



GUEST EDITORIAL

From the Guest Editors: “Enterprise Social Media for Knowledge Management and Innovation in SMEs”

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Over the last two decades, a community of scholars and practitioners focused their efforts on the development of systematic approaches to nurturing and sharing the knowledge base of the organization. Under the knowledge management (KM) umbrella, the focus of research and practice shifted from the study of traditional labor and management structures to that of processes, which take place within knowledge-based organizations to allow fewer people to be more effective through collaboration. Today, a wide range of literature highlights the pivotal role played by KM in the creation of new and useful products, services, structures, and processes. Driven by the growth in the amount of knowledge available to organizations, innovation—one of the most important management challenges that modern businesses face today—depends to a large extent on the effectiveness of KM strategies, tools, and techniques (Cegarra-Navarro, Soto-Acosta, & Wensley, 2016).

In its evolution as a discipline, KM has been challenged by the emergence and continuous developments in technologies that have made new sources of information and knowledge available to organizations from all sectors and to society. Professionals from most areas and levels, from healthcare to construction, apply technology advances on a daily basis. Broadly speaking, technology improved our quality of life and our effectiveness in the workplace.

Online platforms now enable people to communicate, usually for a social purpose, through a variety of web-based services, which offer opportunities for people to interact over the internet. Adopted as social media technologies (SMT), these services allow real-time, direct knowledge exchange between two or more people—within and outside the organization, through the use of most internet-enabled devices. In particular, the usage of social networking tools within the organization, referred to by some as Enterprise 2.0, brought radical changes to the organization in its efforts to improve performance (Soto-Acosta, Popa, & Palacios-

Marqués, 2017; Popa, Soto-Acosta, & Martinez-Conesa, 2017).

Increasingly, large organizations are experimenting with social media as a platform for widespread distributed collaboration. Although still in early stages of our understanding of its benefits within organizations, research found that in certain contexts and under specific circumstances, social networking systems could foster KM processes and further influence organizational learning: key drivers to innovation. Research has shown that in the early 2000s, more than 70% of large enterprises already deployed at least one social media tool. However, practitioners and academics agree that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) follow in the wake of large companies in benefitting from enterprise social media. The literature on the topic shows that little research and few empirical studies have been carried out on the use of SMT in SMEs.

SMEs comprise a large percentage of enterprises in a nation and are responsible for employing more than half of its workforce. Although critical contributors to economic development, the levels of adoption of KM practices, strategies, and tools by SMEs have been hindered by factors including the shortage of human and financial resources that characterizes this type of firm (Martinez-Conesa, Soto-Acosta, & Carayannis 2017). However, enterprise social media are considered by many as low in cost, easy to use and highly effective technologies which support the processes of knowledge creation and sharing among organizational members. Enterprise social media therefore provides the basis for the implementation of KM within SMEs and their effective use as a driver of innovation. However, this argument only emphasizes that the scenario is in an evolutionary phase and further research efforts are now an imperative in this area.

In our efforts to contribute to the body of knowledge in this area, this special issue compiles recent work that informs researchers and practitioners on key areas