THE IMPACT OF INTERNAL SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ON ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION AND COMMITMENT

Completed Research Paper

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Abstract

Socializing new employees into the organization and building higher levels of organizational commitment poses a challenge to organizations of different sizes. Social media technologies present an opportunity for organizations to create value by facilitating interactions among employees. The purpose of this study is to investigate an internal social media tool that was designed and implemented as part of a new hire program. An online survey was administered to IT new hires in a military financial services organization. While work related social media use did not prove to have a significant relationship with socialization or commitment, this study suggests that social related social media use is associated with knowledge of organizational culture, social acceptance, and affective commitment. In this study, two types of social media use, four indicators of socialization and three indicators of commitment were analyzed. Our paper concludes with a discussion and the implications concerning internal social media use.

Keywords: social media, socialization, organizational commitment, and Enterprise 2.0
**Introduction**

Organizations of all sizes face the challenge of socializing new employees into the organization in order to improve productivity, retention, and commitment. The problem of new hires leaving the organization after they have been trained remains acute. According to a study by Leadership IQ of over 20,000 new hires, 46% of new hires leave within their first 18 months of employment with 22% of staff turnover occurring within the first 45 days of employment (Insala 2010). The cost of losing an employee is estimated to be at least 3 times the employee’s salary (Insala 2010). New hires that go through a structured socialization program are 58% more likely to remain with the organization after three years (The Wynnhurst Group).

Socialization is the process of learning the beliefs, values, orientations, behaviors, and skills deemed necessary for new hires to fulfill their new roles and responsibilities (Fisher 1986). It involves teaching new hires the values, behaviors, social knowledge, and necessary work place skills needed to successfully assume an organizational role and actively participate as an organizational member (Louis 1980). Research has found that socialization tactics lead to such positive outcomes as better job performance, reduction in stress, higher job satisfaction, and reduction in intent to leave (Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg 2003). Another major benefit of socialization programs is increased organizational commitment. Organizations are strategically applying socialization tactics and practices in an effort to increase commitment. Research has indicated that organizational commitment is a powerful predictor of turnover and absenteeism (WeiBo et al. 2009). Moreover, commitment has been negatively associated with turnover (Meyer and Allen, 1997) and attendance (Dishon-Berkovits and Koslowsky 2002), and positively associated with organizational stability and effectiveness (Reichers 1985).

While the benefits of socialization programs are clear, the means of achieving effective socialization are complex with many tools and techniques available. Historically, socialization programs have relied upon formal onsite orientation sessions, offsite training sessions, buddy systems, mentoring programs, and business trips with co-workers (Louis et al. 1983). Recently, social media technologies have provided a new tool for organizational socialization. In particular, internal social media systems are being used in organizations to help new employees learn about their jobs, their colleagues, and the organization. (Bennett et al. 2010). Social media provides a familiar tool that organizations can integrate into socialization practices for new hires.

In spite of the potential of internal social media systems, many organizations remain skeptical about social media (Deans 2011). Little is known about the value gained from organizational social media use in general and internal social networking system use in particular (Andriole 2010). Our work will explore the value of internal social networking system use by new hires. Specifically, we empirically examine whether the use of internal social media systems by new hires increases the effectiveness of their socialization into the organization and their organizational commitment. This paper is organized as follows. We first provide the theoretical foundation. We then develop our model and hypotheses. This is followed by our research methodology, results, limitations and conclusions.

**Theoretical Foundation**

According to Saks and Ashforth (1997) there are four theoretical perspectives that have driven most of the research on organizational socialization: (1) VanMaanen and Schein’s (1979) model of socialization tactics, (2) uncertainty reduction theory, (3) social cognitive theory, and (4) cognitive and sense making theory. In an attempt to integrate these four theories, Saks and Ashforth (1997) developed a multi-level process model of organizational socialization that links the major themes, approaches and perspectives. The focus of the model is information and learning, while the other components specify the antecedents of information and learning and the proximal (e.g., role clarity) and distal outcomes (e.g., commitment) that are affected by information and learning (Saks and Ashforth 1997). Thus, organizational socialization is the process through which individuals learn the social norms and mores of their organization (Berger and Luckmann 1967). Due to the increasing rate that employees change jobs, organizational socialization is important to both individuals and organizations (Bauer and Erdogan 2011). There are a variety of socialization practices that organizations use to socialize and orient new employees (Louis et al. 1983). These various socialization practices along with socialization tactics are predicted to directly influence the
acquisition of information (Saks and Ashforth 1997). It is the process of acquiring information and learning that results in a reduction in new hires’ uncertainty and learning various content domains that result in organizational outcomes (e.g., role clarity, organizational fit, skill acquisition, social identification and social integration) (Saks and Ashforth 1997). Even though many factors play a role in successfully adapting or achieving socialization of new hires into an organization, research has focused on four key socialization adjustment indicators of new hires: role clarity, self-efficacy, knowledge of organizational culture and social acceptance (Bauer and Erdogan 2011). Role clarity provides an indication of how well adjusted a new hire feels about the new job. As new hires understand their roles, they experience higher role clarity. Self-efficacy refers to learning the tasks of a new job and gaining confidence in a particular role (Bauer et al. 2007). Social acceptance refers to the sense of feeling liked and accepted by peers (Bauer et al. 2007). Knowledge of organizational culture refers to the understanding of the employee’s role in the organization and understanding the goals and objectives of the organization (Taormina 1994). Past studies provide insights into new hire socialization effectiveness and adaptation through traditional socialization practices such as buddy programs or on-site orientations. However, socialization programs today are likely to incorporate social media. As organizations strive to provide the right resources to their new hires, internal social media applications may play a crucial role in the socialization process. Social media facilitates relationship building, open communication, and information sharing (DiMicco et al. 2008; Leidner et al. 2010; Majchrak et al. 2009). Therefore these technologies might facilitate socialization by providing the medium for new hires to orient themselves in their job, organization and co-workers. This leads to the first research question: what is the outcome of social media use by new hires on the effectiveness of their socialization into the organization?

Among the benefits of socialization practices is that proper socialization inculcates employee commitment. Organizational commitment involves a psychological bond between employees and organizations (Buchanan 1974). It is a psychological state or mind set in which feelings or beliefs about an employee’s relationship with an organization are reflected as a desire, a need, and/or an obligation to maintain membership within an organization (Meyer and Allen 1991). In this paper we use the term commitment to mean organizational commitment, rather than professional commitment. Professional commitment refers to a person’s commitment to his or her particular profession rather than to his/her organization. Such questions as whether access to state-of-the-art technology influences organizational commitment are salient for organizations that hire large numbers of entry-level professionals, many of whom as Gen Yers are accustomed to social media use in their personal lives and expect to be able to bring their personal IT tools into the workplace (Harris, Ives and Junglas, 2012). Tight restrictions on the availability of tools that they consider commonplace might hinder the development of their organizational commitment. But loose restrictions might distract them from work. Much implementation of social media in organizations is by trial and error without a clear expectation of the objectives. And while studies have indicated positive impacts from customer-facing social media applications (DiMicco et al. 2008; Majchrak et al. 2009), few have examined the impact of social media on employees themselves. Our work addresses this latter issue. Our second research question is thus, “What is the impact of internal social media use on the commitment of newly hired employees?”

Research Model and Hypotheses

Figure 1 presents our research model. The model comprises two types of social media use – work related and social related – four types of socialization effectiveness – role clarity, self-efficacy, knowledge of organizational culture, social acceptance -- and three types of commitment – normative, continuance, and affective. We next present the hypotheses.
The degree to which new hires may experience a level of organizational socialization will depend, in part, on the extent to which an organization enables its employees with socialization opportunities during early entry. It is during this period of early entry that new hires tend to determine what the organization is like and decides whether or not they “fit in” (Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg 2003). One of the new trends being integrated into business processes is the implementation of social media technologies (Denyer et al. 2011; Rozwell 2011). When considering Saks and Ashforth’s (1997) multi-level process model of organizational socialization, the social media technology represents the socialization factor at the organizational level that directly influences information, learning and uncertainty reduction. Because social media represents a pervasive tool used by many, encouraging employees to integrate social media as part of their daily routine may have the ability to enable organizational socialization. Although social media use may be considered as one type of use, users employ the social media with different objectives. In one case, the social media tool was strictly to be used for collaboration and information sharing (Koch et al. 2011), while in another case, the social media tool was used for socializing and meeting up with co-workers (Leidner et al. 2010). Because of such differences in social media use, it is important to consider how these two dimensions, work-related use and social-related use, lead to different organizational outcomes.

New hires can potentially use social media for work related purposes that enhance the socialization process experience. Uncertainty levels are reduced through information provided via various communication channels (Saks and Ashforth 1997). In addition, learning through various content domains leads to a better understanding of the individual’s role in the organization and increases skill development (Saks and Ashforth 1997). When social media is used to tap into organizational resources that lay out not only job descriptions, but also assist with providing additional information that clarifies the operational requirements and challenges of the new role and responsibilities, role clarity and self-efficacy may be achieved. One advantage of social media is that interactive online communication via discussion boards or wikis can be used to access role-relevant information about the job or inquire about specific requirements of the new role and job tasks. Another advantage of social media is that it allows for video uploads; therefore, training demos can easily be streamed at the employee’s workstation conveniently at any time. Because training involves the education and the acquisition of skills that help an individual perform his or her job (Taormina 1994), new hires are able to reach a level of role clarity and self-efficacy. Training also refers to the opportunities provided by the employer to ensure that new employees obtain the skills or abilities necessary to perform their new role in the organization (Taormina and Bauer 2000) as well as increase their level of confidence. These types of opportunities along with the flexibility to seek out information from others using the social media application may decrease the amount of time that new employees will take in “learning the ropes.” When an employee has clarity about his role in the organization, it leaves less room for ineffectiveness (Wanous 1980). Social media
technologies can facilitate the manner in which new hires learn about their particular job tasks and job role by making work related connections with others. While individual work roles describe an individual’s need to learn how to perform specific job tasks (Chao et al. 1994), learning about the processes of a particular job (i.e., how to deal with an aggressive customer) is often learned through advice from others in the organization or on-the-job learning (Ostroff and Kozlowski 1992). Social media facilitates learning by enabling new hires to reach out to senior co-workers with expertise or blog about an issue (Koch et al. 2011). Because of the flexibility of social media, new hires no longer have to leave their office work area to acquire work related information. Organizations manage knowledge by facilitating knowledge and information sharing through social media (McAfee 2009). Therefore we hypothesize,

H1: The extent of internal social media system use by new hires for work-related purposes will be positively related to role clarity.

H2: The extent of internal social media system use by new hires for work-related purposes will be positively related to self-efficacy.

Beyond understanding what is expected from them, new hires coming into an organization seek ways to adjust to their new environment (Taormina 1994). New hires desire to minimize their level of uncertainty such that the work environment becomes more predictable, understandable and controllable (Saks and Ashforth 1997). One method in achieving this is for new hires to acquire an accurate knowledge of organizational goals and values (Saks and Ashforth 1997). Organizations have a set of values that defines the organizational culture (Leidner and Kayworth 2006). Within the context of organizational culture, organizational values may be particularly useful in defining the appropriate behaviors with respect to the members of the organization (Leidner and Kayworth 2006). The learning of organizational goals and values also extends to informal, unwritten, tacit goals and values espoused by organizational insiders (Fisher 1986). This becomes important for new hires who are not only attempting to understand and identify how they “fit in” to the organization, but wanting to know how their role relates to the organizational goals and values as well (Chao et al. 1994). Even though job characteristics may be formally defined by the rules of an organization, how each job is performed is based on norms specific to the organization (Aguilera et al. 2006). Given that employees need to understand what constitutes acceptable behavior within the organization (Chatman 1991), an important aspect of socialization is to educate new employees to the organization’s policies, procedures, and norms (Wanous 1980). Therefore, it is imperative to note that employees who are given information about the organizational values, beliefs, and norms are less likely to feel uncertain about whether or not their actions fit within the organization culture.

The availability and acquisition of information and feedback required by new hires to reduce their high levels of uncertainty is influenced by the socialization tactic in place (Mignerey et al. 1995). An advantage that may be gained by organizations using social media is that social media facilitates open communication and discussions (DiMicco et al. 2008). Therefore it provides the means to disseminate critical information to new employees about organizational culture in a fast and convenient way. As new hires make use of social media tools, they may potentially gain the knowledge of organizational culture through the retrieval of information and learning about organizational policies, procedures and norms. This type of activity leads to identification of organization fit and a better understanding of the organization culture (Saks and Ashforth 1997). It is not unusual for organizations to develop strategies (i.e., new hire orientation sessions) that will enhance a new employee’s ability to quickly and easily enter the organization without experiencing much uncertainty. Studies have indicated a positive influence of new hires’ information acquisition on effective socialization (e.g. Bauer et al. 2007; Ostroff and Kozlowski 1992; Saks and Ashforth 1997). In addition, new hires gain a sense of understanding through observation of role models, such as supervisors and co-workers (Ostroff and Kozlowski 1992). When management encourages the use of social media for daily work tasks or actively upload documents to be accessed via social media tools, new hires are more likely to view this behavior as acceptable and as part of the organizational norm. Furthermore, the links between management and new hires enable employees to generate, share and access information by breaking down hierarchical data structures (Kiron 2012). New hires seeking information via social media can learn about the organizational culture, thus we hypothesize

H3: The extent of internal social media system use by new hires for work-related purposes will be positively related to knowledge of organizational culture.
Furthermore, social media tools enable virtual interactions among employees (Majchrzak et al. 2009), enable users to share information (Denyer et al. 2011) and can revolutionize business practices (e.g. McAfee 2006). Many times new hires tend to use social media to form social relationships and engage in online interactions on a personal level. This proactive approach regards new hires as agents who actively work to decrease uncertainty and take advantage of the opportunities to gain an understanding of organizational characteristics and norms by their own initiative (Miller and Jablin 1991). In addition, social media offers new hires a way to tap into different social networks that provide different resources (DiMicco et al. 2008). When new hires establish relationships with other employees outside of their immediate circle of friends they are leveraging the transparency and boundary breaking characteristics of social media. For example, a new hire may have “friended” someone they met during new hire orientation from a different department who they can contact for either help with a project that involves a level of expertise that the other new hire may have or simply contact him or her for a meet up lunch to catch up on their latest activities on a personal level. Moreover, interaction with more senior employees is the principal means by which new hires learn about organizational culture (Schein 1971). These types of activities are more likely to constitute a level of social related use of social media. Therefore we hypothesize,

H4: The extent of internal social media system use by new hires for social-related purposes will be positively related to knowledge of organizational culture.

The introductions of modern technologies (e.g., laptops, mobile devices, and Internet access) have made it difficult for individuals to completely separate themselves from work even while on a family outing or social event (Lindgren et al. 2008; Tarafdar et al. 2007). Organizational social media implementations are designed to integrate social and work life (DiMicco et al. 2008). By encouraging socializing activities through the use of social media, organizations create a working environment that is accepting of online chatting or blogging during regular working hours. For instance, social media tools are most commonly used for “friending” friends and family, discussing personal likes and dislikes about a particular topic, updating personal profile statuses, blogging about any topic of interest, or uploading personal videos or images (Kaplan and Haenlien 2010). When new hires entering an organization are given access to an internal social media, it is probable that they will perceive it for personal use (Collins 2010), as is their customary practice on a daily basis. The ability to create and maintain relationships with friends and family via social media allows for individuals to feel connected (boyd and Ellison 2008). Employees will tend to initially begin to connect with other employees with similar interests in order to create an internal social network of friends.

The formation of relationships or connections among employees may reduce the boundaries between social and work roles (Koch et al. 2012). Friendships begin to emerge out of day-to-day interactions on a personal level (Majchrzak et al. 2009). Developing relationships (i.e., an internal social network) may help facilitate new hires to better understand the dynamics among different work groups (Chao et al. 1994). Learning about work groups is one way an employee familiarizes himself or herself with informal and formal working relationships (Chao et al. 1994). Over time, new employees are likely to identify those co-workers that they can turn to in times of task uncertainty and those co-workers that they can form friendship ties with (Aguilera et al. 2006). The forming of such relationships will allow new hires to not only have friends at work they can socialize with (Leidner et al. 2010), but also to develop a sense of acceptance by others whom they eventually collaborate with on projects as well (DiMicco et al. 2008). Because social media can play an integral part in developing connections among employees, this implies that

H5: The extent of internal social media system use by new hires for social-related purposes will be positively related to social acceptance.

The Impact of Internal Social Media Use on Commitment

Commitment is described as the strength between an individual’s sense of organizational identification and his or her involvement with the organization (Mowday et al. 1979). According to McLean et al. (1991), the first few months of employment are critical in the development of commitment; it is the time that new hires attempt to verify how well the job meets his or her expectations. A previous study concluded that MIS graduates entering a new job have particular expectations (i.e., challenging tasks, promotional opportunities) and when organizations meet these expectations, employee loyalty increases (McLean et al.
Thus, it is in the best interest for an organization to not only meet new hires’ expectations, but also to decrease the levels of uncertainty by minimizing factors such as role conflict or role ambiguity in order to eliminate experiencing negative impacts on new hires’ performance and retention (King and Sethi 1998). Because information acquisition is directly related to commitment (Ostroff and Kozlowski 1992), social media use has the potential of directly impacting organizational commitment.

Affective commitment is an emotional attachment that characterizes employees who strongly identify with, are involved in, and enjoy membership in the organization (Allen and Meyer 1990). Employees who have a sense of community and who develop relationships with coworkers are more likely to feel an emotional attachment. The adjustment of new hires arises primarily through interpersonal communications between new hires and other employees of the organization (Moreland and Levine 2001). Employees normally want to remain in organizations that provide them with positive work experiences because they expect these positive experiences to continue and place value on them (Meyer and Allen 1991). Employees who enjoy working at an organization continue to put forth efforts (i.e., log into discussion boards or challenge a co-worker to a tennis match) to remain connected with others and to participate in social events, which reinforce positive emotional outcomes that lead to building personal resources (i.e., Leidner et al. 2010). For example, employees who have friends within the organization will usually seek them out for support during difficult times (Leidner et al. 2010). These types of relationships can help new hires establish a sense of belonging and emotional attachment to the organization. We therefore hypothesize,

H6: The extent of internal social media system use by new hires for social-related purposes will be positively related to affective commitment.

Continuance commitment reflects the perceived costs that may be associated with leaving the organization (Meyer and Allen 1991). According to Becker (1960), commitment is viewed as a continual engagement in activities that a discontinuation of such activities would result in a loss of an investment (i.e., time spent on training) or cost (i.e., relocation). Similarly, Kanter (1968) described continuance commitment as that which occurs when there is a profit associated with remaining at the organization and a cost associated with leaving. This type of commitment only develops when the potential costs of leaving are recognized (Meyer and Allen 1991). Perceived costs can take many forms inclusive of work and non-work related significance (Meyer and Allen 1991). Perceived costs may include: losing the time and effort spent on training to acquire nontransferable skills, losing benefits, giving up rank associated privileges, or having to relocate and leave close family and friends behind (Meyer and Allen 1991). If organizations provide a culture that embraces social media and relaxes the working environment in such a way that it develops a sense of work-life balance, employees are more likely to identify a perceived cost involved in an external job switch. In terms of positive experiences, employees using a social media tool have been known to build relationships, to become more engaged, to develop a sense of community, and to be more productive (DiMicco et al. 2008; Koch et al. 2012; Leidner et al. 2010; Majchrzak et al. 2009; Smith 2011). Because of these potential benefits, employees may perceive that the threat of losing out on such experiences is worth more than a potentially higher salary elsewhere. Organizations are embracing social media to connect employees and increase their commitment (Mullaney 2012). Therefore we hypothesize,

H7: The extent of internal social media system use by new hires for social-related purposes will be positively related to continuance commitment.

Moreover, employees may experience a feeling of obligation to stay with an organization because of pressures exerted on them prior to or after entry into the organization (Wiener 1982). This is referred to as normative commitment. Normative commitment may develop when an organization provides an employee with advanced rewards or incurs significant costs in providing employment (Meyer and Allen 1991). When an employee feels that the organization has gone beyond the norm to provide a working environment that embraces the employee, helps him or her along the way to better understand his or her role, gain confidence, and invests in his or her well-being, the new hire is more likely to reconsider leaving the organization because a sense of loyalty has been developed. For the most part, new hires do not want to leave a bad impression and leave within a short period of time because they know that some investment has been made, but when an organization fails to give new employees guidance and instructions in order to acclimate them to the organization and their new role as part of the socialization process (e.g., Louis 1980; Saks and Ashforth 1997), those new employees may not necessarily feel an obligation to remain because they have not been made to feel as if they are important to the organization.
As the demand from new hires increases (Grant 2011; Hickey 2011), organizations are listening more to those needs in order to make new hires aware that they are considered important, but in turn organizations expect for new hires to be committed to the organization. Social media implementation initiatives serve as a recruitment mechanism of new hires by giving them access to technologies that are most likely already part of their daily activities and providing them with the flexibility of social media use during the work day. Social media is a selling point for organizations trying to gain the expertise of new hires. New hires will be able to use social media to contribute, participate and engage for organizational purposes (Bradley 2011). The act of social media implementation may be perceived as an organization’s outreach that is beyond the norm. New hires using the social media tool to gain the knowledge they need to accomplish their work tasks or to seek information about the organization are benefiting from an investment made for them. By continual social media use for purposes of achieving job related outcomes, new hires may learn to value this investment and determine that their commitment to the organization is a sense of loyalty and obligation. As such, it can be hypothesized that

H8: The extent of internal social media system use by new hires for work-related purposes will be positively related to normative commitment.

Method

The method section begins with a discussion of the measures used in this study followed by descriptive statistics of the participants and the results.

Measures

The majority of the measures for this study were adapted directly from extant literature, although two variables (i.e. work-related social media use and social-related social media use) were developed since prior validated measures were not available. For most of the constructs, a minimum of four items was used to comprise the construct. All constructs were measured using a 5-point Likert scale. The items developed for this study will be addressed first.

Social Media Use

The use of social media is the type of use identified by the participant whether it be for work-related purposes (i.e., posting an update on a project) or for social-related purposes (i.e., setting up a social event). Because no previous items measuring social media use exist, the measures for the use of social media were developed for this study by referring to findings in extant case study research (i.e., DiMicco et al. 2008; Koch et al. 2011; Leidner et al. 2010; Majchrzak et al. 2009). The social media use scale measures respondents’ purpose of use (i.e., work-related versus social related purposes). The items developed to measure work-related use asked individuals to rate the extent to which they use social media to: (1) post updates on work projects, (2) set up meetings with colleagues about work projects, (3) share information about organizational objectives with colleagues, (4) share information about organizational policies and procedures, (5) organize their working files, (6) upload credible information for future use, (7) share their expertise in a particular area, and (8) gain access to others with expertise in a particular area. Items measuring social-related use include the extent to which individuals use social media to: (1) set up social events with co-workers after working hours, (2) make friends within the organization, (3) take a break from work, (4) chat with others while at work, and (5) find people with similar interests. In order to ensure that the wording of the directions and questions of the survey were clear and understandable, the survey was reviewed by two former interns from the participating organization who used the social media tool while employed there. In addition, the participating organization required several iterations of the comprehensive survey to be tested internally to meet the expectations and requirements of several governing committees (i.e. survey governance committee, human resource committee, and communications committee). This process ensured that the survey’s intent, wording, and readability would not be misinterpreted in such a way that would jeopardize the employee’s well-being and the organization’s reputation. Such a process helps reduce bias in response from misinterpretation and, as noted by Straub (1989), helps to establish content validity.
Organizational Socialization

Four dimensions of socialization effectiveness were measured. Role clarity refers to having sufficient information about the responsibilities of one's job. A measure developed by Rizzo et al. (1970) was used to measure role clarity. The items asked individuals to rate the extent to which they: (1) feel certain about how much authority they have in their position, (2) know what their responsibilities are, (3) know what is expected of them, and (4) feel they have sufficient time to perform. Self-efficacy refers to the opportunities given by the employer to new employees to obtain the skills necessary for the new employee’s job role. Items measuring self-efficacy were adapted from an instrument used by Hsieh et al. (2011) and include the extent to which individuals: (1) feel comfortable in their position, (2) can easily perform job tasks on their own, and (3) feel comfortable in their position even if there is no one around them to tell them how to perform a task. Knowledge of organizational culture refers to an employee’s comprehension of the organizational goals and values, the employee’s job role, and the organizational culture. Individuals were asked to rate the extent to which they: (1) know how to get things done in their organization, (2) have a full understanding of their duties in the organization, (3) agree that the goals of their organization have been made very explicit, (4) have a good knowledge of the way their organization operates, and (4) agree that their organization’s objectives are understood by almost everyone who is an employee. Social acceptance refers to a new hire’s acceptance and assistance by other employees. Items measuring social acceptance include the extent to which individuals: (1) feel other workers have helped them in their job in various ways, (2) feel their co-workers are willing to offer assistance or advice, (3) feel their co-workers have accepted them as a member of their company, and (4) feel their relationships with co-workers are very good. Taormina’s (2004) organizational socialization inventory (OSI) instrument was used to measure knowledge of organizational culture and social acceptance.

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment refers to the feelings concerning an employee’s relationship with an organization. Affective commitment refers to the emotional attachment between members of an organization and the organization. Individuals were asked to rate the extent to which they: (1) would be very happy to spend the rest of their career with their organization, (2) enjoy discussing their organization with non-employees, (3) feel as if their organization’s problems are their own, and (4) do not feel like ‘part of the family’ at their organization. Continuance commitment refers to the perceived cost of losing organizational gains if and when an employee decides to leave the organization. Items measuring continuance commitment include the extent to which individuals: (1) are not afraid of what might happen if they quit their job without having another job lined up, (2) feel it would be very difficult for them to leave their organization even if they wanted to, (3) too much in their life would be disrupted if they decided they wanted to leave their organization now, and (4) feel that they have too few options to consider when leaving their organization. Normative commitment refers to a sense of moral obligation to remain in the organization. The items measuring normative commitment asked individuals to rate the extent to which they: (1) think that people these days move from company to company too often, (2) do not believe that a person must always be loyal to his or her organization, (3) would not feel right to leave their organization if they got another offer for a better job elsewhere, and (4) were taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to one organization. Organizational commitment was measured with a version of Mowday et al’s (1979) organizational commitment questionnaire (OCQ). Allen and Meyer (1990) incorporated this questionnaire when identifying three components of commitment (i.e., affective, continuance, and normative). The statements in the survey measuring organizational commitment were adapted from Allen and Meyer’s (1990) scale.

Descriptive Statistics

Data for the current study was collected via an online survey of new hires in a large financial institution headquartered in the southwest region of the United States. The organization prides itself on being a leader in the use of IT and is among the first to employ social media as part of the socialization of new hires. We are interested in the individual level response to internal SNS use for socialization. By gathering data from a single organization, we are able to hold constant the myriad of other aspects of the socialization process. A total of 450 surveys were distributed and 151 valid responses were received resulting in a response rate of 33.6%. Participants were primarily IT new hires in a military financial
services organization. The IT new hire is an individual with less than three years of employment. The social media was implemented as part of the organization’s new hire program. These employees along with those that had entered the organization at the time of implementation were the most appropriate people to answer the survey. Participants included a variety of titles including: 65% software developers, 26% engineers, and 9% other IT. While 71% of the participants have been employed for less than one year up to three years, 29% have been employed between four to six years. Participants over three years of employment had been part of the organization’s new hire program, therefore their response of current use of the social media was considered in this study. Table 1 illustrates the breakdown by years of service.

**Table 1. Years of Service by No. of Employees**

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<th>Years of Service</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than a year</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
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New hires using the social media were categorized by number of years they had been using the social media. A Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA by rank indicated that there were no significant differences attributable to length of employment. We therefore treated the entire sample as one.

**Data Analysis and Results**

After surveys were completed, various quantitative analyses of the data were conducted. The data was first reviewed using SPSS 18.0 as part of the data cleansing process to eliminate missing values, to test for outliers and to test the assumptions. The most fundamental assumption is normality because in order to use the F and t statistics, normality is required (Hair et al. 2006). In testing for normality, the skewness and kurtosis values were calculated, the histograms were created and analyzed, and the Shapiro-Wilk’s W test was performed. The visual review of the histograms and the results of the Shapiro-Wilk’s W test confirmed violation of the normality assumption (p < 0.05). Additionally, linearity and homoscedasticity were tested and the data was not linear. The results of the Levene’s test depicted that the homogeneity of variance assumption was not violated for most of the variables (p > 0.05).

**Data Transformation**

Because of the extreme violation of the statistical assumptions of normality and linearity, the data was transformed. Data transformations are used to modify variables for one of two reasons: 1) to correct violations of the assumptions underlying the multivariate techniques, or 2) to improve the relationship between variables (i.e., correlation) (Hair et al. 2006). Since many possibilities exist for transforming the data, it is often necessary to proceed by trial and error, monitoring the improvement after the transformation (Hair et al. 2006). Another method of data transformation is the Box-Cox technique (Box and Cox 1964; Hair et al. 2006) which “…represents a family of power transformations…” (Osborne 2010, p. 1) and eliminates the need of trying a variety of transformations in order to find the optimal one. Box-Cox can direct researchers to find the best normalizing transformation for each of the variables.

Initial results from the measurement model after applying Box-Cox transformation showed high cross-loadings for items in more than its own factor (i.e., work-related use and social-related use) and showed low loadings (< .50) for items in knowledge of organizational culture. As such, work-related use and social-related use were combined into one construct and knowledge of organizational culture was dropped. Because the factor loading of each item is higher on its own factor versus on another factor and there were no issues with any large cross-loadings, discriminant validity is met (Hair et al. 2006). Furthermore, the measurement model showed satisfactory reliability and convergent validity (composite reliability, CR > .70; average variance extracted, AVE > .50) as shown in Table 2.
Table 2. Reliability and Validity After Box Cox Transformation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AVE</th>
<th>CR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AffecCom</td>
<td>0.6888</td>
<td>0.8681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ContCom</td>
<td>0.5442</td>
<td>0.8209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NormCom</td>
<td>0.5558</td>
<td>0.7850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Clarity</td>
<td>0.6094</td>
<td>0.8198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMS Use</td>
<td>0.6002</td>
<td>0.9509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Efficacy</td>
<td>0.7405</td>
<td>0.8946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SocialAccep</td>
<td>0.7204</td>
<td>0.9115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The standard bootstrap resampling procedure was used to test the structural model in SmartPLS and Figure 2 illustrates the model results from the analysis. The results show one significant relationship: social media use (work-related use and social-related use combined) is negatively related to role clarity, contrary to expectations. Because there is a negative relationship, this can be interpreted that the more the social media is used, the less likely that employees will gain role clarity.

Although data transformations were applied to the data analysis, Sakia (1992) notes that this transformation does not always fulfill the basic assumptions of linearity, normality and homoscedasticity as suggested by Box and Cox (1964). For example, transformed data may result in reducing the positive skew in one variable, but may result in a more negative skew in a different variable (Field 2009). In other words, as one variable reaches an acceptable measure of normality, another is caused to spread further from the normal distribution. Even though transformations are often used to address assumption violations, transformations may not necessarily produce a viable solution to a problem (Sakia 1992). According to Field (2009) even if one problem is solved, different problems may be created in the process. To address this issue, the next section includes analyses applying a non-parametric test.

**Non-Parametric Test**

Fortunately, there exists a number of non-parametric measures (i.e., Spearman R, Kendall-tau, Mann-Whitney, Kruskal-Wallis, Jonckheere-Terpstra, among others) that may be used to test non-normal data.
Non-parametric methods may be considered “weak” in comparison to parametric methods, but they allow for insights about the data when nothing is known about the parameters of the variable of interest (StatSoft 2012).

The Wilcoxon signed-rank test (Wilcoxon 1945) was identified as the most appropriate method to use because when the need for comparing two sets of data that come from the same participants exists, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test can be used to assess whether the mean ranks of the two related samples differ (Field 2009). In this study, the data collected violated the normality assumption and reflected different variables (i.e., role clarity, self-efficacy, and others) for each of the participants. In using this approach, the social media use type was converted to four categories identifying the type of user (i.e., low, high, strictly work-related, or strictly social-related). A low user was identified as one which rarely used social media for work or social-related use, while a high user was identified as a participant who used social media for multiple work and social-related purposes. The strictly work-related category identified users that used the social media solely for work, while strictly social-related users used the media solely for social purposes. The variable, knowledge of organizational culture that had been previously dropped was included in the non-parametric tests. For each of the observations, the variables were paired in all of the possible combinations to denote if there was a change within the data. The results of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test are found in Table 3. The highlighted cells identify significance between two variables. Please note that variable comparisons are reported in this table reading down the outcome variable column of Figure 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of User:</th>
<th>1-Low</th>
<th>2-Work Related</th>
<th>3-Social Related</th>
<th>4-High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socialization Effectiveness</td>
<td>Role Clarity and Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>z = .476</td>
<td>z = 1.41</td>
<td>z = -1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>p = .634</td>
<td>p = .157</td>
<td>p = .200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role Clarity and Knowledge of Culture</td>
<td>z = 1.06</td>
<td>z = 1.73</td>
<td>z = 2.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>p = .291</td>
<td>p = .083</td>
<td>p = .011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role Clarity and Social Acceptance</td>
<td>z = 4.70</td>
<td>z = 2.00</td>
<td>z = 6.324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>p = .000</td>
<td>p = .046</td>
<td>p = .000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-Efficacy and Knowledge of Culture</td>
<td>z = .383</td>
<td>z = 1.00</td>
<td>z = 2.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>p = .702</td>
<td>p = .317</td>
<td>p = .003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-Efficacy and Social Acceptance</td>
<td>z = 3.76</td>
<td>z = 1.41</td>
<td>z = 5.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>p = .000</td>
<td>p = .157</td>
<td>p = .000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge of Culture and Social Acceptance</td>
<td>z = 4.29</td>
<td>z = 1.00</td>
<td>z = 5.374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>p = .000</td>
<td>p = .317</td>
<td>p = .000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Affective and Continuance</td>
<td>z = -3.55</td>
<td>z = -1.84</td>
<td>z = -5.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>p = .000</td>
<td>p = .854</td>
<td>p = .000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continuance and Normative</td>
<td>z = -0.938</td>
<td>z = -0.577</td>
<td>z = -1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>p = .348</td>
<td>p = .564</td>
<td>p = .107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affective and Normative</td>
<td>z = -5.23</td>
<td>z = -1.63</td>
<td>z = -7.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>p = .000</td>
<td>p = .102</td>
<td>p = .000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to properly interpret these results, a negative z-score does not imply a negative relationship as when one interprets path coefficients. The positive or negative symbol simply refers to the variable that is listed first in the mathematical calculation of the test. For example, if we are comparing role clarity (RC) and social acceptance (SA), the mathematical equation is RC-SA; if the difference is positive, this means that RC has a greater number than SA; if the difference is negative, this means that SA has a greater number than RC.

Although there is not a significant level of change in every comparison between two variables, the results demonstrate that different types of users experience some differences for certain types of socialization.
effectiveness and commitment levels. In terms of socialization effectiveness, all users experience social acceptance more than any other type of socialization as indicated by the occurrence of significant differences in each row where social acceptance is compared with another variable. While social media users that primarily use the tool for social-related purposes experience a significant level of knowledge of organizational culture as shown by the three significant differences in the social related column for each variable compared to knowledge of organizational culture, others do not. In other words, social-related users solely experience a level of knowledge of organizational culture that allows them to gain a better understanding about the social norms of the organization. Interestingly, all four types of users (i.e., low users, social-related users, work-related users, and high users) experience social acceptance. Because social acceptance can be achieved at any level of social media use, one may wonder what other factors may have an impact on this dimension of socialization effectiveness. Socialization effectiveness is determined by four factors for which two of the factors - role clarity compared to self-efficacy – did not have significance for any of the four user categories. From this analysis, social media use has the potential to acclimate a new hire by developing the areas of social acceptance and knowledge of organizational culture.

Furthermore, in analyzing the levels of commitment, there is no significance for continuance commitment compared to normative commitment for any of the four user categories. Most users experience affective commitment through social media use as shown by the significance of 6 of the 8 cells where affective commitment is being compared. Social media helps create affective commitment, but does not help create normative or continuance commitment. An employee who experiences an affective level of commitment develops an emotional attachment to the organization and wants to remain in the organization (Meyer and Allen 1991). In addition, an employee who is affectively committed identifies with organizational values (Meyer and Allen 1991). In this analysis, social media builds an emotional attachment that influences the desire to remain in the organization but does not build a sense of obligation or build a sense of need to stay in the organization. Table 4 summarizes the results of the hypotheses from the parametric and non-parametric analyses.

Table 4. Summary of Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1: The extent of social networking system use by new hires for work-related purposes will be positively related to role clarity.</td>
<td>Not supported; sign in opposite direction of hypothesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2: The extent of social networking system use by new hires for work-related purposes will be positively related to self-efficacy.</td>
<td>Not supported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3: The extent of social networking system use by new hires for work-related purposes will be positively related to knowledge of organizational culture.</td>
<td>Not supported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4: The extent of social networking system use by new hires for social-related purposes will be positively related to knowledge of organizational culture.</td>
<td>Supported; Wilcoxon Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5: The extent of social networking system use by new hires for social-related purposes will be positively related to social acceptance.</td>
<td>Supported; Wilcoxon Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6: The extent of social networking system use by new hires for work-related purposes will be positively related to normative commitment.</td>
<td>Not supported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7: The extent of social networking system use by new hires for social-related purposes will be positively related to continuance commitment.</td>
<td>Not supported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H8: The extent of social networking system use by new hires for social-related purposes will be positively related to affective commitment.</td>
<td>Supported; Wilcoxon Test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion and Implications

The aim of this social media study was to see if internal social media use can help socialize new employees and engender commitment. To investigate this, we surveyed employees who worked for a financial institution that had successfully implemented an internal social media, which was aimed at socializing new hires. Our results partially support the theoretical model and support three of our hypothesized
relationships. The results indicate that using an internal social media technology for social-related purposes can help new employees develop two dimensions of socialization: knowledge of the organization’s culture and social acceptance. Social-related social media use can also foster affective commitment (i.e., new hires identify with, are involved in and enjoy organizational membership (Allen and Meyer 1990). These findings offer implications to research on internal social media by quantifying variable relationships that the qualitative research on internal social media suggests (Gonzalez and Koch 2014).

While new hires could also use the social media for work-related purposes, our analysis found no relationship between work-related use and socialization effectiveness or commitment. This suggests that organizations may benefit more by allowing employees to socialize over an internal social media rather than appropriating it for work-related uses like knowledge management and training. We will now discuss the results of our model, previously presented in Figure 2, which illustrates the impact work-related and social-related social media use has on various dimensions of socialization effectiveness and commitment.

**Socialization Effectiveness**

The results provide encouraging evidence for organizations looking to supplement new hire socialization programs with an internal social media. Our analysis indicates that new hires who use an internal social media feel socially accepted and gain knowledge about their organization’s culture. Contrary to our hypotheses, we found no evidence linking work-related social-media use to self-efficacy and it even negatively impacted role clarity.

The finding that new hires feel socially accepted and gain knowledge of their organization’s culture when they use the company’s internal social media to socialize contributes to socialization research and our understanding of technology’s impact on culture. This research is one of the first studies to link technology use to organizational socialization, most organizational socialization studies look at programs, policies and events (i.e., Louis et al. 1983). Furthermore, most technology and culture studies investigate how culture impacts technology rather than how employees can use technology to acclimate into an organization’s culture (Leidner and Kayworth 2006).

Unfortunately, our findings about work-related social media use are less encouraging. The new hires in this study did not experience self-efficacy or role clarity from using the social media for work-related purposes. There was no link between work-related social media use and the new hires feeling that they could succeed in their job (i.e., self-efficacy) and there was a negative link between social media use and a new hire’s understanding of their job role. The internal social media literature (Gonzalez and Koch 2014) offers some explanations for this including competing priorities, boundary blurring, and stigma. The system, while intended to blur social and work boundaries, might have inadvertently imposed stress on the new hires as they tried to reconcile recreational uses of the social media with their daily performance targets. The blurring of boundaries has become a greater issue with the increasing trend of mobile device use (Feldstein et al. 2005). Managers are connected to their employees at all hours (Wajcman et al. 2008) and employees interpret this communication outside of working hours as being free to work when and where it is most convenient (LaFollette 2011). Contrarily, managers view communication with friends or family and checking Facebook at work as unproductive (LaFollete 2011). This difference in views may provide for confusion and misunderstanding of the technologies. While our model found no relationship between work-related social media use and self-efficacy or role clarity, future research should investigate negative relationships. Does internal social media use hinder role clarity and self-efficacy? If so, internal social media could have nefarious effects on new employees such as anxiety, role dissatisfaction which have been associated with lack of role clarity (Rizzo et al. 1970).

**Commitment**

Although research suggests that socialization is an antecedent to commitment (Meyer and Allen 1991), our model suggests that social media use can directly impact an employee’s commitment level. This
study finds that new employees who use an internal social media technology experience affective commitment. Affective commitment involves an emotional attachment to the organization where employees identify with, are involved in and enjoy organizational membership (Allen and Meyer 1990). Employees stay with the organization because they want to. In the long run, committed employees are more likely to go the extra mile, to offer one another support, to have a strong acceptance of the organization’s goals, and to have strong will to remain with the organization (Mowday, Steers and Porter 1979).

Contrary to our hypothesized relationships, the availability of an internal social media application does not cause new hires to remain with the organization because they feel they ought to (i.e., normative commitment) or because they feel they need to (i.e., continuance commitment) (Meyer and Allen 1991). There are several potential explanations for this. This study’s new hires may not have experienced normative commitment because they did not recognize the investment that their organization had made in their welfare by making a social media technology available. For the majority of new hires in this study, their position at the financial institution was their first professional job upon college graduation. The new hires may have perceived the financial institutions’ social media and accompanying work life balance policies, which allowed new hires to take breaks during the day and exercise, learn new things, and socialize, as normal. The social media may not have engendered continuance commitment because the new hires believed that the skills (e.g., graphic design, leadership and project management) and friendships they were developing over the social media were transferable outside the organization.

Conclusion

Readers should interpret this study’s findings in light of its limitations, which relate to our data collection and its impact on our analysis. First, we studied a single organization, creating generalizability issues (Lee and Baskerville 2003). Second, since there were no pre-existing measures for social media use, we developed our own measures from the social media literature. Unfortunately, we were unable to measure multiple dimensions of social media use such as time spent, tasks completed or features used, because the financial institution we studied limited the survey’s length in an effort to manage the new hires’ productivity. While a multi-item construct would have allowed the survey to better capture the constructs’ theoretical complexity (Cook and Campbell 1979), our structural model only had two independent variables trying to predict seven variables. This is problematic because it limits the number of factors that can impact organizational socialization and commitment. As a result, we had to use non-parametric testing because our data did not follow a normal distribution and had limited variance. Therefore, our analysis identifies associations between two variables rather than the degree of association (Field 2009). Lastly, our sample size of 150 was sufficient when treated as a whole to test our hypotheses, but when divided by length of employment, was perhaps too small for significant differences to be observed. Whether, or not, employees continue to reap socialization and commitment benefits from social media after several years of employment in an organization is not clear from our data. Future research would need a larger sample of employees with varying lengths of employment to investigate the influence of length of organizational tenure.

Despite these limitations, this study advances the internal social media research. While internal social media research promises to transform organizations, it is currently in its nascent stage as organizations struggle to understand how employee social media initiatives can positively influence organizational metrics such as productivity, turnover and profit (Deans 2011; Gonzalez and Koch 2014; Kane et al. 2013). Implementing an internal social media is a socially complex endeavor influenced by the organization’s culture and how employees choose to appropriate it. While many people associate social media with socializing, recreation and learning about others (Koch et al. 2013), internal social media technologies offer organizational benefits. When new employees socialize on their company’s social media technologies they are learning about the organization’s culture and begin feeling socially accepted. This use makes new hires want to remain with the organization (i.e., affective commitment) thus reducing costly turnover expenses. Most new hires tend to leave organizations between 18 and 24 months of employment (Insala 2010). We hope this research helps managers and stimulates additional research into how internal social media may transform organizations, governments and industries.
References


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