

Humans of Deloitte – Internal Campaign Launch and Thought Process

By Shilpa Maggon

As part of the Global Knowledge Management team at Deloitte in India, my role included promoting internal tools that helped employees find and exchange information (intelligence) that existed within the company, to drive successful client engagements. One such tool was Yammer, an internal social media platform that employees could use to find and connect with others, to learn from and collaborate.

For the company and its leaders, it was an important tool which could be leveraged to harness the collective experience of a global organization and eventually drive successful client engagements and win more business, therefore viewed as a business imperative. There had also been significant investment for the platform, with value being given to connecting with colleagues across geographies and time zones.

Even though Yammer was an interactive platform and the only such tool within Deloitte, the data and number of users suggested that this tool was not widely adopted – sign-ins were around 20%. This kind of platform was only as good as the people and conversations that were taking place on it. This was a problem and there was room for improvement. I decided to take this up as a challenge.

In my research I investigated with my team who had tried hard with various tactics to drive utilization but were unable to move the needle much further for global employees. Having limited success discouraged them from trying harder. I tried to rack my brain while browsing through external social media to see if I could get some ideas or insights that I could use to promote this internal social media tool in an innovative way.

My inspiration came from a page I followed on Facebook titled “Humans of New York” which featured stories of individuals from various walks of life. I enjoyed reading these stories with their human-interest angles, and so did millions of others. I had a moment of realization that the reason I connected with these stories was because people were sharing honest accounts of their lives – not just related to their successes but also about the struggles and failures that shaped them. The millions of followers for this page further served as an indicator of the success of this type of content. This stuck with me, and I kept thinking if this was something I could bring into a more professional setting and creatively use to drive more adoption.

I decided to interview a few people within Knowledge Management and write about how they brought their complete selves to work and how their personal lives, thoughts and actions helped shape their professional careers, highlighting unique, diverse perspectives. As human beings we are interested in people who are interesting, and that was the reason I felt this unique approach could work. An example of an employee I featured was a Risk Management professional who also rescued snakes outside of work. I thought about how I could combine these two things and highlight how his unique personal life contributed to his work with clients as well.

This first Humans of Deloitte story lived on a private group I created on Yammer. To test how people received this story, I invited around 60 individuals to this group from different business functions, including senior leaders. I got an almost immediate response from most members on how they learnt so much about this colleague and how it made for engaging content. I wrote a few more such

stories after interviewing others and got positive feedback each time. This was validation I was seeking – people engaging with these stories could help drive adoption of the tool.

Once I established this was the way to go, I opened the group to become public to the rest of the organization. Soon these stories started getting company-wide traction. People from across the globe were engaging and reaching out to the people featured and learning more about them. Leaders started reaching out to me to know more about who would be featured next and I even got nominations from teams.

I also simultaneously promoted Humans of Deloitte across the company through various channels but made sure this content was only available on Yammer – if you wanted to read it, you needed to sign in to Yammer. In six months, sign-ins had gone up by 40 percent! Followers for Humans of Deloitte reached 20,000. My Knowledge Management teammates were super excited about the usage of this tool. Other communication professionals started reading and engaging with these stories and wanted to replicate it for their organizations as well.

Through these stories, employees learnt more about what their colleagues did at work along with clients they worked with and started connecting with each other for help. I tracked conversations and frequent topics people engaged with and was able to see that our overall objective of leveraging internal IP to win external business was being realized. Eventually we had 8-10 success stories of practitioners using Yammer to land clients through engaging with others. These case studies provided more fodder to promote the tool. Overall content on Yammer also proliferated since people started logging in more and sharing their own content.

Humans of Deloitte eventually became a company-wide campaign and much beyond Yammer – it is currently used by the company to focus on its people-centric culture.