

## Podcast: SAP and Social Media - BS or Value? Live from Madrid

"A live recording about the future of SAP tech skills, taped in the Madrid expert lounge"

Podcast Taping Date: November 9, 2011

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With all the JD-OD.com videos posted, it's time to catch up with the best of the audio, including this session from SAP TechED Madrid, on "SAP Social Media: BS or Value." Taped live at my expert lounge session, this was a typical JonERP "unpresentation" with no slides, just an uncensored and hopefully valuable conversation. We talked for 25 minutes, digging into whether there is value in social media for SAP professionals and how you go about finding it.

I was fortunate to have some very savvy SAP Twitter uses and community members to spice this one up, including: Chris Kernaghan (aka "BoobBoo"), Fred Verheul, and Steve Rumsby. As a side note, it's interesting how each of these guys has a different personality and tweeting style, but they also have fundamental similarities in their views on building community with social tools.

The participants wanted to talk about the value of social media for both SAP professionals and project teams, so we covered each aspect. I suppose what makes my view on this topic different is that I'm deeply cynical about the misuse and noise created by these new tools, but at the same time, frequently startled by the possibilities of social media to deepen relationships in ways that are the furthest thing from BS. I think you get a sense of this from the talk, and the participants added a lot of insight into the actual application of these tools in the SAP world. One fascinating karmic aspect to social media: the more you focus on what you are going to get out of it, the less you actually get. Whereas if you share things that matter, the payoff is simply an organic byproduct.

I see effective SAP social media participation as three phase process that requires (and needs)no viral eyeball counting obsessions. It's simply: 1. Listen to the experts in your field, 2. create meaningful content that advances that conversation, and then 3. engage in the discussion wherever that discussion is happening. All metrics and stats do in the end is prove these points are unavoidably true. Deviating from them carries reputation dangers...

If you enjoyed this one, you might also want to hear my SAP social media podcast from Las Vegas. Note: this podcast is rated PG-13 for occasional blunt language!

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### Podcast Highlights

1:00 What's on the participant's minds? Chris: I'm a huge believer in social media and the SAP community, but there is the darker side, as well, with trolls and such, so it would be good to talk about that. Jon: There's a big distinction between SAP social media in a personal community and brand building kind of way, versus using it for companies and project teams, so let me know which aspect you want to talk about. In many ways, it's easier for an individual SAP professional to use these tools - once you get into corporate social media, there are more barriers to address, including posting

guidelines, liability, and cultural fit. Participant: I'm interesting in social media for general networking and finding new jobs. Participant: I tried to build up a small community of SAP BI developers to work together inside a company and it's very difficult, so I want to know: how can I get the people to contribute something. I started up a SharePoint, and it's been empty for weeks, it's very difficult to start it up, the people don't see the value for themselves.

3:20 Chris: We've been using Yammer, an enterprise class Twitter-like tool, which enables us to interact the same way that Twitter does in real-time and also pass documents. We have tens of thousands of members on the Yammer community, and it's something that we use really heavily. Our CTOs back it. It started out underground, but then our social media guidelines grew from that and Yammer enables collaboration globally, so you may want to look at a tool like that. Jon: there's also ESME, a project that has some SAP Mentors and other open source developers behind it.

5:00 Jon: user adoption of these tools is becoming an issue - even with Google Plus, which had a very resource-intensive launch, many folks weren't saying that they don't didn't have the bandwidth to get involved on another site. The proliferation of noise affects personal and company social media projects and impacts the level urgency folks feel about these tools, so they have to be relevant to fuel adoption. As for the "SAP social media BS or value" question, Klout is bullshit, clubbiness is bull shit, Getting back to your job question, it can be awkward to put "actively seeking work" on your LinkedIn profile, so immediate job gratification can be tough with social media.

With a longer view, there are certainly ways you can network to build a strong job referral community around you. It's a combination of social internet stuff and events like this. Building a better network is what leads to opportunities. People question the value of social media because your boss doesn't give you a big raise based on your, blog following. But: if you build your visibility up by using the tools to add value to the SAP community, you can increase your perception of employability beyond company walls. Strangely, the more you focus on what you're going to get out of it, the less you get. The more you find other motivations to contribute, the better your payoff is, when you tap into the passion at the core of your expertise.

8:00 Chris: like Jim Snabe said about the data question, when you have bad data, you just get bad results faster. I've been saying that since when HANA's been announced, and you and I got into an exchange about that on Twitter today. Jon: the key is to figure out where to develop expertise and master that area. It may be beyond SAP, so if you're interested in CRM, it's important to understand the scope of that market as well. You need to figure out how you are going to creatively express your expertise in a way that you can sustain over time. That means figuring out what mediums are going to work for you, whether it's workshops and lectures, white papers, or blogging. Some folks like do to frequent informal blogs, whereas in my case I prefer Twitter for short bursts, and then blog posts with more research in them. But then I also enjoy podcasting and video, so in my case, that's what works.

In my world, Facebook isn't usually the best platforms, but it might work for you. You can still start your own blog and get people linking to that, but you will still need to go to where people are as well, whether it's SCN forums, LinkedIn, etc. "Thought leader" is a pretentious phrase, but there is something to be said for raising the bar on yourself for what you can achieve. Listen to the experts in your field, create meaningful content that advances the conversation, and then engage in the discussion around it wherever that discussion is happening. get more enjoyment, better sense of community, the better SAP professionals have better networks, Mentors top contributors, blowing me away with projects that you do, you're so damn smart, I have to raise my game, positive reinforcement of excellent, social attention is a natural byproduct, it will, but it's hard to define how and when but it's a natural byproduct of a pursuit of excellent...

12:20 Chris: I think it's key to maintain a reasonably consistent presence. As Jon said, these folks around us that we talk to are doing really exciting things, and it pushes you further., it actually becomes a lot of fun to do. Steve: To me, the

major benefit is the community and the contacts outside my organization, the people from whom I can get information. But people are only willing to do that when you build up a relationship with them, you can't just start and magically community appears. You can't just suddenly join it and be part of it, social media is a long game. I played with Twitter for two or three weeks and I didn't see the point, I wasn't doing Twitter properly, you have to be prepared to put in some effort. Fred: to be honest, I agree totally with Steve, it's the combination of giving and getting information and sharing it with others, forming personal relationship in the process, that makes Twitter a powerful tool.

16:15 Chris: the dark side of social media - examples are mean smear campaigns on Twitter, then there are SCN trolls, posting either negative or stupid comments. We can work with the community on how to stop those, but those issues are there. Jon: then there is the question of anonymity, the more anonymity you have, the more you see that type of ugliness. You have to have thick skin, it's easy to get your buttons pushed by stuff like that, and you have to remember that anything you put out there in response becomes a historical archive of what you do.

19:37 Jon: on the question of building community, it's hard to foster a kind of bottom-up ownership from the top. It's hard to inspire from above. The best stuff is always driven by the people themselves. If you have adoption issues, then it's back to requirements gathering to see if there is a need, what tools they would rather use to get it done. For example, I don't have a discussion forum on JonERP.com, because there are too many established forums. It is important to strike a balance: you don't always have to go where everyone is. Sometimes it's a combination of focusing some time on a platform that you have a stake in and then spending part of your time on places where you know your audience is.

Participant: one thing I learned is that it's always effective when you can to have a face to face meeting. Especially when you have a small community, it's a brilliant idea to know each other personally and to have a place in mind where you can meet. From there, you want to try to establish a platform where the people can share content and questions or topics. Our platform wasn't very well accepted by the people, so we did some more polling; we looked at the needs they were facing.

23:00 Jon: when you look at the content hierarchy, the ultimate engagement is to create passionate culture around what you do, but that's not easy to do if you are a brand. Apple is one of the few brands where their own customers will happily do their marketing work for them. With say, Coke or Pepsi, that's not likely to happen. So it's not easy to get people to really feel like they are a part of something to the point where they become advocates, there will be a lot of fails along the way. That's why I have a ton of respect for what the Enterprise Geeks accomplished - they have built a real culture around what they do, and engaged a ton of SAP developers around the world. If you can create that powerful culture, you can solve the rest, but it isn't easy. The good news is you don't have to create culture to experience some reward in social media. There's no magic to it: just care about what you do, try some new tools, and don't be afraid of a bit of a learning curve.