

Social Ubiquity: What Are We Going to Do with It?

An Interview with Scott Klososky

By Cinda Daly, Executive Director of Business Content

Not too long ago, while waiting to catch a delayed flight, Scott Klososky posted a blog that epitomizes the modern realities of social ubiquity, social technology, and connectivity:

“My daughter just texted me, I have a client e-mailing me, and a speakers’ bureau asking me for information for a speaking prospect they are working with. Money never sleeps, baby, money never sleeps.



One of my books just went live in the iBooks store, and I loaded it on my iPad. I also e-mailed it to a client, and he loaded it on his iPad, as well....I am listening to digital music on expensive noise-cancelling headphones, and it sounds great—I cannot hear anyone else around me. I love it.

I am accessing the Internet through a USB AT&T device because I don’t want to pay for the daily fee at the airport. I have my iPhone and iPad sitting right next to my MacBook Pro as I write this. Both of them are connected to the Internet....My phone is tracking my flight, which is late, so I know when to head to the gate. If I happen to hear a song I like on Internet radio, which allows me to listen to music from all over the world, I can download it in an instant, as well.

Hang on, I just had to answer a client question about a date for a webinar next week...”

Scott Klososky, author of *The Velocity Manifesto* (2011) and *Enterprise Social Technology* (2011), isn’t afraid to shake up the status quo. We sat down to talk about why enterprises must embrace a new order and what leaders need to do to adapt to the changing dynamics precipitated by the explosion of social technologies and new mobile devices.

Cinda Daly: While many organizations are embracing social technologies, you’re of the opinion that enterprises aren’t taking enough advantage yet. Why is this the case?

Scott Klososky: For a couple of reasons: Historically, organizations have been pretty bad about adopting major technology shifts quickly. When the first PCs came out,

companies were nervous about them. Should we give computing power to individuals? Would they use it responsibly? IT didn't like them and execs were worried. Adoption was slow. Spin forward a few years, and we get the Internet. Companies wanted to block it. "People are just going to shop all day. We need to control this resource." Same early-acceptance issue as the PC. Now, spin forward to social technology. A lot of executives don't understand it, or use it personally, in some cases. And, of course, IT departments want to block it for security issues. It's the same play we've seen. When you hand a new and very powerful tool to someone, there are things they can do that are magical, and there are things they can do that can be serious problems. People are fearful about that. It's not unlike letting your teenager have a car. There are wonderful things they can do with it, or they can wrap that car around a telephone pole.

Daly: To what extent should leaders feel a sense of urgency to embrace social technology in their enterprises? Do they have to act now?

Klososky: It's not only that they need to do it now, but any time a new technology comes out. There's a clock that starts ticking about the value of adopting it earlier than your competitors and using it wisely. For the amount of time it takes until your competitor catches up, you have a competitive advantage. As soon as you see a new technology innovation that's a powerful tool, the faster you adopt it and learn the benefits of it, the faster you'll get market share, the faster you can build tighter relationships with customers.

Daly: In your book, you offer up several interesting concepts about how social technology, properly exploited, works to ones' advantage. Tell us a little about the social dynamic of "crowdsourcing," which you used to write *Enterprise Social Technology*.

Klososky: Crowdsourcing is simply harnessing the Internet herd to do work on your behalf. Basically, it's the next extension past outsourcing—taking your work and going to India, Pakistan, China to find people to do work for less money. With crowdsourcing, you post the work online and allow people to take the work and do it, or compete to be able to do that work. The work might even be done by anonymous people. It's about harnessing the dynamic of the two billion people that have computers all over the world; just posting that work and allowing that herd to decide if they want to do that work or not. There are seventy-five or more different crowdsourcing sites now that help you harness that herd. Go on Logotournaments.com, for example, and instead of paying a design house \$10,000 for a logo design, post a bounty of \$300 and within a week you will have 200 submitted designs. It's dramatic, how much money is saved and how rapidly work gets done.

Daly: What are some of the other crowdsourcing sites you refer to? Do people use this to, for example, develop new software applications or build knowledge bases?

Klososky: crowdSPRING is the largest. Then there's chaordix and 99designs.com, which is one of my favorites. Innocentive.com is a fantastic business site that's

gone crazy lately. And there are a number of sites that are great for technical support organizations. TopCoder is a crowdsourcing site for getting code written, and Mturk, an Amazon site, is where you can get research done or documents written.

Daly: You coin a phrase: “river of information.” What is that river?

Klososky: “River of information” is one of the more powerful things that almost no one is talking about. We’ve always had rivers of information. It might have been the newspaper, magazines, books, TV—tools like those help us gain a certain amount of information and put it into our heads every day. Based upon how much I read or study, my river might be bigger or smaller than yours. Today, with all the social tools we have—blogging, Twitter, online newsletters, RSS feeds, podcasts, YouTube—there’s an explosion of information out there. The amount of petabytes of information that is created every day is staggering. Now, that’s great, but if you didn’t have any way to harness it, it wouldn’t matter. But we do. With social technology, we have methods and tools that help us harness huge amounts of that information. You can assemble tools like Google Reader, Net 5, and tweetdeck, which provide aggregation points and filtering, so you can harvest all of the information that is relevant to you and provide it to you in a way such that in thirty to forty-five minutes a day, you can dump that information into your brain. It creates a system of continuous learning on a scale we’ve never had before. It dramatically accelerates our ability to add knowledge.

Daly: How far have organizations come toward building this river? Or, should I ask, how far do they have to go?

Klososky: No one is institutionalizing it yet. At my company, FPOV (Future Point of View), we’re teaching companies how to put in river-of-information processes, so their employees can raise their IQs faster-faster. After all, it’s a knowledge economy, and the smarter people win. So when you can institutionalize your rivers, you have advantages over your competition. When you are running a help desk operation, for instance, the amount of knowledge your people have directly applies to the quality of service you can provide. If you provide ways to make all the people that are providing that help smarter, and they are fifty percent smarter, you are fifty percent better. It just makes sense. We’re still handing help desk people binders of information as opposed to providing digital, continuous learning systems for them.

Daly: All those devices you described using that night in the airport need support. What’s your advice to enterprises about supporting these critical business tools?

Klososky: My advice is a bit radical. It’s very much time to quit setting standards and quit telling people what tools they are going to use. It’s time to start asking them what they want, give them a budget, and let them go buy it. It’s a simple concept. But not until you’re ready to get enlightened, to realize that the most important thing isn’t to set standards, to control devices, to control the software people use, it’s will you be willing to let go and say, “Here’s what you need to accomplish on your job. We don’t care what

tools you use—use what you need. If you love Mac, if you love the iPad, here's \$2,000; spend it on whatever you want. Every year, we will give you another \$500 to buy whatever new hardware or software you need.”

Daly: Some people are even advocating “bring your own.” That wide-open environment is a scary notion for IT executives and support organizations.

Klososky: Of course. First they will say it's a support nightmare. There's a very easy solution: don't try to support everything. Then they ask, “How do people learn how to use them?” Answer: People have to self-learn, which is what we do most of the time anyway.

Daly: How do you protect the data, the confidential information, the knowledge base, without these standards?

Klososky: Data security is an issue. That's partly training, which we don't do enough of now. Put responsibility back on the employee. Inform everyone of the security levels they have to adhere to. If they don't adhere, fire them. Make it the terms of employment.

Daly: Once you've opened an enterprise to these different ways of conducting business, what's the most difficult thing to manage?

Klososky: You're handing very powerful tools to your employee, and when you hand powerful tools to people, they have the potential to use them irresponsibly. Let everyone use Facebook at work? It can be an awesome tool or it can waste two or three hours a day. It can be a serious distraction. You have to manage that. The other really dangerous thing is when any one person can potentially talk to two billion people around the world, for free, in an instant. That's an unbelievable piece of power, and there's unbelievable danger in that. Not every employee will be discrete. It just takes one or two indiscrete employees that post something they shouldn't post to create a horribly embarrassing situation.

Daly: Unfortunately, there are many examples of that point. And this is a major stumbling block for organizations that are debating how to move ahead judiciously. To your earlier point, however, leaders need to embrace new technology, and in this context, social technology. What steps must leaders take to catch up?

Klososky: Little has been done to holistically address how social tools can be fully integrated into an organization. There are three things leaders need to do. First, they need to be more tech aware. I don't mean know how to use Facebook, but how to apply technology tools quickly and well. They can't say, “I have a tech guy to do this.” Second, leaders have to be able to predict the future accurately, and have a vision that goes out at least five years. Third, leaders have to understand how to change the culture or improve the culture of the organization. Culture drives so much of the productivity and innovation. A lot of leaders have no sense of or feel for how to alter or improve the culture.

Daly: People often, and easily, get stuck dealing with day-to-day issues and short-term thinking that they can't step back far enough to look ahead.

Klososky: That's why I wrote the *Manifesto*, and I can easily go on a rant about this. It happened the other day when I was speaking to CEOs in the accounting space. I think I said it three times, "I don't think you are leading." I get frustrated that we have so many people in their fifties and sixties who have the title, but they aren't leading. Leaders have a vision of where they're going to go, tell you how they will lead you there, and go in that direction.

Daly: So it's a generational thing?

Klososky: It's definitely a generational thing. Take Biz Stone, cofounder and creative director of Twitter, and these other young tech guys, who aren't even thirty years old but have built billion-dollar companies. Why are they running their companies so differently from Exxon or IBM? Because they view things differently and are doing very different things in their work cultures. These young guys are very visionary, always looking out for what is going to happen next, what the world will look like five years from now. It's dramatically different from the fifty-, sixty-year-old managers who almost always look five years back, at what was successful then, and think, "When the economy picks up, let's do more of that." I'll remind the readers of Marshall Goldsmith's sage insight, captured in his book title: *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*.

Daly: How would you guide IT service and technical support leaders to incorporate social technology tools into their service organizations?

Klososky: "Rivers of information" is an important concept here. Learn how to institutionalize that. Teach individuals how to build their own rivers. It improves peoples' career IQ. Teach them how to use social networking well; when you need to solve a problem, reach out to Facebook or LinkedIn. I have a young girl in my company who had a problem with her car. She went out on Facebook and posted, "I need a man to meet me at my house at 5:00 PM to fix my car." I said to her, "That is crazy," and she looked at me like I had three heads. "Three people responded. I had a problem; I can't fix it, and I know I have someone in my network who can." She was so sincere. She picked one of the three, the one she trusted. It's the ability to work that network if you can't find an answer. I've never forgotten that story.

Scott will be presenting a keynote at the 2011 HDI Annual Conference & Expo (March 29–April 1, in Las Vegas), entitled "The Technology Integration of Man."

A former CEO of three successful startup companies and the author of three books that will be released this year, Scott publishes a blog at www.technologystory.com, and can be found on Twitter at [@sklososky](https://twitter.com/sklososky). And be sure to check out the full text of Scott's blog on www.HDIConnect.com.

About Scott

Scott Klososky is a visionary technology architect who cofounded a venture that resulted in the world's first handwriting recognition software platforms. He has invested in a variety of publishing technologies, including audio and crowdsourcing. Currently, his company, Alkami Technology, is redefining online banking and financial literacy.

Scott is the author of several books on technology and leadership, including *The Velocity Manifesto: Harnessing Technology, Vision, and Culture to Future-Proof Your Organization* (Greenleaf Book Group Press, 2011) and *Enterprise Social Technology: Helping Organizations Harness the Power of Social Media, Social Networking, Social Relevancy* (Greenleaf Book Group Press, 2011).

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