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Leveraging the Social Media Revolution to Improve Treasury Performance



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It really is inevitable. If you are a corporate treasury manager, eventually you will exercise the power of social media to enhance your job performance.

Let's look at why that's such a certainty, how some treasury managers are already using social media to influence product development priorities at Deutsche Bank, and one simple but effective way you can introduce social media into the fabric of your operations.

Everyone's Doing It

Social media has taken the world by storm with a staggering scope and intensity.

For instance, in the short time since its 2004 launch, the Facebook social network service has attracted upwards of 600 million members. By the end of first quarter 2011, it's predicted that about one-tenth of the world's population, including one-quarter of people between the ages of 15 and 64, will be on Facebook. Meanwhile, LinkedIn, the business-oriented social networking site, has about 90 million members, and Twitter, the social networking and microblogging service, has about 175 million users.

Even more amazing is the number of hours people are spending on these networks. For many under the age of 30, Facebook has replaced television as a primary leisure activity.

What does this mean to you as a financial professional? Social media will be impacting the people in the world of finance that you communicate with on a daily basis, how they interact with you and others, and how they view the world. It's unrealistic to think you won't need social media to communicate in your business life. It would be like if, 10 years ago, you said that even though everyone has started e-mailing, you planned to continue writing letters on paper as a principal way of communicating with colleagues and other business associates. It's just a fact: People will interact more and more using social media.

Drive DB!

Having come to this realization in Global Transaction Banking at Deutsche Bank, in late 2010 we executed a social media campaign designed to enhance our engagement with clients about our product development. For about two months, in an initiative we call "Drive DB!," we invited clients to visit a web site to vote "yeah" or "nay" on a list of product development ideas. We turned it into a game. Each idea was represented by a race car, and when clients voted for an idea, its car moved toward the finish line.

What made social media so effective for this campaign was that it allows for two-way communication. So not only did we ask clients to vote product development ideas up or down, but we also asked them to offer their own ideas — and then have other clients vote on those ideas.

About 900 clients participated. We're analyzing the campaign results now and soon will be reporting back to participants about how we will be responding to their votes and suggestions. We plan to make some refinements and launch another "Drive DB!" campaign in 2011.

Social media has given us another tool to put into practice one of Deutsche Bank Global Transaction Banking's basic business philosophies — that our product development priorities and the design of our products should be driven by our clients. And from our clients' perspective, the Drive DB! initiative has provided a taste of how social media is likely to revolutionize how they communicate with their banks and other business partners in years to come.

Why Not a Treasury Wiki?

Some treasury managers are taking advantage of social media networks like LinkedIn to participate in targeted discussion forums. But apart from that, you won't find too many treasury professionals yet leveraging the power of social media in their jobs.

However, here's an idea to get you started on that path: Create a Treasury Department wiki.

A wiki is a web site that allows users to create, edit and store content on a collaborative basis. Information posted on a wiki can be categorized and made searchable. Wikis are a great way to store instructive documents and e-mails — and other information that might get buried or forgotten — and make it accessible to all within a business unit.

If you have a large Treasury Department, you could establish a wiki and post information about the systems and processes you use, the regulations that impact your work, as well as information on sales, cost-reduction and other programs. When someone, such as a new Treasury employee, has a question, 9 times out of 10 the answer will be posted on the wiki.

The social media revolution is under way. In Treasury, why wait to reap the benefits?