

## Effective Team Collaboration Made Simple

**Having a seamless collaboration environment is crucial now that work is increasingly global and outsourced to external parties. One of the benefits of virtual teams is that you can bring in new members from anywhere in the organization as required by the project.**

However, you need to ensure that everyone has access to the latest version of the documents and requirements and is clear about what they are supposed to do next. That easily becomes a challenge when communication is not always face-to-face.

Team collaboration is migrating away from email into web-based collaboration solutions. Lumo Flow is one such tool and it can improve cross-team communication by centralizing documents, conversations and project activities under one user interface. We call it a social productivity tool since it comes with social networking features that helps to build trust among team members and to get questions answered quicker.

### **Bombarded with too many emails and meetings?**



Email easily becomes a distraction since you cannot easily separate project specific messages from rest of the communication. Everyone is familiar with the problems caused by excessive email. Locating information and keeping track on tasks become painful. With no centralized place to search, it creates silos of information as discussions are restricted to only named participants.

New employees are difficult to on-board when there's no central knowledge base to look for information. Email simply wasn't designed to be a collaboration tool that would address the needs of a team working on a project of any larger size than few members. Does your company still rely on email on its project communications?



### **Social networking in the enterprise, huh?**

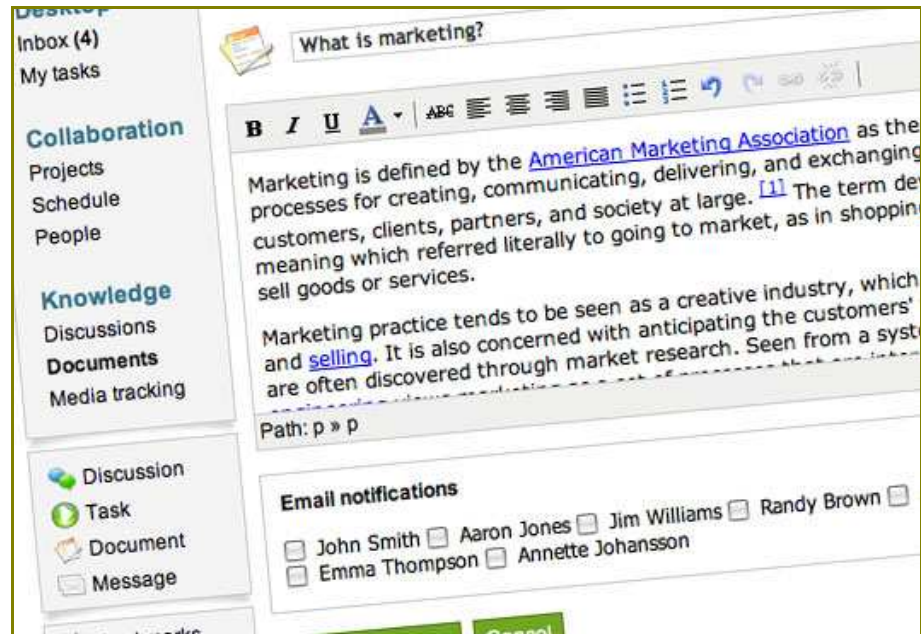
You bet! Especially the younger generation of employees is already proficient with consumer social networking tools such as Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter. Many of the same ideas are now making their way into the enterprise. When adapted to meet the specific needs of the enterprises, they can drive productivity and innovation.

The main benefit of social networking in business environment is its ability to build trust and strengthen the ties of people across organizational boundaries. When everyone is clear about the objectives and aware of what others are doing there is less chance of someone miss-interpreting the message.

When everyone is given tools to contribute and to get their message heard, the dynamics of the team can be adjusted in a positive way, and the team as whole can become more productive. In a social enterprise, all members are equal in the creation of information, encouraging instant communication and sharing of knowledge.

### **Seamless tools for project management**

Defining and assigning tasks are the first steps when starting a new project. In Flow, projects can be divided into assignable tasks and milestones can be used to collect tasks into smaller subsets. Assigned tasks are moved to each members personal task lists and reminders about deadlines are shown on each member's dashboard. When a task is completed, the assigner will be notified.



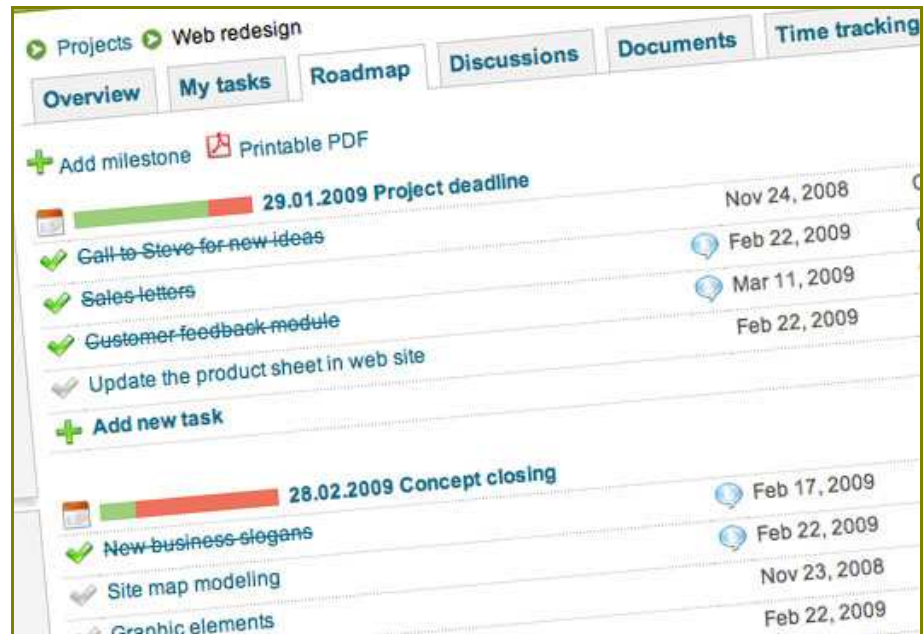
## Where did I put that document again?

There's a lot of information to be shared, meeting minutes, project documentation, design guidelines, best practices - anything that needs to be written down for reference by the team.

How quickly can you find a document sent to you by email one month ago? How often have you asked for a document to be re-sent to you just because locating it would take too long?

In Flow, documents are shown in context so that the related discussions are stored along with the documents. Whenever you need to access a document, you can also see what has been discussed about it and what other related items exist in the workspace.

The search functionality provides the quickest way for locating specific information. Instead of showing everything in one list, results from different content types are shown separately, providing a comprehensive view to the whole knowledge base.



## Keep everyone on the same page

Dashboards provide a quick overview on what's happening in the workspace. Project managers are able to monitor activities within the project and can provide direct feedback. Team members can get reminders of activities they are currently engaged with.

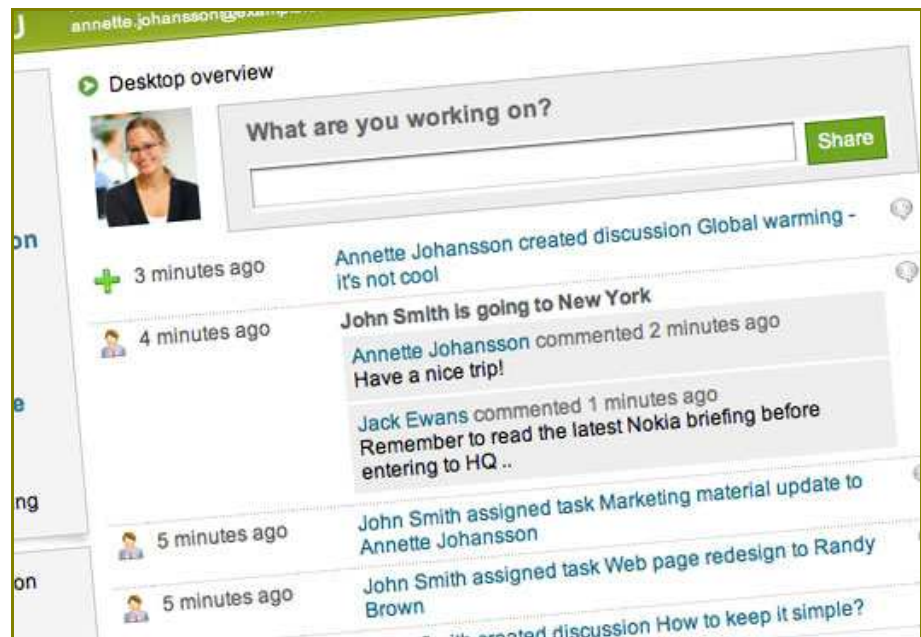
Profile pages provide a centralized directory of users in which everyone has the ability to explore and to see what others are doing now and what they have been working on in the past.

Conversations among team members is one of the most critical things a manager of a virtual team needs to support. The team needs to be provided with multiple levels of communication ranging from personal messaging to public discussion forums. The chosen collaboration tool should encourage a free-flow of information so that team members willingly share what they know and provide support for each other.



## Microblogging, what is that?

In a face-to-face group, managers and team members watch body language and facial expression to develop a sense of what's going on. Participants in virtual teams have to convey this same information using the tools that technology can offer. By lowering the barrier of participation, communication can be kept active. Microblogging is a great technology for casual communications and status updating. Short, free-form messages which can be commented by others, encourage participation and help to increase the sense of community.



One of the central concepts in Flow is *activity feed*. Every event in the workspace, such as assignment or completion of a task, or someone uploading a new document, is notified to others via the feed. Depending on the context, the feed is filtered to provide the most relevant information for the task at hand.

Activity feeds help members to keep track on what's currently going on in the workspace and enable instant feedback



## How to boost the social productivity?

All the project activity starts as discussions between team members. Traditionally, when discussions are turned into tasks, the link between the task and the discussions that originated it, is lost.

In Flow, tasks are associated with the preceding discussions preserving the context in which the task was created. When a task is completed, the results can be recorded, using the built-in documentation tool, as documentation for later referral. We call this process a *seamless loop of productivity*.



Research shows that majority of our knowledge is tacit, stored in private notebooks and in peoples heads. This information is typically exchanged informally in person-to-person discussions. A successful collaboration space can release some of this valuable knowledge by functioning as a “virtual water cooler” - a place where employees can find each other in order to exchange information and advice.

### What was that acronym you mentioned...?

SaaS stands for *Software as a Service* and it means that the service is hosted and maintained by dedicated people with expertise in keeping the servers running. The service is accessible from any location, 24 hours a day. The service may occasionally be updated to a newer version, but that doesn't require any activities from you, the user. In fact, the only thing you need is a web browser and an internet connection to access your workspace.



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