ALSTOM

ABSTRACT: Alstom faced the challenge of enhancing collaboration and knowledge sharing across its global workforce. Head of Community Networks, Walfa Chouki, used a formula of experimentation and sound methodology to deliver an e2.0 platform to over 75,000 employees in 70 countries(*). Identifying key elements of company culture and business requirements provided the foundation for the company's e2.0 efforts. Alstom has experienced benefits ranging from brand recognition to increased innovation and reduced carbon footprint.

The 2.0 Adoption Council

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People and Process First. Technology Second.

Introduction

One in four light bulbs worldwide is powered by Alstom technologies. With 2009 sales of €23 billion, the company is the world leader in integrated power plants for the production of electricity and air quality control systems and the world leader in very high speed and high speed transport, Alstom's technological advances enabled the company to achieve the world rail speed record at a speed of 574.8 km/h on 3 April 2007. Alstom's employee base is spread over 70 countries and has been pieced together through a history of mergers and acquisitions, thus silos are everywhere. So, when Walfa Chouki of Alstom University[1], was given the mission to centralize people around the common values of Team, Trust and Action to foster knowledge sharing across the company, she knew it would be no small task.

Alstom Puts Employees First

"I think if I could summarize it, it's all about people. Not about tools."

Before talking to vendors, before doing a pilot, before ever looking at technology Chouki first wanted to understand how Alstom employees work. Her goal was to learn how communities could be formed around shared interests and culture.

As Chouki looked across the company she noticed departments like R&D, technology and engineering could most benefit from a collaboration platform. "We have so much expertise and so many different products."

The employees in these business areas could capitalize greatly from having a combined knowledge base.

The team continued to work with informal networks, such as their Six Sigma organization, to see how employees connected by interest and separated by geography worked together. Developing a better understanding of how Alstom employees work and which departments could benefit the most, the team felt comfortable developing requirements, selecting tools that would meet those requirements and launching pilots.

Pilot, Experiment, Learn

At the time this project kicked off, talking about "social networks" at Alstom was unpopular. However, there were individual initiatives through social networking sites (e.g., Linkedin, Facebook). Chouki knew she would have to experiment in order to put together a business case she could take to the rest of the company. During this time she and her team used experimental pilots to continue to understand business needs and requirements. "We started with five pilots using communities with different drivers and maturity levels," Chouki recalls.

Through the multiple pilots, Alstom's collaborative needs began to emerge. There was a need to enable online communities, but what also became apparent was the need to update Alstom's piecemealed, dated IT environment.

While the team was temporarily without a formal business case, they were never without key leadership backing. Alstom's CFO, CIO, SVP of HR, VP of Alstom University and SVP of Strategy were looped in from the beginning, regularly updated on the pilots' progress and challenges. Chouki realized that having executive backing early-on would prove critical to the team's success. "Our strategy was to start with the believers and with sponsors that have business challenges where collaboration is needed."

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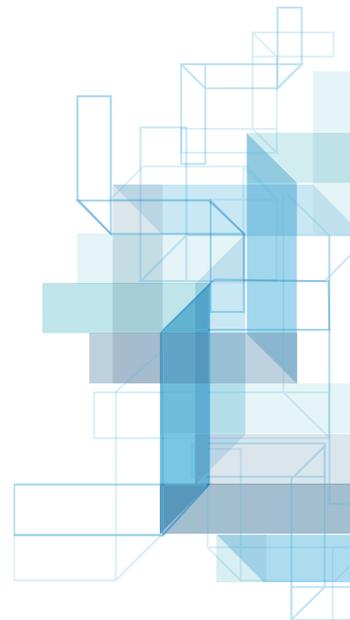
Alstom's Pillars of Collaboration

Armed with executive backing and a better understanding of employee culture and business requirements, Chouki and team put together the Alstom Collaborative Way program. Providing the foundation for Alstom's go-forward plan, the Alstom Collaborative Way was founded on three pillars: 1) building a collaborative IT environment; 2) people management and new ways of working; and 3) common methodologies and tools for communities.

Collaborative Environment (IT)

Continuing with the experimentation theme, Alstom started down the formal tool selection path by piloting externally hosted community forums. Initially limited to Alstom University employees, the pilot's immediate success quickly created demand from all parts of the company. Beyond just the forums, demand for other functionality grew as well. With the help of Alstom's CIO, Chouki and the team quickly added separate wiki and blogging applications that were available company-wide.

Chouki explains, "While successful, hosting these tools externally was not an acceptable long-term solution. At that time, everything had to be internalized, hosted on our servers." In addition to moving the tools into the Alstom IT environment, there was a need to combine the tools into a single platform. "We let people use the technology as a sandbox, now we are moving to a completely integrated environment."

People Management & new ways of working

When it came to employee education, Alstom University already had the processes it needed; it was a matter of adapting the content to address tool how-to's, as well as community and collaboration best practices. Alstom also created a collaboration competency and built a series of guides on how to run collaborative events and meetings. "We thought that collaboration could be seen as only virtual or by using technology, but we wanted all meetings to be more collaborative." Chouki wanted to emphasize the importance of shifting Alstom to a mindset of collaboration. As the tools are only a means to an end, they wouldn't be utilized if the culture remained siloed.

"People would come to us and say they wanted a wiki, but they didn't really understand when a wiki could benefit them"

Common Community Framework

With employees spread all over the world, Alstom University needed to come with a common framework it could use to guide community owners through community setup and management. The goal was to have a menu of tools and processes so anyone looking to create a community could be autonomous and use the menu in a self-service manner. This was already a big culture shift.

To complement the menu and walk community owners through key decisions, the team developed the Community Lifecycle and a toolkit. "The 'Community Lifecycle' governs a community from inception all the way through shut down." While each community would be customized to support its individual needs, owners still needed help evangelizing the benefit of a community, eliciting participation and picking which tools would best meet their requirements.

To help spread the word of what Chouki and her team were doing, the team created an "Introduction to Communities in Alstom" video. The video would be played to kickoff all large company events. Once the video piqued

> *We had almost nothing; we started with communities, had several technologies that were not really integrated and now we're moving to a fully integrated approach.*

> *If you can imagine, we were 75,000 people at the time, and having a common methodology was a challenge.*
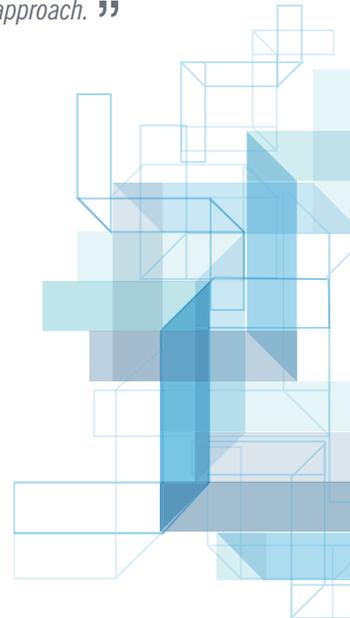
user interest they would contact Chouki and she could apply the lifecycle methodology to help the community get up and running. This video is also available on external channels like YouTube, Dailymotion or Slideshare (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVoDJZT-Rnw)

Similarly, the Alstom University team created e-Learning modules for the different tools and technologies Alstom now had. Users would again be prompted to contact Chouki's team for guidance.

Governance

"We made it very clear from the beginning that our communities should abide by three basic rules:
1) collaboration is business related;
2) collaboration should not be anonymous;
3) activities within these platforms should be monitored, not censored."

Chouki knew that having a developed governance model would help gain leadership buy-in. "The governance helps a lot. We are still in a culture where authority has its importance. Governance helped us to set the scene and build the foundation."

At Alstom, governance was an executive concern, but it was addressed satisfactorily with pilot experimentation. At the same time the team was setting the governance, they were gathering best practices and success stories from the pilot. One of these best practices became mandatory: each community must have a Community Leader, someone to monitor and follow community life.

The Community Leader drives activity in the community, stimulating and maintaining the group dynamic. He or she requests resources as needed, coordinates meetings and deliverables, and liaises between members and the Community Sponsor. The Sponsor is outside the community but still supports and promotes the community to the outside world, and provides strategic direction and new missions. The Sponsor provides resources as needed and participates in the validation of community recommendations.

And should a community become inactive, Alstom had the foresight to build in metrics and triggers that would prompt community shut down. "If there is no activity within six months, if people aren't motivated to participate or if the sponsor becomes disengaged...we can make that decision confidently."

Governance was also evident at a departmental level where roles were clearly defined. IT was responsible for building the Alstom collaborative environment; HR examined the way in which Alstom recruited, developed and rewarded collaboration; and everyone involved was responsible for developing a common framework for community planning, training, development and roll out.
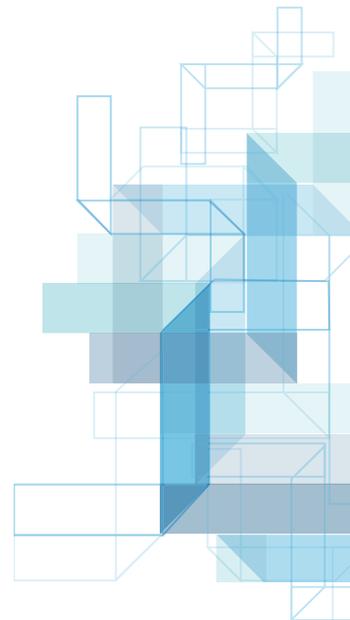
How Alstom Measures Success

Return on Investment (ROI) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) get a lot of buzz in the e2.0 world. Chouki, like many other practitioners, noted KPIs and ROI metrics were difficult to ascertain. "We started to measure the activities through the tools, we called it a dashboard...but frankly the measured metrics do not reflect collaboration, but rather activity which is essentially meaningless." After a few months, Chouki directed the reporting to focus more

"We often talk about KPIs or ROI, which are very difficult to pinpoint."

on Return on Experience (ROE) than ROI. Documented interviews with successful community managers were initially posted on the corporate intranet; now the team conducts and posts video testimonials.

One such successful community is the 1,000 member of their Global Field Service Network. The community is composed of employees all around the world who have expertise in Alstom's power plants. "They created a pool of people who travel globally. In the low activity period, they participate in the community and by transferring knowledge."

Success is more than Metrics

There are no concrete metrics that capture Alstom's success. However, Alstom believes it has experienced multiple benefits from its collaboration roll out, many of them emergent. The first is what the company calls the "employee lifecycle." Alstom has seen a boost to its brand among potential employees. "It's helped attract some new candidates," Chouki explains. The Alstom Collaborative Way approach has received attention at conferences. "It's quite modern compared to other major industrial companies with Latin culture."

Alstom now has a new understanding of what it takes to be successful in its highly federated, but collaborative culture. HR is now looking at augmenting the skill set it looks for in developing leaders or managers. It's not only about functional expertise, but about the behaviors you want to assess, evaluate and reward.

Collaboration has also sparked innovation at Alstom. Ideas are being shared more readily than before. The Innovation Management System Community realized that they didn't have a community for managers. "They gathered 100 managers facing the same problems, and now they're collaborating on ways they can all help Alstom be more innovative." This community engaged the VP of Strategy and is now working on developing a new approach to improve innovation inside Alstom.

A final area in which Alstom is seeing great benefit, and in line with their corporate social responsibility efforts, is a reduction in their carbon footprint. By implementing a Cisco Telepresence© solution, with each virtual meeting held Alstom is measuring and reducing its CO_2 emissions.

> *It's not just one big issue that we helped to solve, but it's all these things put together that help to make Alstom a better place to work.*
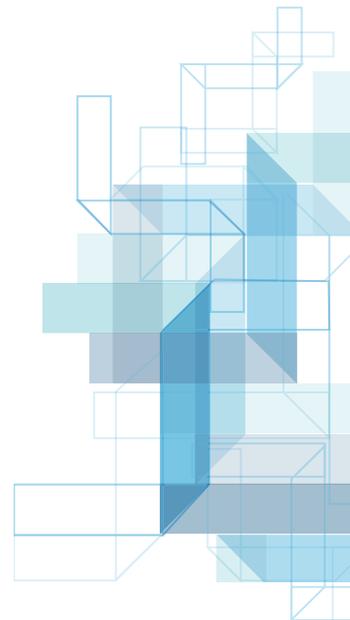
What's Next?

Alstom still faces challenges. There is an element of management resistance that the company is experiencing. "Managers want to know that the information being shared in these communities is accurate." Chouki believes that a continued focus on user education and change management can help show that not only is the information accurate, but that communities are self-regulating, weeding out the inaccurate information.

Alstom University is by no means finished in bringing collaboration and capabilities to employees. The company is currently working on rolling out an educational video sharing platform solution (Alstom University Tube) to enable social learning and knowledge sharing.

Alstom employees can record and share short, but valuable educational content. "Think about it, we have nearly 100K trainers in the company," Chouki exclaims.

For those about to embark on an Enterprise 2.0 initiative, Chouki has some advice. "It's not about the tools; it's about their usage and the mindset." She warns against rolling out tools if you don't first change the culture to one of collaboration. To that end, she suggests getting management buy-in early on so that employees know it's acceptable to share knowledge through these new tools. "You can have the best tool in the world…it will be useless if you don't have adopters. So don't think about the tool, think about how it impacts the organization."

You need the management to push it, but you need the organization as a whole to be ready to use it.
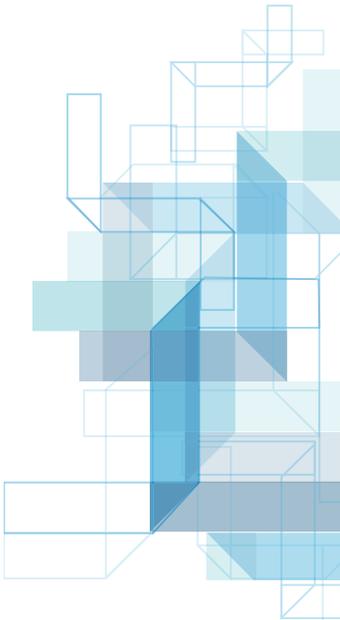
Source: Wikipedia

ALSTOM

Type	Société Anonyme (Euronext: ALO)
Industry	Engineering, manufacturing, technologies and transport
Founded	1928 (Alsthom)
Headquarters	Levallois-Perret, France
Key People	Patrick Kron (Chairman and CEO)
Products	Equipment and services for power generation and transport
Revenue	€19.65 billion (year-Mar 2010) [*]
Operating income	€1.779 billion (year-Mar 2010) [*]
Profit	€1.217 billion (year-Mar 2010) [*]
Employees	68,860 (Mar 2010)[1]
Website	www.alstom.com

[*] *In 2010 Alstom created a new sector grid it offers a wide range of solutions for power transmission, with a focus on smart grids. Alstom employs 96,500 people in more than 70 countries, and had sales of over € 23 billion* in 2009/10.*

1 *Mark Alstom University (AU) was launched in 2007 with a clearly defined goal: to ensure that employees have the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to contribute to both Alstom's and the individual's success. The Community Networks function was included from the start with Chouki and her team identifying three objectives: 1) promote the learning by sharing; 2) increase cross-function collaboration; and, 3) become a reference point for the organization's collaborative culture.*

Founded in 1999, the MIT Center for Digital Business (MIT CDB) is the world's largest center for research focused on the digital economy. MIT CDB has worked with more than 50 corporate sponsors, funded more than 60 faculty and performed more than 75 research projects. The center's faculty and sponsors represent the leaders in Digital Business research, analysis and practice worldwide. Together with its partners, MIT's Center for Digital Business is inventing the future of Digital Business.

Dachis Group is the world's leading social business advisory firm. With offices in five countries worldwide, Dachis Group helps large scale enterprises capture value from trends in technology, society, and the workplace. The firm's proprietary framework of Social Business Design drives insight across three main practice areas: Customer Participation and Engagement, Workforce Collaboration, and Business Partner Optimization. The future of business lies in socially calibrated, dynamic business cultures and Dachis Group shows leaders how to make the future a reality.