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Social Network Web Sites and Intra-Organizational Relationships:
Using Facebook to Build Employee Relationships at Serena Software

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my mother, Sharon Lee Sing Barnes. You are and have always been the force that drives me to succeed. All of my academic endeavors culminate with this thesis, and none of them would have been possible without your love, encouragement, and support. When I decided to leave the nest to forge my own path, you did not once hesitate to help me along that journey, and I am truly grateful for your constant care and nurturing for my goals and dreams. Thank you, Mommy, for always being there for me through the good and the bad. Thank you, Mommy, for always reminding me that I can achieve anything I set out to do and do so to the best of my abilities.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the use of Facebook as a tool to build relationships at work among employees of global technology company Serena Software. Email interviews with 13 Serena Software employees demonstrated that the social network site is in fact building relationships among them. Participants attributed information sharing as the element that most helped them to build relationships with each other. The interviews revealed evidence of the characteristics of relationship quality: trust, commitment and satisfaction. However, participants expressed a different definition of the fourth characteristic — control mutuality — in their Facebook relationships. The results showed that participants did not define their Facebook relationships with colleagues as either communal or exchange. Research on social media is emerging because social media are relatively new compared to traditional media. This study is significant to organizational and public relations literature because it examines how social media can support internal organizational and public relations functions such as building relationships. Public relations research on employee-employee relationships is limited, so this study builds knowledge in that area. Furthermore, there appears to be no research on the use of Facebook to build employee relationships, making this study original.

Chapter One

Introduction

“Social networks such as LinkedIn, Facebook, MySpace and Twitter are not the wave of the future. They’re the wave of now” (Kugler, 2008). Using these sites as an organizational tool to build employee relationships, however, may be the future still.

Building employee relationships at work is important to an organization’s functions (Wright, 1995). Facebook may be one way to facilitate employee relationships. On its site, Facebook is described as “a social utility that helps people communicate more efficiently with their friends, family, and coworkers.”

This study examines employee interpretations of their participation in Serena Software’s Facebook “experiment” — allowing employees to use the social network to connect with each other. Serena’s experiment is original; it is an innovation that no one has studied. Serena management’s purpose in adopting Facebook, a contemporary but understudied communication technology practice, corresponds with the literature on relationship building in organizations. Building relationships is one of the principal goals of public relations (Kent & Taylor, 1998; Wright, 1995). However, research in public relations is thin on the subject of building relationships with employees. Even scarcer is public relations research on the role of technology in relationship building. This study asks: Do Serena employees’ interpretations of their Facebook participation confirm or disconfirm both Serena management’s goals and the relationship building literature?

Chapter two provides some background on the implementation of the officially sanctioned use of Facebook at Serena Software. It also provides information on Facebook's utility in executing an internal function of building relationships among employees. Most research on Facebook has focused on its marketing and advertising functions. Chapter three scans the literature on computer-mediated communication, Internet social networks, organizational communication, and public relations approaches to relationship building. All this literature suggests that online social networks may help to create and maintain employees' connections and communication with each other and, therefore, build relationships among them. Chapter four describes the email interview method for this study and explains the procedure used to collect and analyze information. Chapter five presents the results of email interviews with 13 Serena Software employees. Chapter six offers a discussion and analysis of the results. Finally, chapter seven discusses implications for public relations pedagogy and practice in terms of Facebook's role in relationship management. This chapter also highlights the study's limitations, and offers direction for future research.

Chapter Two

Background

Serena Software appears to be among the first companies in the United States to announce publicly the officially sanctioned use of Facebook by employees. The president and CEO of the California-based technology company, Jeremy Burton, an enthusiastic Facebook user, views Facebook as an opportunity to mobilize his workforce to open, build, and maintain relationships at work (Arteaga, 2007). In November 2007, Serena Software issued a press release (see Appendix A) announcing the launch of “Facebook Fridays,” an initiative that allowed Serena employees one hour of company time to use Facebook and connect with colleagues, family, friends, and customers via the site. The initiative applied to some 800 employees in 18 countries where the company has branches. It gave Serena employees an opportunity to learn about each other on a personal level. Burton led his company in this self-revelation of personality by highlighting his avid interest in racecar driving, for example, on his Facebook profile. This demonstrated to his employees that he is as normal a person as they are. He exemplified the purpose of his plan — to “bring that sense of personal interaction and community back into the workplace” (Arteaga, 2007). Eventually, “Facebook Fridays” extended beyond one hour on one day, and Facebook is now used more regularly during employees’ everyday routines.

While the company's primary goal for using Facebook in the workplace was to improve personal interaction and build relationships among employees (Arteaga, 2007), the company also had a secondary goal. In the press release (see Appendix A) about the launch of the initiative, Burton said, "Social networking tools like Facebook can bring us back together, help us get to know each other as people, help us understand our business and our products, and help us better serve our customers on demand." The secondary goal was to help employees understand the software technology that Serena developed and sold (Arteaga, 2007), and that Facebook used for its applications. Using Facebook would give employees hands-on experience with the software technology.

Burton's intentions were clear when he thought about and implemented the officially endorsed use of Facebook at Serena Software. To find out if Burton's goals on relationship building are in fact being achieved, it is necessary to find out from employees if and how they are using Facebook to build relationships.

The reader should note that while this study was being conducted, Jeremy Burton was president and CEO of Serena Software. However, soon after the study was completed, he resigned from the position.

Chapter Three

Literature Review

Several factors come into play on the topic of Serena's use of Facebook as a relationship builder among employees. First, Facebook is fundamentally a computer-mediated mode of communication. Research on computer-mediated communication has focused on both the negative and positive aspects of this technology-based process of interaction. While some have criticized it for its absence of social cues (Bargh & McKenna, 2004; Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 1998; Walther, 1992, 1996) others have commended it for its ability to connect people, especially across long distances (Kiesler, Siegel, & McGuire, 1984; Tidwell & Walther, 2002; Wellman, Salaff, Dimitrova, Garton, Gulia, & Haythornwaite, 1996). Next, Facebook is a social network site. Social network sites' impact on forming and maintaining relationships is viewed as an advantage (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2006; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). They contribute to building relationships among employees in organizations. Furthermore, organizational communication is said to lead to the formation of relationships among colleagues (Downs, Clampitt, & Pfeiffer, 1988; Taylor, 2005). Last, relationship management theory has been applied to several studies dealing with organizations' relationships with internal publics (Jo & Shim, 2005; Ni, 2007, 2009) and is apt for this study.

Computer-Mediated Communication

“Computer-mediated communication (CMC) is synchronous or asynchronous electronic mail and computer conferencing, by which senders encode in text messages that are relayed from senders’ computers to receivers” (Walther, 1992, p. 52). CMC can be classified by modes such as email, chat programs, video conferencing, social networks, text messaging, and instant messaging.

Early research on CMC had one common concern about the topic. Compared to face-to-face (FtF) communication, CMC lacked nonverbal codes (cues) that usually provide meta-communication or communication about how to interpret the communication. The absence of these cues was said to affect participants’ perceptions of communication context and restrain their message interpretation (Walther, 1992). However, social influence among CMC communicators equalizes because hierarchical control and power information is obscured while the absence of social communication norms keeps attention focused on the message itself (Kiesler et al., 1984). Postmes et al., (1998) explain that communication through the computer eliminates nonverbal feedback, making the medium less “socially present” than FtF interaction.

Despite this main negative effect of CMC, research has identified positive effects as well. CMC reduces the constraints that physical boundaries place on people’s social contact, is easily accessible and inexpensive, and provides individuals the independence to interact in spite of geographical, national, religious, and other limitations (Postmes et al., 1998). Postmes et al. explain that the breakdown of physical boundaries by CMC leads to a breakdown in social boundaries by giving people freedom from norms and social roles. In terms of group communication, lowering barriers can make group

members feel less distant from each other and produce group solidity and collective behavior (van den Hoof & de Leeuw van Weenen, 2004). Furthermore, lower barriers in CMC lead to increased communication and, consequently, increased commitment to the organization (van den Hoof & de Leeuw van Weenen).

Different approaches to CMC have addressed the medium's effect on communication. A major approach to CMC is social presence theory. Social presence is the feeling that other people are involved in communication (Walther, 1992) or the extent to which people establish warm and personal bonds with each other in a communication situation (Sia, Tan, & Wei, 2002). Social presence theory predicts that communicators pay less attention to the social presence of others when there are fewer codes within a medium. As social presence declines, messages become more impersonal (Walther, 1996). Social presence is a quality of the medium that affects how people perceive their relationships with their co-communicators.

Compared to FtF communication, CMC is very low in social presence because of the scarcity of nonverbal cues (Walther, 1992). The low level of nonverbal cues is said to discourage interpersonal impressions (Walther, 1996). However, users learn to adjust their communication to the limitations of the textual medium, and over time this communication may resemble regular interpersonal interaction (Walther, 1996). Social presence may be increased through features such as emoticons and icons that represent physically absent nonverbal cues. While these features are not ideal, they improve the level of social presence in CMC. For example, Facebook's application called "Superpoke" allows users to transmit a variety of cues to each other.

Another approach to CMC is media richness theory. This theory proposes that communication across media differs depending on the number of cue systems that exist within them (Walther, 1992). It suggests that media differ in richness based on the number of cue systems they transmit, the immediacy of feedback, and the facility of natural language (Walther, 1996). Media are categorized by the terms rich and lean. CMC is a lean medium because it lacks nonverbal cues (Walther, 1992) and is more efficient for unequivocal tasks (Walther, 1996). Walther (1992) identified an advantage of CMC's leanness. When communicators are separated by geographical distance and time zones, CMC may be the best media option available, such as when one communicator is asleep at night and the other works during the day.

A third approach is the hyperpersonal perspective. This approach posits that CMC users may engage in more intimate interaction than that of FtF communication because the lack of nonverbal cues, editing capabilities, identity cues, and temporal characteristics assist in the controlled presentation of the social self (Tidwell & Walther, 2002). CMC is hyperpersonal because it permits physically separated communicators to self-present themselves selectively without the intervention of the real environment (Walther, 1996). In this light, the lack of social cues is an advantage to communication.

Similarly, the social identity and deindividuation (SIDE) model argues that the paucity of nonverbal cues in CMC stimulates users to shape impressions that are founded on social categories of individuals rather than interpersonal cues (Tidwell & Walther, 2002). When FtF cues and prior personal knowledge are absent between communicators, the few personality and social cues that are present take on greater meaning in CMC; thus, communicators "overattribute" and build impressions without paying attention to meager

information like typographical errors and misspellings, etc. This is especially the case when partners are physically separated from each other (Walther, 1992).

The SIDE model focuses on CMC's effect on groups. It argues that factors that usually cause deindividuation actually may reinforce group salience and conformity to group norms (Postmes et al., 1998). The SIDE model predicts conformity to group norms related to its social identity as opposed to conformity to everyday material social norms. When partners are separated, group membership salience strengthens and the presence of paralinguistic cues reduces uncertainty and leads to positive evaluations of others (Walther, 1996). Overall, the SIDE model favors group identity over individual identity.

Despite criticism of CMC due to its lack of nonverbal cues, it still offers advantages. It permits communication across distance. It also breaks down social barriers, which in turn, eases the communication process. This breakdown of social barriers contributes to group cohesion, too, which is especially important for employee relationships.

Internet Social Networks

Since the popularization of the Internet in the 1990s, researchers have investigated its effect on social life. People use the Internet mainly for two reasons: 1) to communicate with others and 2) to access information. Furthermore, they engage in this communication in order to maintain interpersonal relationships (Bargh & McKenna, 2004). Although some scholars have argued against the benefits of the Internet in relationship building (Postmes et al., 1998; Walther, 1992) others believe it is a valuable resource for social interaction that facilitates the formation and maintenance of

relationships, thereby creating and enhancing connectivity among its users (Bargh & McKenna, 2004; Kavanaugh, 1999; Wellman et al., 1996).

Again, the Internet has been criticized for reducing the personal aspect of communication through the loss of nonverbal cues (Bargh & McKenna, 2004; Wellman et al., 1996). The absence of these cues negatively affects the process and outcome of social interface and relationships. On the other hand, the benefits of Internet communication seem far more widespread. Individuals find social support, companionship, and a sense of belonging (Wellman et al., 1996). Some scholars believe that people communicate more freely and creatively outside of everyday material social presence (Kiesler et al., 1984). Wellman et al. (1996) believe that the absence of these cues allows people the option to get to know each other on the basis of communication first and then later decide whether to move the relationship offline. Moving the relationship offline is also moderated by trust. When online relationships grow and people get to know each other, their trust grows as well, leading them to take the relationship into the real world (Bargh & McKenna, 2004; Kavanaugh, 1999).

Computer-supported social networks or CSSNs are social networks that link computer networks and people. “Members of virtual community want to think globally with kindred souls for companionship, information, and social support from their homes and workstations” (Wellman et al., 1996, p. 214). On an organizational level, employees use CSSNs to overcome geographical distance, and managers use them to coordinate work structures and reduce costs and travel time (Wellman et al.). The quick and easy exchange of information on CSSNs is an integral part of communicating online. CSSNs give employees working in small or distant sites access to those with more experience

and skill to help them address workplace needs. Some organizations use CSSNs to foster cooperation and assistance among employees. It encourages teamwork and employee morale (Kavanaugh, 1999).

Relationship building and maintenance is a benefit of Internet and CSSN use. Time spent on the Internet engaging in social interaction allows individuals to build relationships in a safe environment with people they already know, as well as strangers. It is especially practical for maintaining long-distance relationships. Self-disclosure, which is a characteristic of relationships, occurs easily via Internet communication. “Because self-disclosure contributes to a sense of intimacy, making self-disclosure easier should facilitate relationship formation” (Bargh & McKenna, 2004, p. 582). The management of self-disclosure on the Internet allows relationships to develop on the basis of common interests rather than differences in social status, gender, race, age, and other traits (Wellman et al., 1996).

CSSNs have benefits in the workplace. They foster a sense of community among employees (Kavanaugh, 1999) by encouraging participation and cooperation. One of the major benefits of using CSSNs in the workplace is breaking down status and power boundaries by the exchange of more casual information such as leisure interests. This kind of informal communication can reduce work stress, integrate new or marginal employees, and increase organizational commitment (Wellman et al., 1996). The Internet and organizational intranets support employee relationships in geographically dispersed organizations as employees move among projects or seek resources (Wellman et al.).

Online social network use among employees can improve the relationship building process. By using CSSNs, organizations can strengthen social ties among

employees and increase the flow of information and resources. Employees may enjoy the timely and convenient exchange of information that derives from CSSNs and sometimes may even prefer it over traditional communication such as telephone calls. The distribution of information and open discussion benefit employees because these actions can strengthen the employees' sense of belonging with the organization and their colleagues (Kavanaugh, 1999).

Researchers in the field of CSSNs also refer to this mode of communication as social network sites (SNSs). SNSs are defined as sites that allow people to 1) build profiles in a bounded system, 2) create and maintain a user list with people with whom they share a relation, and 3) observe and navigate their connections and other connections in the environment (boyd & Ellison, 2008). SNSs afford their members the opportunity to maintain existing relationships and form new ties (Ellison et al., 2006; Ellison et al., 2007). However, boyd and Ellison (2008) affirm that these sites are primarily used for communicating with people who already exist in users' social network; research in this area shows that relationships formed on SNSs tend to begin offline and are then expressed online (Lampe, Ellison, & Steinfield, 2006). Facebook, one of the more popular SNSs, began as a college network. The original version of the site launched with the intention to connect the offline community of Harvard University in an online environment (Markoff, 2007).

In their examination of Facebook's role in forming social capital, Ellison et al. (2006) found that little research was being conducted on online social networks, but within the last three years, this trend has changed. As social network sites like Facebook extend their capabilities and become more popular, researchers have increasingly focused

on the many aspects of SNSs. One of these aspects is how these sites contribute to the formation and building of relationships among their users. As mentioned earlier, self-disclosure of personal information helps to build relationships, and Ellison et al. list learning more about people in one's offline community as one of the benefits of participating in sites such as Facebook. They state that Facebook fosters relationships among its users by permitting them to track those in their community, following their actions, beliefs, and interests.

As a CSSN/SNS, Facebook in theory may provide employees with an opportunity to build relationships, while creating companionship and a sense of belonging. Information that is shared on the social network may lead to trust among users, a critical factor in interpersonal relationships. Self-disclosure that happens on Facebook is another factor that contributes to relationship building. Facebook addresses the geographical distance that physically separates employees by bringing them together in the cyber world.

Organizational Communication

Communication is an integral function of any organization. The main focus of business communication is one-to-one, small-group, or one-to-group relations within the organization or across the boundary of the organization (Reinsch & Turner, 2006). Organizational communication has several outcomes, one of which is relations (Downs et al., 1988) or relationships. These relationships develop from the purposeful action of societal actors who try to fulfill their self-interests and, depending on their ability or interest, will negotiate relationships that improve these interests (Monge & Eisenberg, 1987). Taylor (2005) describes relationships as an outcome of communication: "The

communication activity does indeed generate shared knowledge as people talk their way to a common view, but it also sets the stage for acting as a unit on the outside world, while it simultaneously instantiates relationships of authority, trust, and identity” (p. 215). Taylor writes that relationship building includes interpersonal communication, as well as the formation of collective and individual identities and associational patterns. Trusting relationships tend to form between management and employees when there is a positive communication program (Jo & Shim, 2005).

Organizational communication hypothesizes that communication encourages the formation of individual personality and the development of larger institutions by producing and reproducing rules and resources people use in everyday interaction (Eisenberg & Riley, 1988). Rules are guiding principles or routines of people’s actions, and resources are material or nonmaterial things that people use in action (Poole & McPhee, 2005).

Scholars have looked at the impact that communication technologies have had on organizational communication, especially the impact of computers and the Internet. In their study of technology use and organizational newcomer socialization, Flanagin and Waldeck (2004) found that communication and information technologies encourage organizational affiliation and are a central focus of employees’ daily work and social relationships. These technologies are particularly useful for organizations that are dispersed, decentralized, and virtual. Changing technologies affect the socialization processes of employees.

The World Wide Web is a technology that has significantly impacted organizational communication. It is considered the first mass medium of public relations

because it allows communication with a mass audience without gatekeepers (White & Raman, 1999). It provides new and unique opportunities for interaction between organizations and their publics. Today, practitioners use the World Wide Web to communicate with employees. Some organizations use intranets to accomplish this. Intranets are “principles and protocols of the Internet applied to a private network which enables people within organizations to communicate” (Murgolo-Poore, Pitt, & Ewing, 2002, p. 115). Many companies use this technology to fulfill internal communication purposes and build employee relationships.

Another research area concerns the facilitation of virtual team relationships through the Internet and conventional electronic communication channels. Pauleen and Yoong (2001) found that Internet-based communication channels are more effective than conventional electronic communication channels in building and maintaining relationships among employees. This is particularly useful for organizations that are geographically dispersed.

Public relations practitioners and academicians have not always paid attention to internal publics, i.e. employees, in terms of organizational communication. While there has been some interest in employees, the majority of practice and research in the field during the 20th century has focused on external publics such as shareholders and the general public (Wright, 1995). However, within the past 20 years, there has been an upsurge in research about internal communication. Pavlik, Nwosu, and Ettl (1982) and Pavlik, Vastyan, and Maher (1990) studied employee newsletter readership. Pavlik et al. (1982) highlight the need for management executives to shift from using communication channels for their own ends to fulfilling employees’ purposes. Pavlik et al. (1990)

recognize that employee communicators are revamping their internal media to better serve employees. Cameron and McCollum (1993) studied the role of interpersonal communication between management and employees and suggest that public relations practitioners should apply more two-way communication between the two groups than top-down communication programs. A study by Kim (2007) examines the role of internal communication on employee-organization relationships and reveals that achieving good internal relationships leads to strategic management of communication between an organization and its external publics. Kim asserts that public relations practitioners and managers should use a strategic internal communications system to build quality relationships with employees. Another result of effective internal public relations is the reduction of organizational uncertainty and ambiguity in the minds of employees (Stein, 2006). Although they applied different foci, these studies all underscore the significance of employee communication to the function of organizations.

Internal organizational communication required a shift from focusing on the distribution of information and technical processes to concentrating on building relationships with employees; this shift materialized in this decade. Public relations practitioners and researchers have realized the importance of employee relationships to the successful functioning of organizations. Wright (1995) writes:

Employees need to be treated like customers. They need to be treated like responsible adults not irresponsible children. And these communication executives need to spend as much time encouraging top-level management to develop relationships with employees as they do having their public relations departments produce information and disseminating it to employees. (p. 195)

Relationship Management Theory

Relationship management theory is “effectively managing organizational-public relationships around common interests and shared goals, over time, [which] results in mutual understanding and benefit for interacting organizations and publics” (Ledingham, 2003, p. 190). It “refers to the practice of public relations as an exercise in identifying mutual interests, values, and benefit between a client-organization and its publics” (Hutton, 1999, p. 208). It forms part of public relations research since public relations is viewed as the arm in the organization responsible for managing relationships between the organization and its publics.

Relationship management has been said to be the only definition that both defines and acts as a paradigm for the public relations field as opposed to the other definitions of advocacy, persuasion, education, crusading, and image-making or reputation-managing (Hutton, 1999). More specifically, Hutton asserts that the definition “managing strategic relationships” is more apt for the purpose of defining public relations, and he breaks down each term: “managing” involves planning, control, feedback, and performance measurement; “strategic” entails planning, prioritization, action orientation, and a focus on relationships most relevant to the goals of the organization; and “relationships” involve effective communication, mutual adaptation, mutual dependency, shared values, trust, and commitment. While public relations serves other functions, its main goal is to build and manage organization-public relationships. This goal addresses the organization’s goals as well as the interests, values, and concerns of publics (Kent & Taylor, 1998). Relationship managing helps to build dialogue between the organization and its publics, making both partners in the relationship.

In recent years, the public relations paradigm shifted from a focus on measuring the flow of communication to investigating and understanding the facets that affect the building and maintaining of mutually valuable organization-public relationships (Bruning, 2001). Previously, public relations was seen as a technical function that disseminated communications and was the bodyguard for the organization's reputation, but today scholars and practitioners have argued for its place in the dominant coalition, i.e., as a management function that deals with the organization's relationships. This relationship building process is reflective of Grunig's two-way symmetrical model of public relations (Bruning, 2001). Grunig's model is based on the idea that the organization and its key publics mutually benefit from the relationship (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998).

Relationship management theory explains managing organization-public relationships resulting in mutual benefit, describes how a symmetrical relationship materializes by management's long-term focus on common interests and shared goals, and identifies the measurable effect of mutual understanding and benefit (Ledingham, 2003).

Public relations research uses two kinds of interpersonal relationships to identify the quality of organization-publics relationships. "In an exchange relationship, one party gives benefits to the other only because the other has provided benefits in the past or is expected to do so in the future" (Grunig, 2002, p. 1). The second is the communal relationship in which "parties are willing to provide benefits to the other because they are concerned for the welfare of the other – even when they believe they might not get anything in return" (Grunig, p. 1). Furthermore, Grunig identified four characteristics of relationship quality that he deemed especially important:

- control mutuality: the degree to which the parties in a relationship are satisfied with the amount of control they have over a relationship
- trust: the level of confidence that both parties have in each other and their willingness to open themselves to the other party
- commitment: the extent to which both parties believe and feel that the relationship is worth spending energy on to maintain and promote
- satisfaction: the extent to which both parties feel favorable about each other because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced

These characteristics can be used to describe the quality of relationships between an organization and its publics, including employee publics.

Research applying relationship management theory to different organization-public relationships supports the four relationship management qualities and the two kinds of interpersonal relationships between the organizations and external publics (Hall, 2006; Hon & Brunner, 2001; Ki & Hon, 2007; Waters, 2008). Some researchers specifically study the theory and employees. Jo and Shim (2005) found that interpersonal communication between management and employees encouraged the trust quality in relationships. Ni (2007) used the theory to explore organizational members' perceptions of employee-organization relationships and found varying levels of trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction among employees from Chinese organizations. Ni (2009) applied the theory to employee perceptions about the connection between relationship building and globalization strategies in multinational corporations; Ni found that participants perceived the qualities of trust, commitment and control mutuality, as well as the communal relationship type. Kim (2007) examined the impact of relationship

antecedents on employee-organization relationships and found that relationship antecedents affected the relationship types and qualities.

Several factors come into play in relationship building in organizations when using computer-mediated communication. Although some research has criticized the reduction of nonverbal cues in the relationship building process, other research has identified the advantages of this type of communication in people's interaction. This is especially applicable for employees who communicate via computers most of the time because some qualities of CMC influence group identity and team building. Internet social networks as a type of CMC represent an opportunity for employees to build relationships based on the reported benefits of the medium. While CMC affects relationship building, identifying the quality of relationships (exchange or communal) and characteristics of relationships (trust, satisfaction, commitment, and control mutuality) of relationships are also significant in building and maintaining relationships.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine Serena employees' interpretations of their Facebook participation for clues as to whether employee perspectives support or contradict Serena management's relationship building goals as well as the literature on relationship building.

Chapter Four

Method

Email Interviews

Online qualitative research is a growing practice among scholars. However, its acceptance is occurring at a slower pace than online quantitative research (Gruber, Szmigin, Reppel & Voss, 2008). Pincott and Branthwaite (2000) state that the advantages of doing qualitative research online are “more apparent in online individual interviews (one-to-one) than in online group discussions” (p. 151).

Following Anderson and Kanuka (2003), the online data collection method for this study was individual email interviews. To initiate the research, the vice president of corporate communications at Serena Software was contacted to grant permission to conduct the research on the organization. The contact agreed that Serena Software would participate after the purpose of the study was explained. He recommended the marketing assistant to assist with the study from that point forward.

The marketing assistant compiled a list of 50 employees as potential participants. She chose the 50 employees from a list of all employees in different regional offices. Every 10th name on each list was chosen. The list included 10 North America home-based employees, 10 North America office-based employees, 15 employees from Europe, and 15 employees from Asia/Australia. The marketing assistant sent each of the 50 possible employee participants an invitation email with information about the study (see

Appendix B). The participants were interviewed based on the order of their response to the invitation email. To begin the interview process, participants received email letters of consent (see Appendix C). In this email, participants were offered anonymity to protect their identity and information. They also were offered the consequence-free option of not participating to ensure they did not feel coerced into taking part in the study. They were reassured that no harm would result from participating or not in the study. These issues were addressed in the email letter of consent. Their private/personal email addresses were used to conduct interviews to ensure confidentiality.

The study explored the responses of 13 Serena employees from different offices. Eight males and five females participated. They were of different ethnicities: nine Caucasians, one Hispanic, one Indian, one Asian, and one Pacific Islander. The participants ranged in age from 28-54 with the majority being in their 30s. One of the participants was located in the Asia/Australia region and 12 were located in the North America region (both office- and home-based). Eight of them held administrative positions and five of them held technical positions. Their level of education ranged from high school to master's/professional degrees.

Interviews were conducted via email because of the geographic distance between the participants and the researcher. The criterion sampling strategy was used. This strategy selects participants on a predetermined criterion. According to Creswell (2007), this strategy “works well when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon,” (p. 128). In this study, participants were chosen based on their use of Facebook at Serena Software.

When each participant replied with his or her consent, he or she received another email thanking him or her for agreeing to participate in the study. This email also quickly described the interview process followed by the first set of questions (see Appendix D).

In the next stage, semi-structured interviews were conducted. This kind of interview contains preplanned and sequenced questions that can be followed by open-ended probes. Probing contributes to greater understanding and insight (Anderson & Kanuka, 2003).

Participants received 15 pre-planned questions asking about participants' attitudes and behaviors toward using Facebook. The pre-planned questions were separated into three groups of five questions each, which evenly spread the pre-planned questions. As participants responded to the pre-planned questions, open-ended probes were sent in consequent emails when necessary. The pre-planned questions separated into email groups included:

Email 1:

1. Tell me how you feel about using Facebook at work as Serena Software's corporate intranet.
2. What do you think are the advantages and/or disadvantages of using Facebook as Serena's corporate intranet?
3. What do you see as the impact of Facebook on your relationship with other employees? If you see no impact, please explain as well.
4. Can you provide examples of features or applications of Facebook that help you build relationships with your co-workers?

5. What do you see as the impact of Facebook on your trust in your colleagues? If you see no impact, please explain as well.

It must be noted that participants did not view the term “corporate intranet” as appropriate to describe how Serena uses Facebook. In order to get to the point of the first two questions, they were changed to:

1. What is your attitude towards Serena’s Facebook policy?
2. What do you think are the advantages and/or disadvantages of Serena’s Facebook policy?

Email 2:

1. Would you describe how Facebook influences or doesn’t influence how much you like your co-workers? Why or why not? (Probe)
2. Please explain if Facebook makes it easy to form personal bonds with your colleagues? Why or why not? How? (Probe)
3. To what extent does Facebook affect the amount of control you have in your relationships with your co-workers? Why do you think so? (Probe)
4. To what extent does Facebook break down status and power boundaries in your relationships with your colleagues? Why or why not? (Probe)
5. Please explain if Facebook makes it easier to disclose information about yourself to your co-workers? Why or why not? (Probe)

Email 3:

1. In what ways does Facebook affect your loyalty to your colleagues? Why or why not? (Probe)

2. Tell me if the absence of physical cues (e.g. facial expression, body language, posture, etc.) makes a difference in your relationship development with your co-workers on Facebook? Why or why not? (Probe)
3. Please explain if Facebook is more effective for building relationships with your co-workers than email, chat, videoconference, etc., for you? Why or why not? (Probe)
4. To what extent do you use Facebook to give time, resources, help, etc., to your co-workers? Why or why not? (Probe)
5. Would you say you give these things because other employees have given you the same things before or because you are concerned about their welfare?

When this phase of the interview was over, six demographic questions and one question about their use or not of Facebook before employment at Serena were posed:

Email 4:

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your ethnicity/race?
3. What is your age?
4. What is your region/location (e.g. North America, Europe, etc.)
5. What is your job position (professional, administrative, technical, other)?
6. What is your highest level of education?
7. Did you have a Facebook account before working at Serena? If yes, how long?

The demographic questions were useful to determine if there were similarities and/or differences in attitudes and behavior among participants in these categories.

While the initial questions were structured, the nature of qualitative interviewing allows for additional or different questions to be posed to participants depending on their feedback, so questions changed. After all responses to each email interview were gathered, each participant received a final email thanking him or her for participating and reminding him or her that the study would be distributed upon completion (see Appendix E).

When the interviews were completed, the emails were printed as transcripts. Each participant was given a pseudonym (P1, P2, P3, etc.) to protect his or her identity. Participants were assigned a pseudonym in numerical order in the order that they completed the entire interview. Miles and Huberman's (1994) framework for qualitative analysis was adopted. The transcripts were read thoroughly many times to identify salient themes and topics, which were highlighted in the transcripts. After this, participants' responses were sorted. The responses were organized according to the interview questions and included summary phrases or words from the transcripts. These were then used for interpretation.

Chapter Five

Results

The purpose of this study was to find out Serena Software employees' interpretations of their Facebook participation and whether these interpretations confirmed or disconfirmed Serena management's goals and the relationship building literature. Results suggest that, for the most part, Serena employees' interpretations of their Facebook participation confirm Serena management's goals and the relationship building literature. However, there were a few exceptions in terms of the relationship building literature; some of it was disconfirmed.

This chapter reveals the results of the email interviews with the 13 participants. The results are presented in five sections: attitudes toward using Facebook to build employee relationships, impact of Facebook on employee relationships, practical aspects of Facebook that affect employee relationship building, characteristics of relationship quality, and relationship quality: communal or exchange. The five sections represent the five categories of employee interpretations of Facebook use. The categories were organized based on the salient themes and topics that emerged in the transcripts. The themes and topics that were similar were organized into the appropriate category. By sorting the responses into five categories, the email interview questions did not have to be addressed individually.

Attitudes toward Using Facebook to Build Employee Relationships

The general attitude of the participants toward the use of Facebook is positive. They appreciate the fact that the company allows them to use the social network site during office hours. Some of the positive responses included:

- I like the fact that the company values social networks and the understanding of people that they foster.
- For me I have found that I am talking to more Serena employees around the globe.
- I'm addicted. Now I can stay in contact with friends around the world and communicate with my colleagues, business partners, vendors, customers, and anyone else.
- I do like the program. It's a fun way for us to communicate.
- For a company that has so many remote employees and is spread out so much over the country (and world), it's a great way to get to know the co-workers you usually only interact with via phone and email.
- I truly enjoy the freedom to use Facebook and the access it provides me to pictures and personal information about the people with whom I work.
- I personally find it good as it allows employees to know each other.

Although participants had different reasons why, their general attitude toward using Facebook at Serena was positive.

However, one of the participants (P3) had a neutral attitude about the use of Facebook saying that he did not have a strong feeling about it, but that he was glad the company does not prevent its use. P1 expressed a sense of concern about using the social network at work saying, "It's a bit odd for me to have work and personal life integrated

so much. It makes you extra cautious about what you post on your site.” P12 had negative feelings about using Facebook. She preferred other social network sites such as LinkedIn and Plaxo, hated Facebook’s redesign, and noted that the idea of being required to post personal information because Burton wanted all employees to participate was an invasion of privacy. This interpretation presents an important implication that will be discussed in the next chapter.

Participants also described how they felt about the advantages and disadvantages of using Facebook at Serena. Several said learning about co-workers on a personal level was an advantage. Seven of the 13 participants expressed this sentiment. Some of these comments included:

- Employees get to know each other more and there is more openness among colleagues.
- You get to be connected and interact with your co-workers from around the globe.
- You can really find out who your co-workers are and what their interests may be.

Four of the participants added that Facebook allowed them to become more than simply a name in the company. P11 remarked, “Facebook allows us to become real people to one another rather than just a voice on the other end of the phone or an email.” Another common reason was the open communication/dialog that Facebook allows employees to engage in, with eight of the 13 saying this. P7 favored the communication facet especially because it allows him to discuss sensitive topics such as politics more easily than in other office forums. Referring to his use of Facebook to discuss politics, P7 wrote, “... by posting links to Web articles from other sites on Facebook, I’ve had a fairly open dialog with a LOT of people I wouldn’t have otherwise had.”

Participants also expressed advantages in terms of the company's benefit, rather than their own relationship with their co-workers. This represented a different aspect about participants' attitudes toward Facebook use at Serena. Two employees, P8 and P9, described using Facebook as an advantage for the company's operations. P8 wrote that Facebook uses the same technology that Serena Software was getting into, and this gives him the chance to experience the company's technology firsthand. He said, "It was always known that Serena was getting into the mashup software industry and Facebook uses mashup technology with all of the applications. So it was a kind of introduction to see where the company was headed." P8's interpretation supports the perspective that Burton had another reason for implementing Facebook use at Serena, not simply to build relationships but also to encourage employees to become familiar with the software technology. This implication will be explored in the following chapter. Meanwhile, P9 said, "I'm a strong believer in software as a service and using cloud-based (Internet-based) solutions that help our company offer more services to our constituents yet doing so for a lot less money." He added that Facebook was a great way to "outsource" a part of the corporate intranet to the cloud (Internet).

Although the overall attitude toward using Facebook was positive, participants identified disadvantages as well. P1 and P4 expressed a concern about the openness of one's personal life in the workplace. They said respectively:

- Your personal life is much more open to your co-workers and bosses than most people typically allow.
- Many of the personal things which you would not want in the open also gets disclosed.

Unlike P1 and P4, P6 felt that holding back information merely so co-workers could not view it was a disadvantage. She wrote, “Sometimes you may not want to post something on Facebook because you don’t want your co-workers to see it.” One participant, P6, felt that using Facebook at Serena “has no real disadvantage” except for the probability that someone acts inappropriately, something she says that she has not seen occur since the company began using the social network site.

Impact of Facebook on Employee Relationships

Participants expressed an overall positive impact of Facebook on employee relationships. They identified a variety of these impacts. Two employees, P7 and P8, noted that Facebook allows employees to learn about each others’ personalities and interests; people are more open about who they are. They get to present both their work and personal lives on Facebook. P7 affirmed: “I believe that’s what our ‘community’ via FB is all about, getting to know the ‘other person’ that we all are.” P8 echoed similar thoughts: “I get to see things that interest the people I work with. You get to see a more personal side of the people you work with, what they are passionate about. This can and has changed the perception of some people.” P2 said that when co-workers reveal things about themselves, it makes it easier to find common ground or something to appreciate about the person.

Through this revelation of personalities, participants felt that relationships are built. P9 wrote: “Facebook has helped me establish a relationship with people around the world in record time and with a depth that would have taken me a bit longer.” These relationships may emerge unexpectedly, as P11 wrote: “I have relationships now with people I would not have expected to and have learned more about folks.” P4 declared that

Facebook helps him form bonds with other employees when he has common interests with them. For example, if he and a co-worker both like Kentucky Fried Chicken, they might go out for lunch to the restaurant together and bonding improves. P6 explained that Facebook makes it “really easy to form bonds with co-workers.” She further explained that the social network site helps current employees stay in touch with former employees and that sometimes simply reading others’ status makes her feel like she is part of their day. One participant, P12, felt that Facebook informs people about what makes him tick and makes it easier for people to approach him. He also felt that the sharing of interests and experiences breaks down barriers when meeting people. Eight of the 13 participants felt that Facebook improved communication and made it easier. P9 exemplified this attitude by saying, “Facebook has become an integral part of internal and external messaging.” Participants commented on this aspect on a personal level:

- My communication is much more open on FB than on an internal system.
- It allows us to get to know each other on a level that we wouldn’t typically be able to do when located in different offices.
- Facebook personalizes the relationships.
- It helps us to associate co-workers together as ‘friends.’

Some participants, however, expressed a different view. One participant felt that Facebook has not impacted communication because those with whom she works closely have not adopted the site as she has. One employee, P7, identified a negative impact. He said that while he does not violate Facebook policy or decency, his openness and sense of humor may offend some co-workers, which might consequently deter relationship building with them. This interpretation relates to the impact of information sharing on

trust and satisfaction in relationships, which is discussed in the following chapter.

Facebook may deter relationship building among participants depending on the kind of information shared on the site.

On a different note, P5 said Facebook only impacts the relationships she has with people who are already close to her because she does not use the social network site to “friend” co-workers that she has never met or interacted with. However, she feels closer to co-workers whom she has “friended” on Facebook because she gets to know more about them personally. For her, the social network site has no impact on relationships with employees she does not know. She explained that Facebook gives a “launching point” for starting a relationship, but it is up to the individuals as to how far they choose to take relationships.

The revelation of information, or self-disclosure, was a common thread throughout the interviews, whether or not participants felt comfortable with that. Of the 13 participants, 11 explicitly stated that information sharing helps them learn about their colleagues and, consequently, build relationships with them. Several participants said Facebook was the new forum for “water cooler discussion,” although one participant (P2) felt that the social network site cannot replace “office cooler meetings.” Most participants felt that Facebook was a more appropriate forum to share information about their personal lives than other media such as email, chat, and videoconference. The general consensus was that these other media are still valuable but more appropriate for work-related information sharing.

Facebook facilitates information sharing by junior- and senior-level staff. While participants generally believe that this self-disclosure helps them build relationships with

each other, there were mixed views on whether the social network affects relationship building with upper management by breaking down status and power boundaries. P3 asserted that Facebook has no effect on this and said he would not feel any closer to Burton if Burton posted his pet's pictures. P5 said Facebook has not broken down any such boundaries for her relationships, but thought it was possible for others. Yet P2 wrote Facebook helps "humanize" senior staff. The significance of the findings about the breaking down of boundaries is discussed in the next chapter.

Practical Aspects of Facebook that Affect Employee Relationship Building

Employees use a variety of Facebook features and applications that build their relationships. Seven of the 13 employees said they use status updates because it allows them to know what employees are doing. Status updates on Facebook allow users to share what is on their mind, and allows other users to comment on that status.

Participants wrote:

- Status updates are a great way to keep track of people. It reminds you when someone is on vacation or when something has gone really well (or not so well) at work for the day.
- I like status updates. This lets me know what the person is doing in their personal lives, much as you might find out during a chat around the coffee machine. It provides the same function for people with whom you work, but don't have socializing opportunities.
- Like if I change my status to 'Just watched District 9,' and you, as a co-worker of mine happen to like that movie, we would easily find a topic to talk about during lunch break.

- Status also helps to check out where people are. Most of my FB friends update their location and in case we are both in the same place, we can catch up.

P6 wrote that status update is her favorite feature.

The “link posting” feature, which allows users to put up a URL to share news or stories, is also a common favorite. P8, one of the two employees who listed this feature, felt that these postings encourage communication because users can respond to and make comments on these postings. “People are engaging in conversation with other employees that I think would otherwise not happen.” P2 wrote that link postings sometimes tell him something unique about the person or something that reveals the person’s interests.

Three employees wrote that they use the events feature either to create events or to see what events are going on in the company. P5 said, “The ‘events’ feature is helpful when we hold our charity event on a quarterly basis to share information and photos of how each office contributed worldwide.”

The photo feature is popular because it helps participants put faces to the names of their colleagues. The photo feature allows participants to upload pictures to their profiles. P1 said, “I like pictures because they help me visualize them when I’m on the phone or a conference call with them.” P2 said photos give employees insight into each other’s lives, which makes common vacation sites, hobbies, and interests more visible.

Other common features favored among employees are groups (virtual groups that users can create or join based on similar interests with other users), news feed (the homepage that shows what users have been up to on the site), birthday calendar (a posting on users’ news feed that shows which of their friends have upcoming birthdays), videos (upload and view videos or share links to videos), and walls (the center of users’

profiles for adding new things). Applications, which are third-party software on the Facebook platform that users manually add to their profiles, are also popular. Two employees said they use the “iRead” application, which allows users to show what books they are reading and see what books their friends are reading. P12 said she uses this because a lot of employees also love books and they get to share reviews, etc. with the application. P12 admitted to using applications such as “Compare People” (compares users’ friends in different categories) and “Movie Likeness” (find out what movie stars that users and their friends are similar to), which allows her to see which interests she and her colleagues share. Other applications participants use are “iLike” (shows what users like), and “Interactive Friends Chart” (charts users and their friends’ compatibility).

These features and applications represent the practical means by which participants build relationships with each other through Facebook. The features and applications explain exactly how the social network site functions to foster employee relationships. Facebook encourages more open communication among employees. The absence of physical cues in this type of communication did not come up as a barrier to relationship building. P6 explained that the absence makes no difference because users express themselves with terms such as “LOL (laugh out loud),” “TMI (too much information),” and “OMG (oh my God).” P4 wrote that Facebook communication is “pretty straightforward” because what you write or show is what you mean. Others were ambivalent. P2 asserted that although physical cues are always helpful in understanding people, Facebook offers more information than he would otherwise have. For one participant, face-to-face communication is always better, but because it is not possible with all his colleagues, Facebook suffices. P1 and P5 affirmed that the absence of

physical cues does not affect their relationships because they know their Facebook friends well enough to detect aspects of their personalities. These interpretations support the literature, which says that users adjust their interaction to the limitations of the site, and that other non-physical features contribute to the level of social presence on the medium.

Characteristics of Relationship Quality

The four characteristics of relationship quality investigated in this study include trust, satisfaction, commitment, and control mutuality. Participants expressed a mix of feelings about Facebook's role in relationship building with regard to these qualities.

Participants' responses to Facebook's impact on control mutuality, defined as the degree to which people in a relationship are satisfied with the amount of control they have in the relationship, varied. Some participants appreciated the way Facebook allowed them to control the process of relationship building in terms of "friending" people and sharing information. P4 said, "You can still keep your relationships as you want as people will only know what you want to say." Another participant said Facebook gave her control because she has the freedom to befriend whomever she wants. On the contrary, P1 and P3 said Facebook has no effect at all on this characteristic. P1 added, however, that she understood how it could affect other employees who prefer to keep their life separate. P2 wrote: "Who wants 'control' in relationships? Not my idea of a relationship." Based on the participants in this study, Facebook's impact on control mutuality relates to the power they have to add people and share information. This finding differs from the literature because the literature defines control mutuality as

satisfaction with the level of control in a relationship. This will be further discussed in the following chapter.

Participants had a more positive response to Facebook's impact on the trust characteristic among co-workers. Nine of the 13 participants said the social network site increases their trust in other employees because they are learning more about them through information sharing. Some of the comments that expressed this were:

- It makes colleagues more like personal friends, thus it increases trust.
- I have learned more about my direct peers that I see everyday and this has opened the doors to more communication which has led to more trust among our teams.
- My trust in others has improved because I better understand people's motivation from the information I can gather about them.
- The more I know about my colleagues, the more I trust them.

P1 said that Facebook increases or decreases her trust in her co-workers depending on the information she learns. As an example, she wrote that her trust decreases if she sees a colleague's pattern of heavy drinking, and her trust increases if she sees strong family values in the person. This perspective relates to P7's concern that his openness and sense of humor might deter his colleagues from building a relationship with him. Again, this demonstrates the importance of the kind of information that is shared in Facebook. The literature defines trust as people's willingness to open themselves to each other and their level of confidence in each other. Trust, as described by the participants in this study, is also about self-disclosure and learning about their colleagues. The relationship between trust and the kind of information that is shared on Facebook will be discussed in the next chapter.

Fewer people felt that Facebook has no impact on their trust in other employees. Two participants said they merely get a better understanding of their colleagues without any increase or decrease in trust. P11 said, “I don’t feel like I trust people more. I may just understand their motivation more.” P5 said there is “no significant impact” on trust because she has to have known someone personally to trust him or her. She added that trust does not come from a social network site. This statement was the only one that explicitly stated that Facebook, on its own, is not capable of encouraging trust in employee relationships.

The next characteristic of relationship quality is commitment. Six of the 13 participants responded that Facebook improves their commitment to their colleagues. The general rationale for this was that the personalization of relationships led to increased commitment. P2 explained that this impact on commitment is a benefit to the organization because employees act more co-operatively and are less likely to “jockey for position and stature.” P3, P7, and P9 said this increase in commitment occurs because their colleagues become more like friends or family to them. P11 expressed this increase in commitment in terms of her inclination to go out of her way to help colleagues. She explained that she feels this way because Facebook allows her to “know people a little more.” This literature explains that CMC’s role in breaking down social boundaries contributes to group cohesion. The findings of this study indicate that Facebook improves group cohesion because it personalizes relationships. This will be discussed in the following chapter.

On the other hand, two participants said Facebook has no effect on their commitment to other employees. One participant said it was “hard to say.” Four had no comment on this characteristic.

The last characteristic of relationship quality was satisfaction with or liking for colleagues. Participants described how Facebook does or does not impact this characteristic. Generally, their satisfaction with their colleagues related to the revelation of information on colleagues’ profiles. Two participants felt that the kind of information (negative or positive) that is shared influences their tendency to like their co-workers.

P1 provided an example:

If ‘Susie’ and I both have some of the same hobbies, and both have children of a similar age, it makes it easier for us to connect on a personal level, which may lead us to like each other more. However, as Facebook shows bigger differences between me and a co-worker, it can lead to liking that person less. If ‘Johnny’ and his wife are in the middle of a divorce and all I see on his profile is wife/women bashing, this makes me like him less.

P2 said:

If Facebook reveals them to be right wing or racist, my relationship with them becomes more ‘professional,’ i.e., without personal warmth. On the other hand, when Facebook reveals something personal about someone like they have a child who is autistic or love hiking in the desert southwest, then I feel closer to them.

P3 had a similar sentiment that the type of information colleagues share affects his relationships with them. He thought there was a positive impact. He wrote: “It mostly reveals co-workers’ personal lives and makes me feel closer to them.” P4, P5, and P6 said

Facebook doesn't affect their liking for other colleagues; it merely makes them know more about their fellow employees. P11 said Facebook only makes her more casual and comfortable with people rather than impacting her liking for them. P9 said his liking for colleagues has more to do with their performance in the company than his Facebook friendships with them.

Relationship Quality: Communal or Exchange

Participants did not necessarily view their relationship quality as either communal, defined as when people in a relationship willingly give benefits to each other out of concern for the other's welfare, or exchange, defined as when one person in a relationship provides benefits to another person only because the other person has previously provided benefits or is expected to do so in the future. When asked about giving benefits to their colleagues, participants had ambivalent reactions. P1 said, "I don't typically do this (provide benefits to others) as the majority of people I'm connected with are not local and I would typically offer those things for someone that I could get to." P4 said his tendency to provide benefits to his co-workers depended on what they asked for. However, if he had to provide anything, he would do it both out of concern for them and because they have given him the same things (time, help, and resources) before. There was no clear distinction between the communal and exchange relationship for this participant because he experiences both types of relationships simultaneously. P3 said if any of his colleagues needed anything from him, they would ask him directly or communicate with him via email or chat, not Facebook. P2 remarked that he does not use Facebook to provide work-related help to his co-workers. However, he wrote that outside of work, Facebook encouraged him to give benefits to his colleagues. "I occasionally

have sponsored people's kids or donated to charity because my friends have announced something on Facebook." He did not specify why he did this. Participants did not express a strong sense of either exchange relationships or communal relationships. However, one noticeable difference showed in terms of the communal/exchange relationship quality. The participant from the Asia/Australia region said he would provide benefits to his employees on Facebook while most of the Americans were non-committal about this aspect of relationship building. This could be attributed to the Asia/Australia country's collectivist culture and the United States' individualistic culture.

There was general agreement about the use of Facebook across participants' demographics. Male and female participants of different ages (28-54) favor Facebook for its role in building relationships among employees. Based on the sample, even the older employees who grew up in a different technological age enjoy using the social network site to learn about their colleagues. Participants who belong to minority ethnicities felt just as positive about Facebook use to build relationships as the majority. In terms of culture, most participants were from America and one was from the Asia/Australia region. All of them expressed advantages of relationship building through Facebook. There were no noticeable differences in participants' interpretations in terms of level of education.

For the 13 participants in this study, Facebook helps to build relationships between them and their colleagues. The results indicate that Serena management's goals are confirmed. Facebook brings personal interaction into the workplace and the participants are connecting with their co-workers through the social network site. Participants appreciate that they can use Facebook to learn about their colleagues on a personal level. Getting to know each other has helped some participants work better as a

team — one of Serena management's goals. Participants are brought together on Facebook and this interaction fosters a sense of community. Participants also acknowledged that using Facebook has contributed to understanding the business and its products, as well as serving customers better.

Generally, participants like using Facebook to build relationships with their colleagues. However, they offered some disadvantages such as loss of privacy. While most participants feel that the sharing of information on Facebook leads to building relationships, some believe that the type of information that is shared can sometimes deter relationship building. The kind of information also can affect trust and satisfaction. About half of the sample found that Facebook improved their commitment to their co-workers because the site helped personalize relationships. The results revealed that participants had a different view of control in relationships than the literature. Control is about controlling one's information and who one chooses to be friends with, not about the level of control between two people. The results showed that participants felt that neither communal relationship nor exchange relationships defined their relationships. Overall, participants' interpretations of their Facebook use confirm Serena management's goals and the relationship building literature with a few exceptions. The following chapter offers an analysis of the findings.

Chapter Six

Analysis

In an interview, Serena's vice president of corporate communications remarked that within a month of launching the initiative, the company surpassed 90% penetration of employees with Facebook profiles, and, to date, a minimum of 25% are active users (daily use), 50% are passive users (use at least three times a week), and the rest check their profiles occasionally (McAfee, 2008). While the sample used in this study is not representative of the entire employee population, the level of participation identified above indicates an overall positive attitude among participants about using Facebook at the technology company.

Based on the results of the interviews, Serena Software employees who participated in the present study have a generally positive attitude toward using Facebook to build relationships at work with each other. Participants' relationships in this study are defined by Facebook "friending." The participants' interpretations of their Facebook use support the relationship building literature, with a few exceptions. The participants' interpretations also support Serena management's goals. This chapter presents an analysis of the findings. It discusses the impact of participants' Facebook use on relationship building with their colleagues, on the characteristics of relationship quality (trust, satisfaction, commitment, and control mutuality) and on relationship quality (communal and exchange).

Facebook has afforded Serena Software employees who participated in this study the opportunity to open up to each other on a personal level. One participant exemplified this general attitude: “I do think the social network site, in general, has helped employees in a company like Serena, which is dispersed all over the world, become more familiar with each other on a personal level.” In the present study, Serena’s Facebook use among participants has created new relationships, as well as developed old ones. As an international company with offices all over the world, Serena Software’s use of Facebook bridges gaps across state lines and oceans. Participants admitted that they are learning more about each other, which some say contributes to their trust in each other. By sharing information about themselves, they are discovering common interests with one another. They value this knowledge of others because it opens the way to form relationships. This trend can be compared to another social network: blogging. A blog is a kind of log that is maintained on the World Wide Web (Walker Rettberg, 2008). Walker Rettberg (2008) said the blogging network is not formed mainly by family bonds or by a shared space such as real-life social networks: “... this social network is primarily about the sharing of information. The network isn’t exclusively about information, of course. Trust is built, as are friendships, alliances, and controversies” (p. 61). Based on participants’ responses, this view can apply to Facebook use at Serena as well because Facebook allows them to share information, which leads to more trust and friendships. This supports Bargh and McKenna’s (2004) discussion about self-disclosure occurring more easily via Internet communication, as well as contributing to relationship formation. The results showed that, among those who participated in this study, self-disclosure on Facebook allows relationships to develop, confirming this aspect of the literature. Facebook offers users

many ways to share information about themselves through its wide variety of features and applications. It is no surprise that users feel free and comfortable to self-disclose on the site because that is the atmosphere Facebook fosters.

Participants found themselves forming personal bonds with each other through Facebook, a factor that derives from social presence theory, defined as the degree to which people establish warm and personal bonds with each other in a communication setting. This is another aspect of the literature that is confirmed. Based on most of the participants' responses, Facebook facilitates personal bonds between them. P5 said: "I do feel closer to those co-workers I am friended with on Facebook because I know more about them personally." However, for two of the participants, they only experienced this with colleagues who are already their friends in real life, not with co-workers they did not know personally. The rest of the participants did not express this preference; they were generally open to "friending" their co-workers whether they knew them personally or not, and, consequently, building relationships with them.

These interpretations suggest that the Internet seems may be changing definitions of "friend" and "friendship." Walker (1995) described traditional friendship as "a voluntary affective relationship in which equality is fundamental" (p. 274). Before the rise of the Internet, traditional friendship was an offline relationship. The Internet has changed that by taking friendship online. Before computer and Internet technology, people usually became friends by meeting one another personally. Now people can become friends by meeting online. Facebook, too, is redefining friendship. Simply adding someone to one's friends list makes those two people "friends," as defined by Facebook. Facebook allows users to become friends with strangers who live across the globe. Most

participants consider the colleagues that they (the participants) add to the friends list as friends. Once they are added, it seems that they are no longer strangers even if they never met offline. Facebook friends do similar things that offline friends do: they share personal information about themselves, they share photos and videos, and they plan events, etc. This sharing seems to be what defines Facebook friendships for the majority of participants in this study. However, two participants' interpretations demonstrate a different view. These participants only add colleagues to their friends list whom the participants know through an offline relationship. They seem to use Facebook to bolster friendships with their current real world friends, unlike the majority of the participants who seem to use Facebook to create and build relationships with new and old friends. In that respect, Facebook may be changing definitions of friendship as a relationship one that can exist exclusively online. This is the case for the Facebook friendships of most of the participants in this study.

The relationships that develop as participants divulge information about themselves give them a feeling of connection, and, as one participant put it, the company's divisions are now more than "just another office of people." One of the company's program's goals was achieved. "We wanted everyone to feel like they were a part of Serena ... And we wanted to create a persona for Serena made up of the company's collective personalities" (McAfee, 2008). Through features such as status updates, events, and link postings, participants learn about what is happening across the entire organization, within and outside the U.S. One participant remarked that using Facebook has reduced the sense of disconnectedness that existed before Serena officially introduced Facebook at the office. The benefits of learning about each other on the social

network site extends beyond building relationships with each other; Facebook helps them focus on Serena Software as their community and aids in the recognition of the community's joint goal for company success. P2 wrote: "In a larger sense, I think that this personalization (on Facebook) ultimately causes the organization as a whole to work more efficiently." P8 wrote: "I believe what this (Facebook) is doing is building a community among the employee base." P9 wrote:

The sense of community is enforced not just by Facebook media, but also by the events we organize in the company for which we use Facebook. For example, our quarterly Serena Gives Back event where employees spend one day on charity. We plan these events through Facebook and communicate to each other about them through pictures, stories, etc. There's just no better way to do that!

Participants' interpretations confirm the company's goal of getting employees to feel like part of the organization. This also confirms Waldeck's (2004) finding that communication and information technologies encourage organizational affiliation, as well as van den Hoof and de Leeuw van Weenen's (2004) affirmation that CMCs break down physical and social barriers to produce group solidarity.

A noticeable theme that emerged from the interviews was that using Facebook has a positive impact on team building. Five participants remarked that Facebook has facilitated co-operation when employees have to work on projects together. They feel that knowing the personalities of the people on teams makes it easier to work with them. This effect was one of Burton's goals when he first introduced this program to the company. "Burton believes that colleagues who get to know each other on a more personal level will work together better" (Arteaga, 2007). These interpretations also support the

literature that identifies improved teamwork and employee morale as an effect of CSSNs. Participants said that using Facebook has partly contributed to increased productivity, in groups and individually. P11 said, “I was skeptical about the Facebook initiative but have really enjoyed the sense of community it has brought to me. It has a positive impact on my morale, which then has a direct impact on my productivity.” P11 wrote: “I believe it helps those of us that work in different offices become real people to one another. I believe it’s often easier and more productive to work with people when you know a little bit about them personally.” This is yet another one of Burton’s original intentions. Burton said, “A corporate culture that fosters a sense of community and fun will ultimately help us get more done” (Arteaga, 2007).

Wellman et al. (1996) explain that CSSNs in the workplace break down status and power boundaries by the exchange of more casual information such as leisure interests. Although participants acknowledge that exchanging casual information on Facebook helps them build relationships with other employees, they generally did not feel that Facebook breaks down status and power boundaries in the company. Only one participant felt that Facebook helped to humanize senior staff. Burton is known to share information about his personal life on Facebook, but as one participant said, even if Burton shared pictures of a pet, he (the participant) would not feel any closer to him (Burton). One may tie this point back to the two participants who only add their real life friends to Facebook. Perhaps status and power boundaries make no difference when lower-level employees are not friends with managerial employees in the real world. After all, even if Burton shares a lot of his personal life, his status and power still remain. For most of the participants in this study, Facebook does not seem to impact the boundaries associated with people in

managerial positions even if the participants are learning about the senior-level employees through information sharing.

Participants' interpretations confirm the literature that asserts that employees may enjoy the timely and convenient exchange of information that derives from CSSNs. However, Facebook seems to have equal value as other means of communication such as email, chat, and videoconference. The literature states that employees may even prefer a CSSN over traditional communication such as telephone calls, but only two participants affirmed that Facebook was more effective than the other media. Most participants felt that all the forms of media have equal value. According to the majority of participants, Facebook is a great forum to share personal information, but it does not replace the "water cooler." Participants also said Facebook does not replace email, chat, and videoconference because these media are more apt for information sharing about work matters. P2 wrote: "Facebook complements all other forms of interaction. These other channels are also valuable in their own way." P4 wrote: "All tools (media) have their own value."

Another important aspect of the use of Facebook is opening the lines of communication among employees. P7 wrote: "My communication is much more open on Facebook than on an internal system." P11 wrote: "On a personal level, communication has improved dramatically, which spills over on the professional level." Most participants felt that, since the inception of the Facebook program, communication in Serena Software became easier. Participants said they are discovering both personal and professional information by communicating on Facebook. Their responses indicate that the lack of physical cues does not seem to deter their communication and relationship building with

their colleagues on Facebook. P13 said, “I don’t think it (the lack of physical cues) makes a difference in this age of IMs (instant messages) and texting.” For some, it makes no difference because they already know their friends’ personalities and understand their online communication cues. For one, using instant messaging terms such as “LOL” and “OMG” compensates for the lack of physical cues, which, according to the literature, improves the level of social presence in CMC.

For others, Facebook communication was not better than in-person communication, but it sufficed even with the lack of physical cues. Participants’ interpretations about the lack of physical cues confirm Wellman et al.’s (1996) assertion that the absence of these cues allows people the option to get to know each other on the basis of communication first and then later decide whether to move the relationship offline. Wellman et al. added that moving the relationship offline is moderated by trust. Since the participants in this study experience increased trust in their colleagues because of Facebook, it should follow that they feel more comfortable moving these relationships into the real world. P4 gave an example of moving the relationship from online to offline when he described sharing with a colleague an interest in a particular restaurant. Once the common interest in the restaurant was discovered, they decided to visit the restaurant together. On the other hand, boyd and Ellison’s (2008) research affirmed that social network sites are primarily used for communicating with people who already exist in users’ social networks. Research shows that relationships formed on SNSs tend to begin offline and are then expressed online. This is the case for only two of the 13 participants. The relationships of these two participants preceded Facebook. It is possible that this hesitance to “friend” strangers on Facebook can be attributed to the participants’ private

personalities. However, they use Facebook to support these offline relationships just as much as the other 11 participants use the site to develop online relationships with old and new friends. Participants' interpretations confirm both of these opposing viewpoints in the literature.

Most participants enjoy the fact that Facebook allows them to learn about their colleagues through information sharing. However, there is a downside to this aspect of Facebook. One participant felt that it was a disadvantage to sometimes have to refrain from putting certain information on Facebook so that colleagues would not see it. This statement represents the problem of privacy loss on the site. Two other participants expressed concern about their loss of privacy on Facebook, which explains why they only add their real friends on the site. Serena's adoption of Facebook seems problematic on this level because the company wanted all employees to participate. Even though employees are entitled to add or not add anything they want to their profile, the company initiative still seems to invade the privacy of two participants. P12 said some employees had a problem with this request to use Facebook. She wrote:

The general invasion of privacy involved in requiring employees to post personal information and share it with the world, or at least the company, went down the wrong way with some folks. They felt Facebook went way beyond what an employer has any right to expect of employees.

Although Burton appeared to have good intentions by implementing Facebook use among employees to build relationships and acclimatize employees with software technology, a problem emerged. Facebook may be blurring the lines between public and private life for Serena employees. Employees seem to be on the clock even after work

hours because of Facebook. This perspective leads to the thought that employers are in control of employees 24/7, a prediction that emerged in the 1990s when technology was on the rise in the workplace. Although only two participants expressed concern with their loss of privacy, it is possible that other employees feel the same way. However, for the majority of participants in this study, the invasion of privacy on Facebook does not appear to be a problem. Hegemony suggests that whether employees feel loss of privacy or not may be beside the point because employees indeed have lost a degree of privacy.

The interviews revealed that Facebook impacts the characteristics of relationship quality. The most evident impact is that of trust. Participants defined trust as information sharing and self-disclosure. Relationship management theory defines trust as the level of confidence that both parties have in each other and their willingness to open themselves to the other party. Nine of the participants expressed an increase in trust of their co-workers because of their interaction on Facebook. Trust increases because of information sharing. Learning about each other on a personal basis leads to participants' increased trust in each other. One participant said, "We start knowing colleagues more, which results in more trust." They see their co-workers more like friends now. Thus, participants' interpretations confirm the definition of trust in relationship management theory. But for some participants, trust depends on the kind of information they learn from Facebook. Positive information (such as good family values) leads to increased trust and negative information (such as bad drinking habits) leads to decreased trust. For a couple of participants, Facebook has no impact on their trust in colleagues because they only use the social network site to communicate with people who are already their friends. They believe that they have to have previously trusted colleagues to be friends with the

colleagues. Participants' interpretations suggest that trust moderates friendship. This perspective is exemplified by P3 who said that Facebook makes colleagues more like personal friends by increasing trust in colleagues.

The information sharing aspect of Facebook also contributes to participants' satisfaction with each other. The literature defines satisfaction as the extent to which both parties feel favorable about each other because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced. Participants' interpretations of satisfaction related to liking for their colleagues. Again, the more they know about colleagues the more they tend to like them. P3 said, "It (Facebook) mostly exposes co-workers' personal lives, thus makes them closer to me by liking them." Therefore, satisfaction with colleagues for some participants is rooted in information sharing the same way trust is rooted in information sharing. For four employees, simply learning about their co-workers was sufficient. It did not necessarily lead to liking them more. For one employee, satisfaction had nothing to do with Facebook; satisfaction results from co-workers' performances. This one participant's response confirmed the literature's definition of satisfaction as it relates to positive expectations. The difference, however, is that this participant's satisfaction focused on colleagues' work performance, and it has nothing to do with positive relationship expectations. Among participants, there is a split on Facebook's effect on satisfaction with colleagues.

Participants' views on the impact of Facebook on commitment and control mutuality were similar. Commitment is defined in the literature as the extent to which both parties feel that the relationship is worth spending energy on to maintain and promote. Most felt that liking their co-workers and thinking of them as friends or family

contributed to increased commitment to them. P4 wrote: “It (Facebook) helps to enhance bonding and consequently the loyalty.” Again, they attributed this to the information sharing facet of Facebook. Control mutuality was more perceived in terms of the control Facebook gives participants to add the friends or the information they want to add. P6 said, “In our system, everyone on the Serena network can view each other’s profile unless the profile is private. You can still control who you want to add to your friends list or not.” Control mutuality was not expressed in terms of whether Facebook impacts their satisfaction with the level of control in relationships, which is how the literature defines control mutuality. For some, control was seen as a negative and inappropriate concept for defining participants’ relationships.

Of the four characteristics, trust, satisfaction, control mutuality, and commitment, Facebook most increases trust for participants. Facebook also generally increases satisfaction with and commitment to other employees. The results least supported the impact of Facebook on control mutuality in employee relationships.

Results suggest that participants did not particularly view their Facebook relationships as communal relationships, defined as when people in a relationship willingly give benefits to each other out of concern for the other’s welfare, or exchange relationships, defined as when one person in a relationship provides benefits to another person only because the other person has previously provided benefits or is expected to do so in the future. Only one participant said he would provide benefits to his colleagues. Another participant said if a colleague wanted help, the colleague should ask for it via email or chat. This perspective reinforces the previous point that Facebook is appropriate for sharing personal information, and other media such as email, chat, and

videoconference are more appropriate for work-related matters. While Facebook appears to be building relationships among the participants, it is unclear what the relationship quality is. This can be attributed to the fact that participants generally use the social network site to simply learn about their colleagues on a more personal level. They do not see it as a means to give to or gain from other employees. This does not mean that this is the case for all Serena employees. One participant said that her propensity to provide benefits to her colleagues depends on their physical proximity to her. If a colleague needed help from the participant, the colleague would have to be locally based. Perhaps employees have to be locally connected to experience communal relationships and/or exchange relationships in the workplace. Based on this study, there is little evidence to support the presence of either communal relationships or exchange relationships as a result of Facebook use among the participants.

Participants' interpretations confirm several aspects of the relationship building literature, as well as Serena management's goals. Serena management, however, did not solely focus on employee relationship building when it initiated Facebook use at the company. Management wanted employees to experience the mashup software that Facebook and Facebook's partners used in applications. Burton felt that having employees interact with Facebook on a regular basis would get them to better understand the software technology that the site uses, which is similar to the software technology the company produces and sells. Two participants' interpretations support this goal. They commented that using Facebook helps them improve the company's service. Serena refers to itself as "The Application Development Company" on its company Web site, and one of Facebook's key products is the application. Therefore, Serena's adoption of

Facebook was to the company's benefit, not just the employees. Nevertheless, participants' interpretations of their Facebook use support the notion that Facebook helps them build relationships with their colleagues.

Participants' perspectives also support Serena management's relationship building goals. Participants found that they are connecting with each other through Facebook and building relationships with their colleagues. Burton's plan to encourage personal interaction and community in the workplace was fulfilled according to the interpretations of the participants in this study. Participants' perspectives also support most of the literature on relationship building. As a CSSN or SNS, Facebook has made communication about personal information easier for the participants. They enjoy learning about each other on a personal level, and as several of the participants said, Facebook gives their colleagues a real identity in the workplace. To the participants, their colleagues are no longer merely members of the organizational chart. Participants' interpretations demonstrate that Facebook impacts three of the characteristics of relationship quality: trust, satisfaction, and commitment. However, their interpretations reveal a different definition for control mutuality than the literature. For the participants, control on Facebook is about the power to add friends and information, not about the level of control in a relationship. Participants did not express their relationship quality as either communal or exchange. This finding may be attributed to the perspective that the two types of relationship quality depend on physical proximity, i.e. people need to have a relationship in the real world to be able to define it as either communal or exchange. This study's participants did not express a sense of either communal relationships or exchange relationships via Facebook. The key finding in this study is that participants equate trust

and relationships on Facebook with information sharing and self-disclosure. Overall, the findings support the notion that social media can support the internal organizational function and the public relations function of employee relationship building.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

No other study has focused on the use of Facebook within an organization to build employee relationships, which makes this study unique. This study corresponds with the growing research interest in social network sites for business purposes. Its focus on relationship building coincides with the literature on public relations' role in guiding this internal organizational process. It also extends the connection between computer-mediated communication, social networks, organizational communication, and relationship building.

Public relations practitioners and business leaders alike can learn from Serena Software's adoption of Facebook. Facebook presents a platform for relationship development among employees. It gives them a chance to learn about each other outside the walls of office buildings. This is especially beneficial for global companies whose employees are scattered around the world. Using Facebook may help employees find out about their colleagues on a personal level. It can open lines of communication and increases information sharing among employees. Employees can also develop trust in and respect for each other, and, by extension, togetherness, belonging, and identification with each other.

Nevertheless, the use of Facebook in any organizational setting with a hierarchical power structure has some negative implications. Two participants in this study expressed

concern about the loss of privacy that comes with using Facebook in the workplace. Serena employees have the option to add whomever they want as friends, or to add whatever information they want, but taking part in Serena's program still seems to invade privacy. As one participant said, integrating work and personal life was odd. Another participant noted that the idea of being required to post personal information because that is what Burton wanted was an invasion of privacy. This presents an issue of corporate coercion whereby employees either are forced, or simply may feel forced, to participate in an activity that they may not necessarily want to, even if there are benefits to taking part. Participants typically enjoy using Facebook and using the social network site to self-disclose, but one participant said that having co-workers as Facebook friends was problematic. Sometimes a Facebook user would not post particular information so that co-workers wouldn't see it. This issue presents a paradox: although Facebook appears to be a positive medium for employees to share information, it also seems to limit their freedom to share information. Another problem lies in the kind of information that users post on Facebook. Aspects of employees' personalities that employees present on Facebook may be deemed inappropriate or evaluated negatively by colleagues. Sometimes the presentation of what is thought to be inappropriate or negative information can deter relationship building instead of helping it, for example, if an employee offends co-workers with his or her political opinions. Two participants noted that politics is a sensitive subject that can easily incite problems for Facebook relationships. Organizations should address these matters if they intend to implement Facebook use in the workplace.

To summarize what is pertinent to the literature, this study confirmed and disconfirmed aspects of the literature. In terms of computer-mediated communication and Internet social networks, participants' interpretations support social presence theory, and the use of Facebook to build a sense of community and promote team building. Their interpretations support the notion that the lack of physical cues does not inhibit relationship building among them; participants used other cues to decode Facebook interaction. Participants' interpretations contradict the literature that states that CSSNs break down status and power boundaries; Facebook did not break down these boundaries for the participants. With regard to organizational communication, participants' interpretations confirm the idea that communication and information technologies encourage organizational affiliation. Their interpretations reveal that Facebook has equal, not more, value as conventional electronic communication channels in employee relationship building. For relationship management theory, participants' interpretations confirm the presence of three of the characteristics of relationship quality — trust, commitment, and satisfaction — in their relationships with colleagues. This was not the case for control mutuality. Nor was it the case for the types of relationship quality (communal or exchange). There was no significant evidence in this study to support the presence of control mutuality in participants' relationships with their co-workers. The participants did not define their relationships as either communal or exchange. From a public relations perspective, the absence of these aspects of relationship management theory may be the most significant finding.

The current investigation is somewhat limited because only 13 employees participated. A larger sample may have yielded more interpretations about Facebook use

at Serena especially with regard to the characteristics of relationship quality (trust, satisfaction, control mutuality, and commitment) and the types of relationship quality (communal and exchange). The participants in this study did not express either communal relationships or exchange relationships with their colleagues on Facebook, but this does not indicate that this is the case for the entire employee population. The study is also limited because there was no balance among the ethnicities of participants. The majority of the participants were White; four were of different ethnicities (Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Indian). None was of African descent, African-American, or Black. If the participants were from a wider cross-section of ethnic categories, there may have been more noticeable differences in their interpretations. The same limitation applies to the regions/locations that participants were from. All but one were located in the United States. If more participants were from different regions, the study may have been able to examine culture as part of participants' interpretations. Other research could study a larger sample of participants that could yield a greater variety of participants in terms of ethnicity and region/location. Finally, while the email interview method has benefits, conducting the interviews by phone or in person might have provided more in-depth responses. Additionally beyond expanding the study of Serena Software, future research might explore using Facebook to build employee relationships in other organizations of different sizes, different types of organizational structure, different management styles, and different industries, including profit and nonprofit.

This study adds to the organizational literature by exploring how social media can be used within the workplace. Future research on the topic, however, can focus on using Facebook to build relationships with other stakeholders such as suppliers, financiers,

community organizations, etc. Another study could focus on how Facebook affects employees' relationship building with the organization as opposed to relationship building with colleagues. Future research also can focus on how *other* social network sites can serve internal organizational and public relations functions. The popularity of social media today presents significant implications for businesses. Integrating social media into internal organizational processes can prove beneficial because they can help to build relationships among employees. Based on the literature and some of the participants' interpretations, employees' interaction on a personal level can lead to increased team spirit, as well as a sense of community. Social media can improve not only organizations' external functions such as marketing brands, but also public relations functions as well. Participants' interpretations in this study confirm the literature on relationships building, with a few exceptions. The interpretations also confirm Serena management's goals. However, much more research is needed in the area of electronic social media and organizational relationship building.

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Appendices

Appendix A- Serena Software Press Release

Serena Software Adopts Facebook as Corporate Intranet

"Facebook Fridays" Foster Fun and Community Spirit at Serena Software

SAN MATEO, Calif. - November 2, 2007 - Serena Software, Inc. is breaking out of the corporate mold by announcing today that its 800 employees around the globe will participate each week in a company-wide program called "Facebook Fridays," which encourages employees to find fun and personal connections in the workplace. Each Friday, employees are granted one hour of personal time to spend on their Facebook profiles and connect with co-workers, customers, family and friends. This initiative will start on Friday November 2nd and will be rolled out in 18 countries where the company has offices.

As Web 2.0 technologies such as instant messaging (IM), wikis, and texting make communication faster and more efficient, the "human" element of communication can feel increasingly removed. How can people bring that sense of personal interaction and community back into the workplace? Surprisingly, through one of the hottest technologies around-Facebook, a social utility that connects people with friends and others who work, study and live around them.

Fanatic for Facebook

Serena President and CEO Jeremy Burton is an avid user of Facebook, using it to keep in touch with employees, friends, and business partners from wherever he is in the world-in Japan visiting customers or racing cars at Laguna Seca. He wants to bring the benefits he

gains from using Facebook to his company, and allow employees to have more fun combining their personal and professional lives. He is doing this by making Facebook his company's intranet-a place where employees can find everything from a list of company holidays to the CEO's favorite movie. Burton believes that colleagues who get to know one another on a more personal level will work together better. The company already has more than 30% of its global workforce on Facebook prior to the launch of Facebook Fridays.

"As our business continues to grow, the workplace becomes more and more distributed, which can make us feel disconnected from one another," said Burton. "Social networking tools like Facebook can bring us back together, help us get to know each other as people, help us understand our business and our products, and help us better serve our customers-on demand. A corporate culture that fosters a sense of community and fun will ultimately help us get more done. Companies that do not embrace social networking are making a huge mistake."

Recent studies indicate there are roughly 70 million Gen Y'ers (born between the years 1980-2000), and Burton believes it's critical to understand and embrace "their world," including on-demand Internet applications and an "innovation without permission" mentality. Serena is using new methods of recruiting, like Facebook, to tune into this next generation of workers who are, ultimately, the corporate leaders of tomorrow.

About Serena Software, Inc.

Serena Software, Inc. is the leading global independent software company focused on Business Mashups and Application Lifecycle Management (ALM). More than 15,000 organizations around the world, including 96 of the Fortune 100, rely on Serena solutions to automate the application development process and effectively manage their IT portfolio. Serena is headquartered in San Mateo, California, and has offices throughout the U.S., Europe, and Asia Pacific. For more information on Serena solutions and services, visit www.serena.com.

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Appendix B: Email letter of invitation

Dear Colleagues:

Rianna Lee Sing, a graduate student at the University of South Florida School of Mass Communications, is conducting a thesis on business uses of Facebook and would like to profile Serena and its employees as the crux of her research. The interviews will be primarily via email but there is a possibility that there will be some telephone interviews. There will be about 15 questions, but you will not need to answer them all at one time. There also may be follow-up questions. The interviews will occur over a two-week period. If you are able to participate, please contact Rianna Lee Sing at rkleesin@mail.usf.edu from a personal (non-Serena) email address. This will ensure your confidentiality.

Regards,

Diana Herrera

Serena Corporate Marketing

Appendix C: Email letter of consent

"Social networks and intra-organizational relationships: Using Facebook to build employee relationships at Serena Software."

Dear X:

The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that you are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with your employer.

The purpose of this study is to examine Serena employees' interpretations of the use of Facebook to build relationships with each other. This is an individual project to fulfill the requirements of a thesis and does not represent the University of South Florida.

Data will be collected through interviews via your provided personal email address to assure your confidentiality and anonymity. There may be a possibility of some telephone interviews if you agree, and you will need to provide a personal phone number in this case. If a telephone interview is warranted, I will let you know via email, and we will make arrangements for it then. Please be advised that telephone interviews will be recorded. Only I, the researcher, will be involved in the data collection.

All of your responses via email and/or telephone will remain confidential, and I will not share them with your employer or anyone else. Your identity will not be revealed anywhere in the research. Any data collected will be stored until December 2009 and will

remain in my sole possession. Additionally, the emails will be your own record of the interviews.

There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study.

Do not hesitate to ask questions about the study at any point. I would be happy to share the findings with you after the study is completed.

Please electronically sign your consent with full knowledge of the nature and purpose of the procedures. You may print this consent form for your own records.

Electronic Signature of Participant

Date

Thank you,

Rianna Lee Sing, MA- Strategic Communication Management '09, Sole Investigator

Appendix D: Email letter of participation

Dear X:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I appreciate your contribution and the time and effort you put into participating.

The interview will occur over a series of consecutive emails for a two-week period; each email will contain a maximum of five questions. The total number of questions will be between 15 and 20. As you respond to the first set of questions, I then will send you another set of questions; we will follow this process until I have presented all the questions to you. You do not have to respond immediately and may take time to think about your responses; however, please keep in mind the schedule to complete the entire interview.

Below is the first set of questions. Let's begin!

Please do not send your responses in a separate email; respond to all questions by clicking on the "Reply" button of your email server.

It would help if you would type your response below each question **in bold face** to separate your response from the question.

Email 1:

1. Tell me how you feel about using Facebook at work as Serena Software's corporate intranet? /What is your attitude towards Serena's Facebook policy?

2. What do you think are the advantages and/or disadvantages of using Facebook as Serena's corporate intranet? /What do you think are the advantages and/or disadvantages of Serena's Facebook policy?
3. What do you see as the impact of Facebook on your relationship with other employees? If you see no impact, please explain as well.
4. Can you provide examples of features or applications of Facebook that help you build relationships with your co-workers?
5. What do you see as the impact of Facebook on your trust in your colleagues? If you see no impact, please explain as well.

Appendix E: Email letter of thanks

Dear X:

The interview is finished. Thank you very much for participating. Your contribution is very valuable.

Please be reminded that I will make the completed study available to you via email. This will happen in December. If you would like to contact me about anything, please feel free to do so at any time.

Sincerely,

Rianna Lee Sing