

# MIX HACK REPORT

## COMMUNITIES OF PASSION

NOVEMBER 2011

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The Management Innovation Exchange  
[www.managementexchange.com](http://www.managementexchange.com)



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COMMUNITIES OF PASSION HACKATHON  
TECHNOLOGY PARTNER:



TRANSFORMATION AT WORK

## INTRODUCTION

For many of us, work seems like... well, *work*. The organizations where many of us spend our days are bureaucratic and politicized. We've stopped trying to be creative, inventive, or even productive, as we've learned it is more traumatic and less rewarding than just doing the bare minimum. So rather than working to get ahead, we settle for getting by.

Against a global backdrop of high unemployment, increasing financial instability, and widespread political unrest, one must begin to wonder if in our zeal to build highly efficient and profitable organizational machines, we have broken something even more important: *our spirit*.

But is there any law decreeing that our organizations cannot be as resilient, inventive, and inspiring—as human—as the people who work within them? Work and passion need not be mutually exclusive. Passion is a significant multiplier of human accomplishment, particularly when like-minded individuals converge around a worthy cause.

Yet a wealth of data indicates that most employees are emotionally disengaged at work. They are unfulfilled, and consequently their organizations underperform. Organizations that can structure work and revise management processes to help people tap into a higher calling, by connecting

employees who share similar passions and by better aligning the organization's objectives with the natural interests of its people, will likely become much more innovative—and humane—places to work.

That's the dream at the heart of the MIX (Management Innovation eXchange): building organizations that are as resilient, inventive, inspiring, and accountable as the people who work within them.

### WHAT IS THE MANAGEMENT INNOVATION EXCHANGE?

The MIX is an open innovation project dedicated to mustering the daring and creativity of in-the-trenches innovators, progressive leaders, and adventuresome thinkers to reinvent management for a new age. The MIX is designed as a collaborative platform to surface bold ideas and instructive stories, to embolden and equip management innovators in every realm

of endeavor, and to make collective progress on making our organizations fit for the future—and fit for human beings.

Don't stand for the status quo. Join the MIX.

[www.hackmanagement.com](http://www.hackmanagement.com)

A **MANAGEMENT HACKATHON** is a short, intense, coordinated effort to develop useful **HACKS** (innovative ideas or solutions) that can be implemented by organizations to overcome barriers to progress and innovation.

In fact, some of the world's most inspiring and innovative organizations are actually structured much more like passionate communities, where people see themselves as members supporting a movement—not mere employees seeking a paycheck. By studying what makes these organizations such passionate communities, and simultaneously learning more about communities of passion of all types, we can discover what must change in our organizations to make them more fit for human beings than they are today.

It was in this spirit that, in the spring of 2011, the Management Innovation Exchange launched the Communities of Passion Management Hackathon. We found our inspiration in the technology world, where hackathons were born. In technology, a hackathon is a short, intense, coordinated effort to write an enormous amount of software code in a short period of time.

Our Management Hackathon was an attempt to deeply and quickly explore the concept of communities of passion. *What are they? How do they form? What hinders their growth? And how can we overcome these barriers?* By the end of the Hackathon, our goal was to develop a solid set of management hacks: “source code” that could be used by anyone interested in overcoming the barriers preventing their own organizations from becoming communities of passion.

## THE HACKATHON

In March 2011, 60 MIX contributors representing a variety of organizations and located on six different continents volunteered to participate in the Community of Passion Management Hackathon.

Contributors came from all walks of life: a college student from Caracas, Venezuela, the president of an alternative energy company in Cleveland, Ohio, a futurist from Melbourne, Australia, a communications professor at the University of Southern California, a management consultant from Milan, Italy, a product manager at Mozilla, and a 12-time author, among many others. What each volunteer shared was a passion for understanding more about how to enable communities of passion.

Over the next six months, this group participated in a series of sprints designed to result in a set of innovative management hacks. Our hackathon was built around a design thinking methodology coupled with management hacking principles developed by Gary Hamel and the MIX community. The Hackathon was organized into four phases.

### WHAT IS DESIGN THINKING?

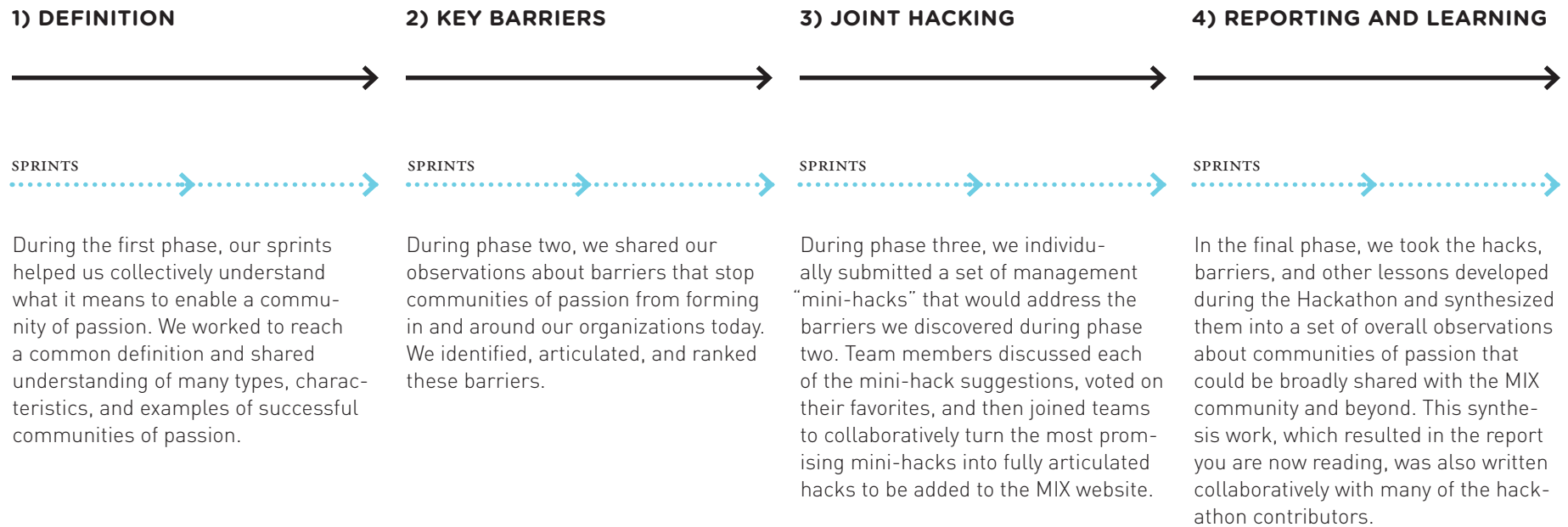
We used a **design thinking** methodology to run the Communities of Passion Hackathon.

Design thinking is a process used by groups to collaboratively solve problems or explore opportunities by *building ideas up* rather than tearing them down.

The “building up” approach makes design thinking quite different than the analytical problem-solving processes regularly used in the business world.

Design thinking is optimized for collaboration and inclusiveness, so it is a great way to engage a diverse group of people and get them working together to develop innovative new ideas.

## THE HACKATHON PROCESS



### THE SPRINTS

Each phase was split into one or more sprints lasting from one to three weeks. During the sprints, almost all work was done asynchronously using an enterprise social networking platform called Saba Social. This technology allowed us to bring together a geographically-distributed group of collaborators in an online virtual community.

Because contributors were located in different time zones around the world, this was the best way to ensure everyone had equal opportunity to participate.

A **sprint** is a short 1-3 week project with a specific end goal.

# So was the Hackathon experiment a success?

## *Can you hack management as easily as you can hack software?*

*We think so.* A number of great outcomes emerged from this collaborative effort, including:

### **INNOVATIVE NEW MANAGEMENT HACKS**

Over 25 mini-hacks and 12 fully realized hacks were created by the hackathon team. Two of these hacks were later named finalists out of over 140 entries in the HBR / McKinsey M-Prize competition on the MIX.

### **A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF COMMUNITIES OF PASSION**

By working together and sharing ideas and perspectives, the team reached a clearer definition of what it means to enable a community of passion and what barriers often stand in the way. We'll share some of what we learned later in this report.

### **A NEW COMMUNITY OF PASSION**

One of the goals of the project was to learn by doing—to build a community of passion for people who are interested in understanding communities of passion. Many of the Hackathon participants have since stayed in contact with each other and continued to work together on projects outside of the Hackathon. We hope and expect this will continue.

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*Over the following pages, we'll share the story of the Communities of Passion Management Hackathon and many of the concepts, definitions, barriers, and hacks that emerged along the way.*



A **COMMUNITY OF PASSION** is a group of people who share a common set of values and are passionately pursuing a specific purpose.



## WHAT IS A COMMUNITY OF PASSION?

So, what exactly is a community of passion? It is a group of people who share a common set of values and are passionately pursuing a specific purpose. Group members care deeply about that purpose, adhere to their shared values, and include members who are often selfless in their interaction with others as they pursue this passion.

The specific purpose can take many different forms, from sharing information, experiences, and ideas to improving skills and knowledge, solving a problem, advocating for a cause, supporting and helping other people, or even creating a new product.

**Why do communities of passion matter?** Organizations that understand how to recognize, create, and empower communities of passion will be able to leverage passion as a multiplier of human effort. Only when people are passionately engaged in their work, when they feel like they are a part of something larger than themselves, will the organization reach its true innovative potential.

### BEHIND THE SCENES: HACKATHON SPRINTS 1 + 2

**IN SPRINT #1**, we asked our contributors to name five communities of passion they felt were incredibly successful then follow up with examples of communities of passion to which they belonged.

**IN SPRINT #2**, we began to develop a definition of the term “community of passion” by asking contributors to answer the question “What is a community of passion?” and rewriting the description of communities of passion for the MIX website.

## THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNITIES OF PASSION

In our work during the Hackathon, we discovered three characteristics that distinguish successful communities of passion:

### A STRENGTHS-BASED VIEW OF PEOPLE

Successful communities of passion foster a culture that helps members respect one another as unique and valued human beings. Members are encouraged to recognize that each person brings a helpful set of talents, signature strengths, and unique perspectives to the community. For example, W.L. Gore founder Bill Gore rejected the notion that people were fundamentally lazy and needed to be told what to do. Instead, he trusted that they would be engaged in their work if they were a part of projects they were passionate about and were striving to reach goals they believed in.

### AN INCLUSIVE AND EXPERIMENTAL VIEW OF PROCESS

Great communities of passion have an internal “idea architecture” for both submitting and executing new projects in an autonomous way. In this structure, individuals are allowed to experiment, fail, learn, and grow. For example, in the open source community, it is easy to “fork” a project into an entirely new project so that passionate contributors can try new things without being held back by the status quo. Often, these forks eventually reconnect with and improve (or even replace) the old way of doing things, allowing innovation to occur more rapidly.

### A BROAD SENSE OF PURPOSE

In a successful community of passion, there is both a why and a how. The why is the larger sense of purpose—a grand mission, a noble cause—that people can rally around. This important mission is then reinforced by the specific core values that determine how the particular community gets things done. For example, the community surrounding the Whole Foods chain of markets in North America and the United Kingdom believes very strongly that the best path to healthier people and a healthier planet is to support natural foods, organic farming, and sustainable agriculture.

## WHY MEMBERS GET INVOLVED

In our research, we uncovered two universal drivers for participation, plus many diverse individual motivations. The two universal drivers for participation were:

### 1. ENTHUSIASM

Communities of passion are filled with people who care. Members have shared principles, values, or history that underlie the purpose of the group—and they feel strongly enough about these principles to do something.

### 2. SELF INTEREST

Shared principles and values alone are not enough for the community to be successful. Active participation also requires the presence of a tangible personal benefit—the “What’s in it for me?” factor.

New social connections

A source of inspiration

The chance to be “David” fighting a “Goliath”

The desire to help others

A fun way to learn something new

Mutual respect

Belonging to something greater than themselves

The opportunity to make meaningful contributions

**WHILE ENTHUSIASM AND SELF INTEREST  
WERE THE TWO UNIVERSAL DRIVERS  
FOR PARTICIPATION, OTHER DRIVERS  
INCLUDE:**

A love of competition or cooperation

A sense of pride in positive outcomes

The desire to affect change, make a difference,  
or make something better or more efficient

Access to a perceived authority or celebrity

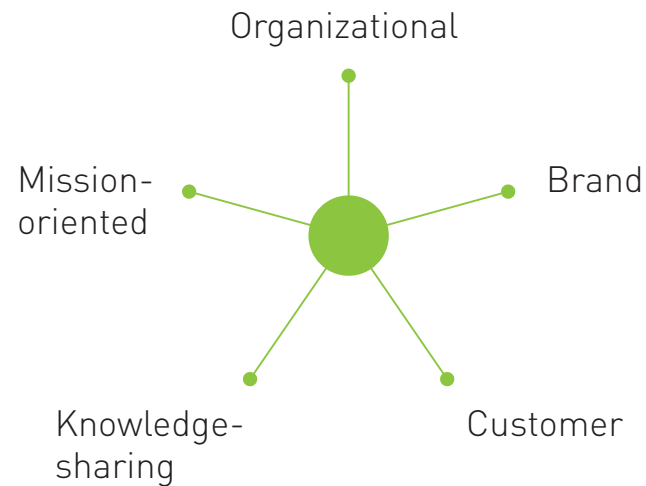
A creative outlet

A surrogate family or a way to make new friends

## TYPES OF COMMUNITIES OF PASSION

In the Hackathon, we identified five key types of communities of passion.

### THE FIVE TYPES OF COMMUNITIES OF PASSION



### 1. ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNITIES

Organizational communities are typically found within organizations and companies that deliberately build a culture around a shared purpose and set of values. These communities leverage the energy of workers to drive innovation and productivity.

Innovative organizations often have charismatic leaders who engage their entire organization as a community of passion by nurturing allegiance to the organization's mission. These organizations may also encourage the formation of smaller communities, typically by granting autonomy and freedom to workers.

"Zappos is a place where fun and commitment seems to describe the work and the workplace community."

Ellen Weber, Hackathon Contributor



## 2. BRAND COMMUNITIES

Another type of community is formed by brand loyalists or enthusiastic users of specific products. Users help each other discover new and innovative uses for products, create their own message boards, YouTube videos, and more. Some organizations strategically engage these communities to meet business objectives.

“Harley Davidson has been a successful community in the long run (since 1903), and a real community of passion. They define themselves as “brothers and sisters bound by the passion to ride.” [That’s] a mission statement with a lot of passion-related ingredients: a virtual family that shares the passion of riding an object, which is not just a motorbike to them, but also a recipient of enthusiasm, inspiration, creativity, time, and care.”

Silvia Colombo, Hackathon Contributor



## 3. CUSTOMER COMMUNITIES

Organizations can also create, foster, and host communities for customers within their domain. These communities provide value to customers through knowledge sharing, both with other customers and company representatives.

Organizations can also access these communities for a treasure trove of customer intelligence to improve product development and services.

“In the UK, Giff Gaff is a cellular network and service run by the people for the people. Giff Gaff bucks the trend of outsourced contact centers by placing the user at the heart of the customer experience. Customers help other customers to sort out problems. The company encourages this behavior by rewarding the most helpful customers with call credit and other incentives.”

Rudi Sellers, Hackathon Contributor



#### 4. KNOWLEDGE-SHARING COMMUNITIES

Some communities of passion come together and thrive simply for the sake of sharing ideas, knowledge, and learning.

“With Wikipedia, the orchestration that happens behind the scenes to ensure that the right information is updated is exceptional.”

Madhusudan Rao, Hackathon Contributor



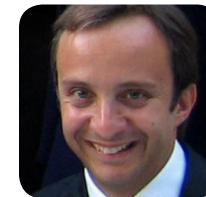
#### 5. MISSION-ORIENTED COMMUNITIES

History is rich with examples of people driven to self-organize for a cause. Out of their shared passion, as well as their exchange of ideas and resources, a community of passion is born. These communities of passion can lead to transformation not only for the members, but also for everyone that community impacts.

These communities are diverse and include many non-profit organizations, religious groups, neighborhood associations, and disaster relief campaigns.

“One set of communities of passion I’ve been intrigued by are Volunteer Technical Communities (VTC)—self-organized groups of technically savvy volunteers who collaborate on socially useful causes, like disaster relief and international development. Over the last couple of years, these VTCs have generated significant impact in alleviating catastrophes like the Haiti Earthquake (and more recently the one impacting Japan).”

Michele Zanini, Hackathon Contributor



## BARRIERS THAT HINDER COMMUNITIES OF PASSION

Every community of passion will face its own barriers to collaboration, innovation, or action. Some of these barriers are imposed by people, others by process. These roadblocks can come from inside the community, from within the larger organization that supports it, or beyond. What they have in common is their ability to damage the strength of a community if left unchecked. When faced with a barrier, communities of passion and their supporting organizations must be resourceful and strategic in their response.

### THREE TYPES OF BARRIERS

There are three types of barriers that communities of passion typically face.

#### 1. STRUCTURAL BARRIERS

The basic pyramidal structure of most organizations, based upon cascading top-down power and control, is often cited as a barrier to enabling communities of passion. While this structure can stifle creativity and autonomy, it is by no means the only structural barrier. Rigid hierarchies, the way boundaries are drawn within the organization, the size of teams, and the underlying power struggles caused by these structures also discourage communities of passion from taking root in many organizations.

#### 2. PROCEDURAL BARRIERS

The hardwired and often bureaucratic processes and procedures used to manage the organization—like performance reviews, compensation, budgeting, resource allocation, hiring and promotion, strategic planning, and goal setting—have the power to undermine attempts to enable communities of passion. Complex and bureaucratic processes can make progress painful or impossible. The processes may be seen as slow, inefficient, or even pointless and often make it hard to join, stay involved, or justify participation in a community of passion.

#### 3. IDEOLOGICAL BARRIERS

The final category of barriers is often the most difficult to overcome. These barriers come from the fundamental values and beliefs that underpin and orient the organization, and as such are often self-imposed. Overcoming them can require a great degree of honesty, introspection, and humility.

## KEY BARRIERS

In order to develop truly meaningful and useful management hacks, we first needed to completely understand the core barriers that stop communities of passion from forming or thriving. During the Hackathon, the team generated 30 real-world barriers. We then rated the barriers in an attempt to uncover many of the most critical ones. Here are the top 10 specific barriers as rated by the Hackathon team.

### BEHIND THE SCENES: HACKATHON SPRINTS 3 + 4

IN SPRINT #3, we asked our contributors to name as many barriers that hinder communities of passion as they could. We then discussed and built on each of the submissions.

IN SPRINT #4, we rated each of the barriers that had been submitted with the hope of uncovering key barriers to communities of passion.

### 1. CUMBERSOME SYSTEMS, TOO MUCH BUREAUCRACY

When the systems in place are too cumbersome or there is too much bureaucratic “red tape” in an organization, it literally saps the motivation out of the individuals and teams by impeding their creativity and flow—reducing passion, productivity, and, eventually, profitability.

**BARRIER TYPE:** procedural

### 2. THE ABSENT DECISIONMAKER

An absent decisionmaker can take two different forms. Sometimes a community itself is empowered to make decisions and move forward, but one or more critical members of the team are either absent when the decision needs to be made or are not active contributors. They may have missed critical information or discussions. This situation can be even worse when the absent decisionmaker protests that a decision is made without them, which slows down the group and makes it more risk-averse.

The second form of absent decisionmaker can appear when the community itself isn’t empowered to make its own decisions, but must instead make recommendations to a leader who isn’t an active member. Some absent decisionmakers are too busy to allow the community to move forward. Others don’t take the time to understand the community recommendation or overrule it without discussion.

**BARRIER TYPE:** structural and procedural

### 3. LOST HOPE

Every project, particularly ones that attempt something that’s never been done before, will face challenges. If members aren’t prepared for difficulties that lie ahead and leaders don’t act quickly to help refocus, an ordinary setback can cause a project to stall.

A situation like this can be especially dangerous for a community project that depends on help from individuals who are very short on time and have other projects competing for their attention. When hope is lost, communities of passionate people often decide that their passion would be better spent elsewhere.

**BARRIER TYPE:** ideological



#### 4. HINDERED CONTRARIAN THINKING

Communities of passion, as teams committed to advocacy, creativity, innovation, and problem-solving, can benefit a great deal from people that challenge conventional wisdom. Yet organizations often discourage outside-the-box thinking.

During brainstorming meetings, people suggesting divergent ideas are often looked at with suspicion, and the first reactions to their inputs are often negative. Faced with an icy reception, contrarian thinking can be quickly stifled. But sometimes a single person in the meeting with the courage to back the divergent idea can change the attitude of the group radically.

**BARRIER TYPE:** ideological and structural

#### 5. ORGANIZATIONAL SILOS

Communities of passion often transcend organizational boundaries—whether within an institution (e.g., across functional departments or business units) or within a broader ecosystem (e.g., to include customers, suppliers, or partners). Traditional management practices focus on structuring and performing work within individual units, often creating hard-to-penetrate silos that impede effective community building.

**BARRIER TYPE:** structural

#### 6. UNHEALTHY COMPETITION

Some communities spawn unhealthy competition between community members. This competition can be the result of people trying to jockey for credit and individual rewards for community successes or to avoid responsibility for community failures. Sometimes this competition is exacerbated by community leaders who take all the credit, share credit or rewards poorly, or show favoritism toward certain community members.

When this sort of community competition escalates, it can not only damage the experience of those involved in the competition, but even those who remain on the sidelines may be turned off by the spectacle.

**BARRIER TYPE:** ideological and structural

#### 7. LACK OF SHARED VALUES OR COMMON PURPOSE

Too often, communities of people come together with good intent never having discussed or come to clear agreement on what the group's purpose is and what values community members share. Sometimes the community has "checked the box" by having a list of values or a core purpose that are no more than words on the page and are not deeply held and understood by the members. Or the community, in the interest of reaching consensus, has compromised on a

mediocre purpose and values that everyone can agree to, but about which no one is truly passionate.

**BARRIER TYPE:** ideological

#### 8. THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

The devil's advocate is someone who purposely or accidentally shoots down the ideas of others without taking responsibility, instead deferring accountability by introducing their criticism with the phrase "To play the devil's advocate..." The devil's advocate can be a passion-and idea-killer in communities.

The intent of the devil's advocate is not to provide constructive criticism, but instead to put up a wall that says, "You have to satisfy my doubt before we can continue to entertain this idea." Often community members will find it easier to not share ideas with or become emotionally invested in the community because of fear of (or frustration with) a devil's advocate.

**BARRIER TYPE:** ideological

#### 9. THE OVEREAGER SUPER-MEMBER

Many communities have "super-members": people who are extremely active and deeply involved. While this is usually a good thing and a sign of a passionate community, in some cases these super-members can scare off other community members.

Sometimes the super-members come across as antagonistic because they do not believe others understand the community as deeply as they do (yet they don't have the time or patience to explain). But even an eager, positive super-member can overwhelm other community members with information, requests, or questions.

**BARRIER TYPE:** ideological and structural

#### 10. DISCOURAGING FAILURE

In communities where it is not acceptable to fail, community members take fewer risks. The higher the perceived cost of failure, the fewer risks will be taken, and the less the community will be able to achieve. In some communities, fear of failure becomes such a driving force that people are motivated to do nothing more than the absolute minimum necessary.

**BARRIER TYPE:** ideological and structural

## COMMUNITIES OF PASSION MANAGEMENT HACKS

After deeply exploring many barriers to enabling communities of passion, we were able to use the collective knowledge and talent of the Hackathon team to brainstorm a series of management hacks that would help us overcome those barriers.

Some of the ideas that emerged from our discussions were grand in scale or ambition, while others were deceptively small tweaks with powerful impact. Two of the hacks that emerged from the Hackathon later became finalists in the Harvard Business Review / McKinsey M-Prize competition on the MIX, chosen out of over 140 entries.

In this section, we'd like to share many of the best management hacks that came out of this collaborative process. This is by no means an exhaustive list of all of the potential hacks that could help overcome the barriers to enabling communities of passion, but is instead intended to spur further conversation and ideation. While we have summarized each hack here, you can read the full text of the hack on the MIX, including the solution, practical impact, challenges, first steps, and more. The link to each hack is included at the end of each description.

### BEHIND THE SCENES: HACKATHON SPRINTS 5, 6, + 7

IN SPRINT #5, we asked each of our contributors to build a prototype "mini-hack" that might address one of the key barriers or categories of barriers we had already identified.

We then rated and ranked each of these mini-hacks IN SPRINT #6, in much the same way we had previously done for the barriers.

IN SPRINT #7, we asked the authors of the top-rated hacks to lead teams of volunteers to build out their ideas into fully formed hacks for the MIX. These teams collaboratively authored 12 full hacks that are now on the MIX website.

# FREE TO FORK

*Full Hack on the MIX:*

<http://www.managementexchange.com/hack/free-to-fork>



## **FINALIST**

*in the Harvard Business  
Review / McKinsey  
Management 2.0  
M-Prize Challenge*

*Hack contributed by David Mason, Jonathan Opp, and Gunther Brinkman*

**BARRIER TYPES ADDRESSED:** structural and procedural

In the open source software movement, an essential element to the power of open source (which leads to faster development, increased innovation, and greater stability) is the concept of forking.

In any open source project, there is always the freedom to “fork” the software. This means that anyone can take the code, move it under a new project name, change the code (and possibly the direction the project was moving), and re-release it.

Recently in the open source world, forking has come to be re-envisioned as a space where people work on their own ideas with the intention of merging those ideas back into the project when ready. The fork is now a tool for collaboration that makes merging easier and less likely to produce conflicts.

This hack takes the idea of the fork from the open source software world and applies it to management. It gives all employees the power to take management’s ideas and rework them to either replace the original idea or merge the two together. The fork allows everyone to have a voice, and the best ideas to rise to the top.

Forking could help management bridge the gap between simply asking for creative ideas and establishing a platform where divergent, even dissenting, ideas can be heard, and employees can be empowered to prototype and build support for them.

# MASSIVE STORYTELLING SESSIONS

*Full Hack on the MIX*

<http://www.managementexchange.com/hack/massive-storytelling-sessions-1>



*Hack contributed by Alberto Blanco, Alex Perwich, Jonathan Opp, and Tony Manavalan*

**BARRIER TYPES ADDRESSED:** structural and ideological

An organization's aspirations (mission, vision, and values) are all too often static words rather than anything internalized by its members. But those aspirations have the potential to transform the organization into a community of passion.

One way to build a shared vision or common values is through massive storytelling sessions. In these events, everyone has the chance to speak their minds, co-create the organization's stories, and get rewards and recognition for their contributions.

Massive Storytelling Sessions should be open to every member of the organization. You may even consider inviting customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders to participate. It is highly important to make sure that people will be committed to being part of the process rather than just assigned or allocated as if they were mere resources.

At the end of the sessions, the entire organization will be better aligned and more deeply invested in the mission, vision, and values, which makes the organization more nimble, disciplined, and accountable. In this sense, Massive Storytelling Sessions could be one of the first big steps toward promoting passion, creativity, and innovation within the organization. Giving some ownership of the organization's future to its workers gives them a more vested interest in that future and paves the way for communities of passion to take over.

# SILO-BUSTING WITH FORMAL NETWORKS

*Full Hack on the MIX:*

<http://www.managementexchange.com/hack/silo-busting-formal-networks>

*Hack contributed by Michele Zanini, Sam Folk-Williams, Michi Komori*

**BARRIER TYPE ADDRESSED:** structural

Most large organizations have many informal networks, which may be called peer groups, communities of practice, or functional councils. These unite individuals who share interests, but they can be relatively ineffective if their work is stifled by strong vertical silos.

Unintended barriers—for example workplace “toxins” such as hoarding knowledge or resources, cynicism, exclusion, corporate politics, simple neglect, or even unhealthy competition—all can prevent natural networks from flourishing. Even if informal networks are able to overcome these barriers and design innovative programs, they may never get implemented due to lack of buy-in, funding, or other barriers.

Formal networks are empowered, organized communities of passion that aim to drive collaboration and progress across silos. Unlike matrix structures, formal networks organize work through shared interest, and are therefore based on collaboration, rather than authority. They avoid the complexity and ambiguity that some matrices generate by specifying multiple “bosses.”

Unlike informal networks, formal networks have access to real resources and submit budgets based on specific innovative plans. They also have support infrastructure, including network coordinators to facilitate interactions among members. They operate with clear objectives. Contributions of network members are measured against these objectives through formal accountability processes, such as individual performance reviews.

Formal networks can create many benefits for organizations that implement them, including:

- Better economic results from impact of the network’s activities (higher effectiveness and efficiency)
- Better allocation of resources and expertise towards important priorities
- Deeper personal relationships among diverse members of a community that transcends traditional silos—resulting in more motivation and engagement
- Simpler organizational design that replaces cumbersome and outdated matrix structures
- Inspiring, encouraging, and rewarding innovation that spans genders, ages, careers, and experiences.

# MAKE EVERYONE ACCOUNTABLE FOR REMOVING TIME-SUCKING SYSTEMS

*Full Hack on the MIX*

<http://www.managementexchange.com/hack/don%E2%80%99t-just-flatten-organization-make-everyone-accountable-flattening-time-sucking-bureaucratic->

*Hack contributed by Chris Grams, Rebecca Fernandez, and Sam Folk-Williams*

**BARRIER TYPE ADDRESSED:** procedural

When workers' time is eaten up by mindless paperwork and other time-sucking processes, there is little passion or time for innovation. It's time to put employees and managers to work on solving the bureaucracy problem.

One place to begin is by tying the compensation, rewards, and recognition of managers to not just how well their team performs financially, but also how successfully each manager eliminates the layers of bureaucracy that stop their teams from getting even more work done more quickly.

To be successful, this effort will require a lightweight, "bottom-up" way to rate how well managers are doing at removing bureaucratic processes. The ratings that come from this survey should be directly tied to management compensation at all levels of the organization. Managers that perform well at removing unnecessary bureaucracy as reported by those below them in the organization should be rewarded for their efforts, while those who do not would miss out on this portion of their compensation.

Meanwhile, every piece of feedback from the survey that results in the elimination of bad bureaucracy is the opportunity to tell a story. This story will have heroes (the employees who identified the issues or collaborated with managers to develop a solution), drama and crisis (things or people who stood in the way; obstacles that were overcome), and a (hopefully) happy ending.

These stories must be captured and told throughout the organization as real examples of ways that bureaucracy can be harmful and how it can be eliminated. Turn the people or departments that flattened bureaucracy into heroes and give them awards. Tell their stories everywhere you can.

By telling these stories, you'll begin to create a culture where people don't just eliminate bureaucracy because it is measured as part of their compensation, but instead because it is part of the culture: "the way we do things around here."

# OPEN THE PROCESSES AND THE “BOOKS”

*Full Hack on the MIX:*

<http://www.managementexchange.com/hack/open-processes-and-%22books%22-1>

*Hack contributed by Susan Resnick West and Kartik Subbarao*

**BARRIER TYPES ADDRESSED:** procedural and ideological

When organizations talk about transparency, they're often referring to sharing their ideas and plans. But openness of the systems, data, finances, and processes in our organizations—radical transparency—offers a number of under-explored benefits.

In most organizations, the strongest symbols of status often involve money—who earns the most and who controls the most. Just believing someone else earns more money can trigger a negative response, creating a significant impairment to interaction with the upset employee, the high earner, and anyone who is perceived to have contributed to this grave injustice.

That's why any move to open the (financial) books must go hand-in-hand with a culture that supports open information, empowerment, and a sense of common fate. If everyone believes they share in part of the organization's success and failure, their sense of status is increased. They feel empowered to effect change. Along with that, if people's sense of fairness is increased (e.g. feeling that the allocation of scarce resources is based on shared principles and values), then passion is unleashed, and the organization can build far higher levels of trust and transparency.

Meanwhile, opening the books enables organization to tap into unexpected sources of creativity. By making detailed financial information related to internal budgets, customers, vendors, and partners available to all employees, anyone can potentially work from the same level of information as the CFO, anytime they want to. For example, an R&D employee highly skilled in data analysis, but who otherwise would not have any access to financial data, would be able to mine customer purchasing patterns to build a strong case for a new product.

# THE BOX OF OUTSIDE-THE- BOX-THINKING

*Full Hack on the MIX*

<http://www.managementexchange.com/hack/box-outside-box-thinking>

*Hack contributed by Silvia Colombo and James Marwood*

**BARRIER TYPES ADDRESSED:** structural and ideological

Ideas that challenge orthodoxies—or even just those far removed from the organizational mean—can be a valuable asset for organizations. But divergent thinking is very seldom encouraged and very often hampered. Bold, disruptive ideas aren't easy for many organizations to nurture.

To leverage the full potential of divergent thinking and simultaneously reduce some of the risks related to it, organizations can use a very simple tool: "The Box of Outside-The-Box-Thinking."

The Box can be envisaged as a wikispace, allowing people to post and share their ideas; to connect, combine, and collaborate. Thanks to technological progress and the viral diffusion of social media, collaborative platforms are now affordable for even the smallest organizations. They are also easy to use, even for people not so familiar with technology. If your company already has an active share-point, intranet, forum, or any kind of collaborative platform, that's also a great place to launch The Box.

At minimum, The Box should have a transparent rating system and a way to comment on ideas.

The Box must have a Mentor that oversees the activity, provides directions for use, answers specific questions, solves practical problems related to the tool or the process, and sets any necessary milestones. This person should be someone who can consistently inspire employees to use The Box to build ideas up, rather than tear them down. The Mentor should either be a senior manager or have access to one. Without an authoritative sponsor, any ideas generated will be difficult to implement.

To keep a broad and open perspective, the top divergent ideas as rated by company members can occasionally be shared with a small group of external stakeholders: customers, suppliers, independent board members or consultants, for example.

For some organizations, it will be important to acknowledge the value of divergent thinking with a formal rewards system. However, for many people, the best rewards are recognition, appreciation, and the incomparable satisfaction that only trailblazers can experience.



# BUILD A STRENGTHS-BASED CULTURE

*Full Hack on the MIX:*

<http://www.managementexchange.com/hack-108>

*Hack contributed by Josh Allan Dykstra, Kartik Subbarao, and Tony Manavalan*

**BARRIER TYPES ADDRESSED:** structural and ideological

Organizations tend to focus most of their energies on fixing weaknesses instead of building on natural strengths and talents. As a result, people within those organizations are ever-poised to defend their own positions from attack, and by extension, their value to the organization. This is dangerous and damaging culture for organizational productivity, human satisfaction, and employee engagement.

Fortunately, this pervasive problem can be subverted entirely by building a strengths-based culture.

The language of the organization needs to shift towards appreciating each other's strengths. A highly effective way to make this shift begins with team-level strengths assessment workshops, using tools like StrengthsFinder or Strengthscope, and facilitated by someone who is already an expert at "speaking the language." These sessions can inspire and teach individuals to talk about each other in a more positive, affirming way, helping them recognize instinctively the different gifts and talents their colleagues bring to the group.

Another illustrative method is to create an exercise that reveals the inherent "blind spots" within our strengths. Give people a specific task that requires divergent skills to successfully complete. Create a few groups—one with superstars in Strength X, another with superstars with Strength Y, and a third with a mix of good (but not superb) strengths in X, Y, and Z. When the task is complete, bring everyone together to look at the solutions developed and see if the specialist X and Y teams can appreciate the breadth of the solution developed by the holistic XYZ team. The takeaway message is simple: collaboration is essential for success.

When an organization can help people see each other as unique individuals with diverse gifts and strengths, its leadership is capable of forming dynamic teams that are well-equipped to tackle any challenge.

# MORE HACKS

These are just some of the hacks that came out of the Communities of Passion Management Hackathon. Also consider reading:

## **EMBRACE SUCCESSFUL FAILURE**

*Contributed by Paul Higgins*

<http://www.managementexchange.com/hack/successful-failure>

## **REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE - THE BUREAUCRATIC TEAR-DOWN & ASSEMBLING THE INFRASTRUCTURE ANEW**

*Contributed by Aaron Anderson*

<http://www.managementexchange.com/hack/reduce-reuse-recycle-bureaucratic-tear-down-assembling-infrastructure-anew-0>

## **THE NEWER THE BETTER**

*Contributed by Steve Todd*

<http://www.managementexchange.com/hack/newer-better>

## **ENERGIZE AND SUSTAIN COMMUNITIES OF PASSION BY BUILDING VIRTUES INTO THE ORGANIZATION'S DNA**

*Contributed by Deborah Mills-Scofield and Alex Perwich*

<http://www.managementexchange.com/hack/energize-and-sustain>

## **LEAD BY NEGOTIATION TO CREATE MORE POWERFUL, ENGAGING, AND EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONS**

*Contributed by Terri Griffith*

<http://www.managementexchange.com/hack/lead-negotiation-create-more-powerful-engaging-and-effective-organizations>

## YOU TOO CAN HACK MANAGEMENT

In the Communities of Passion Management Hackathon, a group of passionate volunteers from around the world who had never met face to face were able to collaboratively identify key barriers and then create a set of innovative hacks that might begin to overcome some of these barriers within our organizations.

**It begs the question:** what could *you* do to identify the roadblocks to progress within your organization?

And then how could you begin to address these barriers?

### THREE SIMPLE TIPS FOR HACKING MANAGEMENT

1. Commit to a big problem
2. Explore bold, new ideas
3. Challenge current beliefs

## HOW TO HACK MANAGEMENT

As with any type of innovation, the hardest part of management innovation is ensuring the hacks you develop are actually new and innovative. While there are no guarantees that you will develop truly revolutionary ideas, you can maximize your chances of making a real breakthrough by following these simple steps.

### 1. COMMIT TO A BIG PROBLEM

The biggest breakthroughs come from exploring the toughest challenges. When identifying the key barriers that impede your organization, don't settle for tackling small problems. Make sure to focus on the really big challenges, the root causes and problems that stir up emotions and energy in your workplace.

You'll generate more passion when you explore barriers that impact many people in profound ways. This passion will translate into energy you can harness during the hacking process, and may even result in more and better ideas, and a more engaged hacking team.

### 2. EXPLORE BOLD, NEW IDEAS

It is unlikely that innovative ideas will spring from the status quo. To find bold, new ideas, hunt for the "positive deviants," the pioneers experimenting on the edge, either within your organization or in the outside world.

You may be surprised to discover experiments going on within your own walls that offer lessons that could be more broadly applied within the organization. But you may also have to go outside, looking for the most imaginative new approaches being tested or applied successfully in the larger world.

Don't stop at analyzing only organizations that look like your own. In our Management Hackathon, one of our first steps was to identify as many successful communities of passion as we could, no matter where they came from. Our team found communities of passion we could mine for ideas in everything from corporations like Whole Foods to temporary communities like the Burning Man festival, and even informal communities like children playing hide-and-seek.

### 3. CHALLENGE CURRENT BELIEFS

One of the key things that hinders people from uncovering ideas that are truly revolutionary is the inability to unshackle themselves from their current reality and beliefs about how things could and should be. To really appreciate and understand a new idea, you must loosen the grip that your present world has on your imagination.

Those who successfully hack management will be able to recognize the difference between traditional dogma or management wisdom that appears to be true (perhaps because it has been left unquestioned for a long period of time or used to be true) and that which actually is true.

## HOW TO RUN YOUR OWN MANAGEMENT HACKATHON

If you want to begin to hack management collaboratively, as we did in this project, consider hosting your own management hackathon. Gather together some of your most passionate contributors and develop a set of management innovations optimized for your own organizational culture.

Start by imagining what your organization would look like if it were living up to its true potential. Perhaps share examples of other organizations that are good models or even share examples of areas within your own organization where others are already attempting to implement innovative practices.

Then put your heads together to uncover the biggest barriers that inhibit progress within your organization. You might find that your organization shares a lot of barriers in common with those we've shared here. Or your organization may be completely different. With the help of your group, rate and prioritize which barriers are most important for you to address first.

Finally, take the key barriers (making sure you've chosen "big" barriers that will stir participants' passion and energy), split up into smaller teams, and begin hacking. Perhaps you'll build off of some of the innovative hacks you find on the MIX. Maybe you'll develop new ones specifically for your organization.

If you do develop your own innovative management hacks, please don't keep them to yourselves. Go to the MIX and

add your hack where anyone can discover it and put it into practice. If you have already tried your hack and seen results, submit it as a story on the MIX from which others can learn.

As the Communities of Passion Management Hackathon has shown, a passionate group of people work-

ing together can quickly produce compelling and useful ideas. We hope that if you see success with the hackathon approach, you'll take the time to share your ideas and innovations so we can continue to reinvent management together as collaborating members of the MIX community.

### RUN YOUR OWN MANAGEMENT HACKATHON

- Define what your organization would look like if it were living up to its true potential.
- Research and share examples that would be good models for your organization.
- Brainstorm the barriers that hinder your progress.
- Develop prototype hacks that address the most important barriers you've identified.
- Choose one or more hacks to implement within your organization.
- Learn from your experiment, and share your stories and hacks on the MIX, where others can learn from them too. To contribute to the MIX, visit: [www.managementexchange.com](http://www.managementexchange.com)
- Consider using an enterprise social networking platform for global collaboration, such as Saba Social, which powered our hackathon.



*Our community of passion*

The Communities of Passion Management Hackathon was a true collaborative effort. This report includes the words and ideas of many different people from around the world. All shared a common purpose and freely gave their time and energy to participate in a project with people they'd never met, using a new and relatively untested process to collaborate with each other.

## AUTHORS

In addition to participating as hackathon contributors, the following people volunteered to help produce this report highlighting our work.



**Alberto Blanco**

Alberto specializes in laughing at himself. He believes square wheels are useful. Some say he is a management innovator, others that he is a poet, and some even think he is an alien. He was born in 1983 in Caracas, Venezuela.



**Silvia Colombo**

Silvia is a management consultant at The European House-Ambrosetti (Milan, Italy) with 15 years of consulting experience in Italy and abroad. She joined the pilot because she loves unconventional, innovative, and passionate ideas in management.



**Josh Allan Dykstra**

Josh is a work revolutionary, author, and speaker. He is a founder of Strengths Doctors, a collaborative consulting firm specializing in building engaging work environments through strengths philosophy and passion-centric organizational design. His new book about the changing world of work and how to design organizations that don't suck will be released in 2012.



**Rebecca Fernandez**

Rebecca is a freelance business writer with a decade of experience in the technology sector.

In recent years her client base has expanded to include other industries, with projects for Red Hat, IBM, Dell, New Kind, North Carolina State University, Nature Publishing Group, Max Planck Society, opensource.com, and AIGA.



**Sam Folk-Williams**

Sam leads the knowledge management team for Red Hat's Global Support Services, developing innovative methods of encouraging collaboration across traditional business silos. He received his MBA from the University of Chapel Hill and currently lives in Minneapolis.



**Chris Grams**

Chris is President and Partner at New Kind, where he builds sustainable brands, cultures, and communities in and around organizations. He is the author of the recently published book *The Ad-Free Brand: Secrets to Building Successful Brands in a Digital World*. Prior to New Kind, Chris spent 10 years at Red Hat, where he played a key role in building the Red Hat brand and culture.



**Paul Higgins**

Paul established Emergent Futures Pty Ltd as a consulting company combining his long experience in business with his training as a futurist to assist organizations and individuals

in the creation of strategy. Paul believes that the application of foresight tools to the strategy process can give organizations a critical edge in a fast moving modern world.



**Michi Komori**

Michi has worked in a variety of sectors including television broadcasting, securities analysis, e-learning, venture capital, and digital media. Her appreciation for the transformational period that business is now experiencing and belief that creative ideas and collaboration are tremendous opportunities for sustainable growth, drives her interest in innovation. She is currently a graduate student in the Master of Design program in Strategic Foresight and Innovation at the Ontario College of Art and Design University in Toronto.



**Deborah Mills-Scofield**

Deb is a troublemaker who challenges the status quo and asks why too many times. She has a patent from Bell Labs and works with organizations to embed an innovation mindset through the creation and execution of highly adaptable, actionable strategic plans. Deb also mentors a lot of startups through her network and her partnership in an early stage VC firm.



**Jonathan Opp**

Jonathan is the Director of Poetics at New Kind, where he works with organizations to define communication strategy—helping them discover their brand stories and tell them in the clearest, most powerful way. Beyond New Kind, Jonathan brings nearly 15 years of experience in creative

roles at three prominent technology brands: Red Hat, IBM, and Gateway.



**Alex Perwich**

Alex is a transformational leader and change agent who builds/develops customer-focused organizations and leaders passionate about driving performance and building enduring value. He is currently President of New Business Development for Logos Energy.



**Madhusudan Rao**

Madhusudan is a passionate individual who has been managing teams for more than 10 years across multiple geographies and organizations. Still looking for the right combination to inspire his team, Madhusudan is excited to be part of this exciting venture to create the next version of Management.



**Susan Resnick-West**

A Clinical Associate Professor at the University of Southern California Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism, and a fellow at the Annenberg Innovation Lab, Dr. Resnick West focuses on the use of communication strategies to create innovative and productive work environments.


# CONTRIBUTORS

Each of the following people contributed ideas, effort, or passion to the Hackathon project.

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## OUR SOCIAL SOFTWARE PLATFORM

Early on in planning the Hackathon, we made the decision to use Saba Social, an enterprise social networking platform from our technology partner Saba. Social business software shares much in common with the social networking tools (e.g. Facebook) that most of us are already familiar with using. The main difference is that social business software enables secure and private online communities within large extended organizations, taking into account the enterprise-grade security, scalability, and availability that is necessary in these environments.



### TRANSFORMATION AT WORK

Our hackathon community, like most large organizations, consisted of a globally dispersed team of collaborators in different time zones that made it virtually impossible to communicate effectively with just email or voice communications. The Saba People Cloud platform enabled us to work asynchronously, resorting to real-time communications only when absolutely necessary. The decision to use social business software from Saba ultimately enabled us to innovate faster as a team and stay connected in what eventually became our own community of passion.

A few of the most interesting benefits of the platform included:

- 1) Speed of deployment: Because it is a “cloud” software solution, there was no need for us to install or spend time configuring the software, which enabled us to launch our online community faster.
- 2) Progressive disclosure: Another interesting feature was the ability to configure the interface with “progressive disclosure.” This meant that we could keep the platform very simple by suppressing features when we first rolled it out, making it easier for end users to become acclimated without much training.

As our sprints progressed and we needed more functionality (such as rich web pages and workspaces for authoring our hacks), we were able to switch those features on progressively.

While we did occasionally use email or other communication mechanisms, we found that using a social software platform that supported a range of collaboration activities including rapid ideation made our hackathon more efficient, and we were able to concentrate on the hacks instead of the technology.

## ABOUT SABA SOCIAL

Saba Social is an award-winning enterprise social networking solution that transforms the workplace by enabling rapid innovation, knowledge sharing, and highly-connected extended enterprise communities of employees, partners, and customers.

Saba Social uniquely integrates social business software features such as ideas, discussion forums, questions, video channels, expert location, and social bookmarking with real-time collaboration features like chat and integrated web conferencing with rich HD video and audio.

Saba's social business solutions help the most innovative organizations in the world transform their business by enabling:

- Rapid innovation to increase revenue and outpace the competition
- Highly-connected customer communities to increase repeat business

- Informed partner communities to accelerate channel pipeline
- A social intranet that creates a culture of motivated and engaged employees
- Decreased support costs and increased customer loyalty by crowdsourcing
- Faster and smarter product development with direct feedback from customers
- Faster on-boarding with social mentoring, recommendations, and virtual job shadowing
- Social learning that combines the best of formal learning processes integrated with the informal

To learn more about Saba Social, go to [www.saba.com](http://www.saba.com)

## ABOUT SABA

Saba (NASDAQ: SABA) enables organizations to build a transformative workplace that leverages the advent of social networking in business and the ubiquity of mobile to empower an organization's most mission-critical assets – its people. The company provides a unified set of People Cloud Applications including learning management, talent management, enterprise social networking, and real-time collaboration delivered through the Saba People Cloud. Saba solutions help organizations leverage their people networks to become more competitive through innovation, speed, agility, and trust.

Saba's premier customer base includes major global organizations and industry leaders in financial services, life sciences and healthcare, high tech, automotive and manufacturing, retail, energy and utilities, packaged goods, and public sector organizations. Saba's solutions are underpinned by global services capabilities and partnerships encompassing strategic

consulting, comprehensive implementation services, and ongoing worldwide support. Headquartered in Redwood Shores, California, Saba has offices on five continents. For more information, please visit [www.saba.com](http://www.saba.com) or call +1-877-SABA-101 or +1-650-779-2791. SABA, the Saba logo, Saba Centra, and the marks relating to Saba products and services referenced herein are either trademarks or registered trademarks of Saba Software, Inc. or its affiliates. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.





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