

SAS Case Study

Dubbed “the Hub”, Socialcast Is a Central Forum for Communication and Collaboration Where the SAS Culture of Openness Can Thrive



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— Karen Lee, Sr. Director of Internal Communication, SAS

AT A GLANCE

Industry

Business analytics software and services

Corporate Headquarters

Cary, North Carolina

Employees

13,349 Worldwide

Socialcast Users

9,500 and growing

Website

www.sas.com

IN BRIEF

Business Challenge

Even with some of the worlds' best technologies at their disposal, SAS was unable to pull company knowledge into one place for everyone's benefit.

Socialcast Solution

Socialcast creates a forum for open discussions and for getting questions answered—a place where SAS's special corporate culture can thrive.

Business Impact

9,500 of SAS's employees use the Hub, with up to 20 new users joining daily. With Socialcast, employees get faster answers to questions, groups connect more transparently, executives engage with employees, and in the end customers are better served.



SAS is the leader in business analytics software and services, and the largest independent vendor in the business intelligence market. Through innovative solutions, SAS helps customers at more than 55,000 sites improve performance and deliver value by making better business decisions, faster.

Based in Cary, North Carolina, SAS has 13,349 employees around the world, including more than 6,700 in the Americas, 3,500 in EMEA and more than 2,000 in Asia Pacific. SAS consistently ranks among the best places in the world to work, and has occupied the Fortune “100 Best Companies to Work For” list in the U.S. for 14 consecutive years—including two of the past three as its top employer. SAS also owns the number two spot on the elite “Top 25 World's Best Multinational Workplaces” from Great Place to Work®.

Business Challenge



A thriving global culture has made SAS one of the premiere companies to work for. In 2009, SAS employees were using an assortment of blogs, public social networks like Facebook, and other applications to communicate and collaborate across teams, offices and countries.

However, nothing in this social toolkit pulled together and exposed their collective knowledge and conversations into one place for everyone's benefit. So SAS began a search for an enterprise social network (ESN) that would consolidate employee communications, intellectual property, and critical information into a single place.

Socialcast Solution



What SAS *didn't* want to do was embark on a lengthy project of a year or more to select the right enterprise social networking solution. To be considered, the ESN had to fit SAS's budget parameters and “not require a ton of resources,” according to Karen Lee, Sr. Director of Internal Communications at SAS. For security reasons, SAS required that all communication in the community remain protected behind the firewall. And they wanted to make sure that their ESN solution would seamlessly integrate with other internal business systems such as Microsoft® SharePoint®, knowing that any tool perceived by employees as “just another inbox” would fail to gain the necessary traction.

SAS looked at a number of ESN's, including a home-grown solution. None of these solutions quite hit the mark. A number of applications that SAS evaluated were too expensive or not secure enough, while others required too much custom programming. During this discovery phase, one vendor clearly stood out for meeting the majority of their criteria—Socialcast.



“No single group of employees is ever left out of critical conversations or denied access to necessary information.”

— Karen Lee, Sr. Director of Internal Communication, SAS

Business Impact



Upon seeing Socialcast for the first time and analyzing the entire platform, Karen Lee, Sr. Director of Internal Communication, believed it provided the best “out of the box” experience and met most of SAS’s strict requirements. Still, an intense process ensued to evaluate all of the potential solutions. At the conclusion of the testing, Socialcast remained at the top of the list.

The Socialcast community was launched on February 14, 2011 (Valentine’s Day). Dubbed “the Hub” by SAS employees, the impact of the new social community was immediately apparent. For instance, without any formal promotion, the Hub registered its first 1,000 users in just 10 days. True to the company’s culture of openness, participation in the Hub community is on an opt-in basis. Today, the Hub is so popular that 9,500 of roughly 13,000 employees are members, with up to 20 new Hub users joining the online conversation daily.

More than 70% of SAS employees use Socialcast

Topping the list of benefits Socialcast has brought to SAS is a sense that employees are enjoying “true collaboration” across all offices worldwide. Karen Lee explains, “No single group of employees is ever left out of critical conversations or denied access to necessary information. If someone in one country needs a quick answer to a question about a customer deployment, they simply post the question to the Hub. Answers come back almost immediately from other locations.” Karen continues, “Or, if an employee needs a specific document, they can post their request to the Hub. Just as quickly someone else responds with a link to that document’s location.” Karen adds that, “The immediate return on investment is realized in the time it would have taken that employee to scour internal databases for the information. Undeniably, the Hub saves time, effort and increases customer and employee satisfaction.”

SAS executives have also been using the Hub as a way to increase transparency and expedite communication with SAS employees. Karen Lee remarks, “Our CEO, Dr. Jim Goodnight, can use

the Hub along with his global corporate update. Recently we had the Hub stream running during his company-wide update; where in the past questions were moderated, the Hub offered complete transparency on comments.” Executives were impressed by the number of questions Goodnight was able to answer live, while additional questions that flowed in were answered later and accessible to anyone in the Socialcast community.

Socialcast helps SAS executives to increase company-wide transparency

With employee and executive engagement thriving on the Hub, SAS wanted to celebrate all they had accomplished as a community. On Valentine’s Day, exactly one year since launching the Hub, they hosted a celebration appropriately named “Love the Hub Day,” and created a number of internal and online events designed to increase engagement and foster collaboration on the Hub.

Those Fortune Best Places to Work numbers don’t lie. Two-thirds of a company’s score is based on the results of the Great Place to Work Institute’s Trust Index survey, which is sent to a random sample of employees from each company. The survey asks questions related to their attitudes about management’s credibility, job satisfaction, and camaraderie. Based on SAS’s track record, it’s obvious that its employees feel engaged, informed, and recognized for their contributions. According to Karen Lee, open communication is at the heart of employee satisfaction at SAS, and their Socialcast-powered enterprise social network provides the space for that to happen.



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