

IBM sees students' Facebook time as more than waste of time

January 20 2012, By Matt Krupnick

College students need not feel guilty about spending hours each day on Facebook or other social networks. Turns out it might help them get a job.

IBM recently started working with San Jose State [students](#) to come up with ways the technology giant could use its internal systems to better interact with employees and the public. About 100 graduate students and undergraduates in the fall analyzed IBM's social-business tools, learned how to use them and thought of ways they could be improved.

Among their ideas: Use "social business" software to tie together customer-service sites with internal bulletin boards where employees talk to one another.

The company hopes to involve students at more than 20 other universities this year.

The corporate world has come to realize young people are leading a "transformation moment" driven by [social networking](#), said Douglas Heintzman, IBM's director of social-business strategy.

"There's something big going on," he said. Twitter and Facebook have played major parts in the Occupy Wall Street and Arab Spring movements. "This phenomenon is taking down governments."

Global Business Services is considering how to implement some of the

San Jose students' ideas.

"How great is that?" said Larry Gee, a San Jose State instructor who worked with [IBM](#) on the university program. "It's not throwaway education, like an essay that will go into the circular file."

Social networking, and its social-business offspring, has become a fashionable field of study at universities. Student projects often focus on using social networks to solve everyday and business-related problems.

Three students at UC Berkeley's School of Information, for example, collaborated last year on a social-business project for their master's thesis.

The "Manufactured Serendipity" project focused on how companies accidentally can find innovation using social networks.

Companies such as [Google](#) reward employees for sparking innovation, and IBM, with 430,000 employees, wants to do the same thing, Heintzman said.

"The employee base provides a pool of information," he said.

The San Jose program paid off for 24-year-old Jackie Flowers, a master's student in biotechnology. She has taken on social-business duties at her biotech industry sales job recently, she said.

"[Facebook](#) is my generation," Flowers said. "I had never thought of it from a business perspective."

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