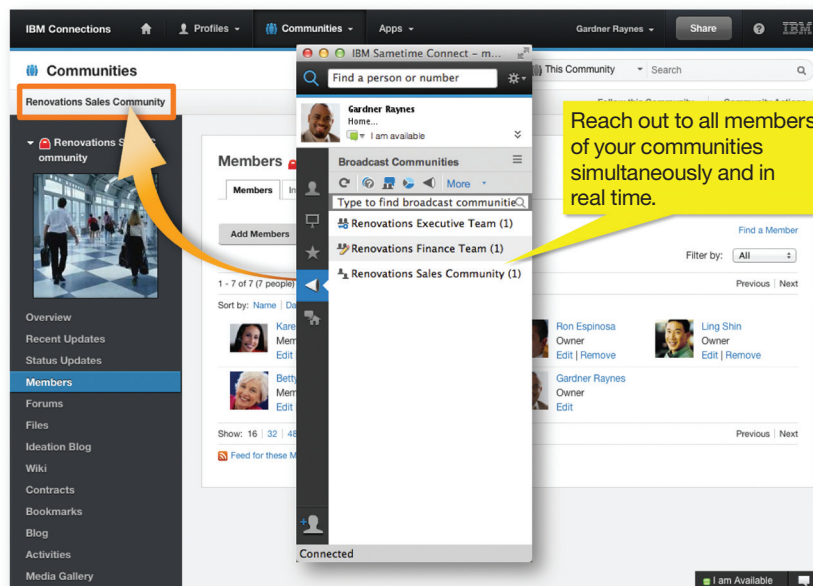


Figure 5. Communities can make introductions easier and creates an environment for better collaboration.

The new **IBM Sametime Widgets for Connections** are designed for Connections Communities. You can install them on a community home page if you are the owner of that community. These widgets help to give a closer, seamless and more intuitive integrated experience with IBM Connections.

The **IBM Sametime Video Chat Widget for Connections** launches a video chat session that is open to all members of the community. Any community member can start the session and others can join while the session is open. The **Persistent Chat Rooms Widget** provides access to community-owned persistent chat rooms. The **Meeting Rooms Widget** brings community-owned meeting rooms to IBM Connections. (See *Figure 6*.)

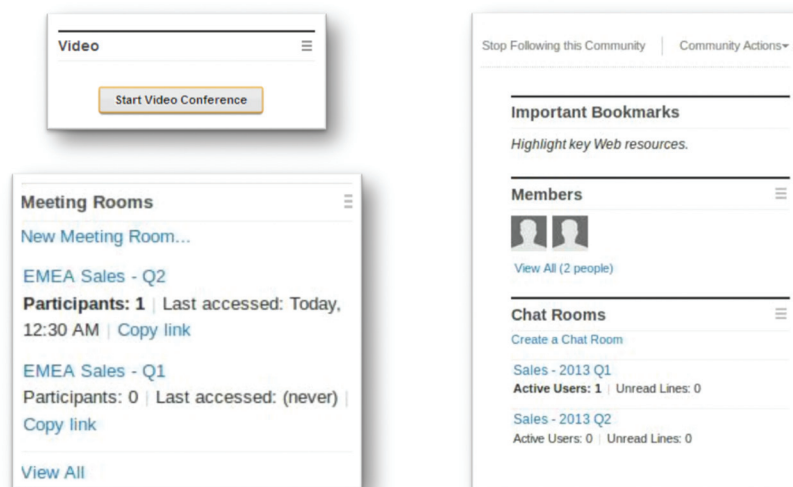


Figure 6. Widgets help to give a closer, seamless and more intuitive integrated experience with IBM Connections.

In summary, IBM's social business platform helps you connect to others quickly for better decision making. You are able to efficiently use networks of people to produce tangible business value.

Case Studies: Putting social business solutions into practice

Here are three case studies on how organizations are taking advantage of IBM Social business solutions to speed their work, make better decisions and improve profitability.

Case study 1: Pooling knowledge through portal, social networking and real-time communication

To help accelerate its globalization and improve employee communication, an international firm needed a system that would:

- Enable its employees to share common information.
- Collectively understand strategic directions and goals.
- Help world-wide employee collaboration.

The company also wanted the ability to identify and bring together individual employees based on their experience, skills and expertise.

Working with IBM, the company created a global platform for collaboration and knowledge sharing based on IBM WebSphere Portal, IBM Connections social networking and IBM Sametime instant messaging software. This enterprise-wide intranet provides a secure environment for pooling expertise and intellectual capital internationally.

Profiles support fast identification of employees with specific expertise, background and skills for answers to questions, consultation and project staffing. Wikis and Files give access to information in documents and presentations—such as training course materials. Blogs enable posting of breaking news, executive messages and real-time feedback from the local centers around the world. Communities let employees form virtual groups based on interests, expertise and business needs. Tag technology for easy filtering is used for all functions, giving users quick paths to needed people and information— independent of time and place. And, of course, employees can then use Sametime to communicate and collaborate with those with relevant expertise.

“[Now] we can collaborate more quickly, more efficiently, at a deeper level to foster innovation and see our work in a new light.”

—Company CEO

The firm can now more easily identify educational content and approaches that have worked in one geographic region and then to apply these more broadly around the globe. This has transformed the company from a regionalized operation to an agile, global one. As a result, it is able to deploy higher-quality, proven educational offerings to both its external markets and its employee population more quickly. This has increased customer satisfaction across regions.

Case study 2: Social business platform helps to extend expertise that can save lives

A children’s hospital wanted to connect international medical experts with caregivers around the world. This collaboration would help to provide equal access to best practices and the latest medical knowledge—even in remote areas of the world. The hospital worked with IBM and a variety of IBM software products, cloud services and research projects to create an interactive cloud-based education and collaboration platform.

This IBM social business platform brings together a global community of healthcare workers, students and medical experts in a continuous learning environment. IBM Connections enables clinicians to grow their skills in a social environment with complementary expert and peer contextual commentary, onboarding support, profile management and search capabilities. IBM Sametime connects clinicians with colleagues and mentors. This real-time interaction reduces information bottlenecks and maximizes access to the most relevant information.

Caregivers not only learn from experts how to diagnose and treat acute childhood illnesses, but they can also interact with each other. This level of collaboration sustains ongoing discussions about effective practices in a clinical setting and contributes to a rich repository of combined knowledge. It is the first application for continuing medical education outside of an institution—a paradigm shift that could revolutionize post-graduate medical education.

“[The solution] is an open forum to connect healthcare providers around the world. The idea is to leverage technology to promote worldwide sharing and exchange of knowledge to rescue children from crisis.”

—A physician participant

The introduction of the social business platform has produced concrete results:

- More than 1,000 users participated in the first year, representing 343 hospitals in 74 countries.
- Caregivers outside the hospital received real time information on how to treat critically ill children more effectively.
- Infection rates in one hospital dropped after a procedural change that was prompted by interactions with medical experts.

Case study 3: Better products through better collaboration

An advanced-materials electronics manufacturer in the United States was looking for a way to increase employee engagement and collaboration. It was hoping to promote better decision making and collective ownership of problems.

The firm sought a social platform that would nurture common interests among employees and create new business initiatives through better communication of corporate programs, news and announcements.

The company worked with an IBM service provider to implement IBM Connections and IBM Sametime to create this collaborative social platform. Sametime provides employees with instant messaging and web conferencing capabilities. Connections software integrates several systems into one platform, including the client’s SAP human resources solution and the Sametime software. Connections allows users to create forums, participate in blogs and effectively manage projects and assignments.

IBM Sametime and IBM Connections helped to increase employee engagement and collaboration, improve access to information, gain more control over vendor communication expenditures and decrease project execution and decision making times.

The manufacturer is reporting an increase in employee engagement, leading to better and more employee-friendly policies within the organization. By centrally locating information, users are able to quickly reference materials and locate experts—dramatically decreasing project execution and decision making times. The company plans to integrate external vendors into the system to help control expenditure for vendor communication. It hopes that by establishing effective communication methods with vendors, it will also improve products and help promote business success.

Conclusion

Using IBM social business solutions, organizations are better harnessing their use of social media. The combination of IBM Sametime and IBM Connections enhances communications through presence awareness and instant chat from multiple entry points. They also help foster knowledge sharing through multiple product features, as well as improving workflow and work processes.

Learn more on how you can:

- Organize and improve work efforts.
- Provide productive teaming opportunities.
- Help users find and access knowledgeable resources and instantly connect with them.
- Share and make available intellectual capital to the whole organization.

For more information

To learn more about the IBM Social Business Solutions, please contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit the following website: ibm.com/social-business

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Software Group
Route 100
Somers, NY 10589

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