

# “Thinking differently” in a flat market and down economy to strengthen sales channels

## **TOSHIBA**

### **Leading Innovation >>>**

TABS manages product planning, marketing, sales, service support, and distribution for Toshiba copiers, facsimiles, multi-function printing products, network controllers, and toner products in the United States, Latin America, South America, and the Caribbean. The company is an independent operating company of Toshiba Corporation, the world's seventh largest electronics/electrical equipment company.

It's an irony frequently noted these days: strategic imperatives don't go away just because a company has fewer people and smaller budgets. The creative thinkers at Toshiba America Business Solutions (TABS) took charge in the face of their challenges with a simple mantra: “We just need to think differently.” This is the story about the intersection between thinking differently and acting differently—and the ease with which you can do that by engaging with Social Business Software.

## Business impetus for Social Business Software

With the market for their products reaching the saturation point, TABS was determined to adapt “on the run” and make significant course alterations to bolster revenue. A strategic initiative was launched to create revenue-generating, value-added programs and services in parallel with continuing strong product sales.

## Solution focus and goals

The key driver of sales for TABS is their dealer and subsidiary network. The traditional tools they used to communicate with their sales channels—such as email, voice mail, and their intranet portal—were simply too static for today’s fast paced business climate. Streamlining communications with, and among, their sales channels was the key focus of their solution search.

## Jive Social Business Software at work

Jive powers an online community called Toshiba eXCHANGE that serves as the dealers’ “go-to” venue and makes it easy for them to ask questions, exchange information, connect to experts, and share best practices. It also performs a critical function as the launching pad for the company’s new value-added services.

## Business value delivered

Three months after launch, TABS was seeing business results from Toshiba eXCHANGE:

- **Improved satisfaction of sales channel.** Surveys show that eXCHANGE met or exceeded the sales channel’s expectations; positive testimonials keep pouring in. Early metrics show favorable responses as well as increased activity and connectivity on Toshiba eXCHANGE when new product information is posted.
- **Faster and more unified dissemination of information about new products, services, partners, and strategic initiatives via eXCHANGE.** Launches on eXCHANGE included the recent rebranding campaign; the introduction of nine new monochrome models with emphasis on ecology and security; and the recently revealed, multi-tiered software strategy to aid dealers in positioning solutions.
- **Faster sales cycles and better results.** The ability to get answers quickly when in a competitive sales situation has helped close deals according to a growing number of testimonials.
- **More efficient and effective corporate operations.** TABS is able to maintain a higher level of channel support with a smaller staff.
- **Rapid development and adoption.** The ability to flip the switch in 30 days with a hosted solution enabled TABS to achieve a positive business impact more quickly.

## The backstory

### The perfect storm for creative thinking

The competition for multi-function products and other TABS solutions is fierce. As the market reached the saturation point, the company asked itself, how do we create new business and growth in this highly competitive environment? The short answer: value-added solutions and services.

As the marketing, sales, and support arm for the dealer and subsidiary network, the TABS corporate staff stays busy fielding product questions and a host of more technically oriented sales concerns around network configuration and software integration. In the wake of the company’s new strategic initiative to capture competitive advantage, they were also busy creating new revenue-generating programs and services. Then came the economic downturn.

The economic downturn forced many companies to reduce staff, limit budgets, and reorganize, and TABS was no exception. The difference was that Bill Melo, TABS vice president of Marketing & Enterprise Services & Solutions, provided a fresh perspective. Bill had just assumed responsibility for a newly reorganized team during this difficult time. He wanted to demonstrate to dealers/subsidiaries that the TABS vision of being a value-added provider would continue to be a prominent message despite the economic picture. He challenged his new team to “think differently” and to find the “silver lining.” The key message: dealers and subsidiaries are the company’s revenue engine. Now is not the time to think small.

To shake things up and foster collaboration among new department members, cross-functional project teams were formed. The Web 3.0 team that led to the deployment of the Toshiba eXCHANGE was one of the major project teams and would be a critical conduit for the messaging and ongoing support of these new strategic initiatives.

### A Web 3.0 team was formed

Co-lead by Terry Kristiansen and Khanh Pham, the Web 3.0 team focused on examining how a Web 3.0 initiative could help leverage institutional knowledge to make the sales network more effective without expanding resources. “We live and work in a knowledge economy,” says Terry Kristiansen, who heads up the TABS Education and Development Group. “We knew that 80% of the institutional knowledge lived in people’s heads, and we needed to find a way to document and leverage a good portion of that to keep the company from losing valuable information and know-how.”

It was a tall order and a short timeline: do this out of current budgets and unveil the results at the Dealer Summit in July—a short four months away. The team’s task was complicated not only by reduced corporate resources and little experience within the team on social business networks, but also by the fact that the sales network consisted of three separate channels: independent dealers, international distributors, and Toshiba-owned subsidiaries. Any new initiative to strengthen

product sales, needed to encourage the sharing of best practices among TABS authorized dealers and appeal to all the channels equally—or risk lopsided adoption.

## Under pressure and thinking out of the box

The Web 3.0 team quickly agreed that the traditional tools they used to communicate with their sales channels—such as email, voice mail, and their intranet—were simply too slow and too static. Product marketing was answering the same questions over and over on a case-by-case basis. The company needed some way to make it easier to broadcast information, share successes, and leverage relationships and corporate knowledge more broadly.

As project leader, Terry first had her team look at a home-grown solution, but the team discarded the solution as too limited. They next looked into using a common enterprise application but quickly realized that its user licensing model, accessibility, and capabilities were not the appropriate solution for this particular project.

The Web 3.0 team was familiar with the benefits of Social Business Software. “We had been investigating some innovative ideas around the creation of online communities to better train and support our dealers,” says Khanh, who is director of National Accounts Pricing & Program Management. “We knew that the Web 3.0 technologies could help us put more feet on the street and deliver more real-world value. We just weren’t sure how to get there. Frankly, we thought we’d be doing well if we made a reasonably well-thought-out recommendation to IT in 60 days.”

## How about plug-and-play products?

Plug-and-play products offering software as a service (SaaS) looked promising because they offered various kinds of community software at an affordable cost. “We made calls to a number of plug-and-play vendors, and they simply didn’t get back to us in a timely fashion for our tight development deadline,” laughs David Sutton, TABS program manager, Professional Services.

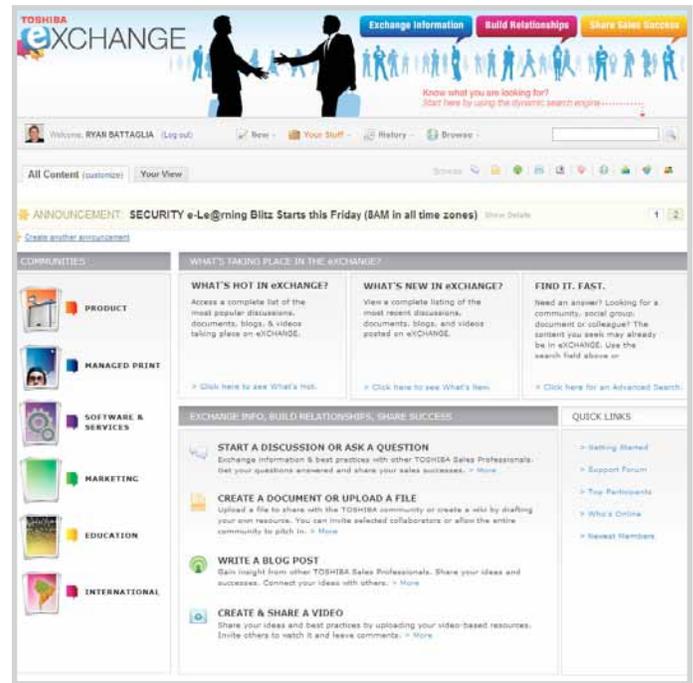
What about Jive? “Initially we didn’t even consider Jive,” explains Terry, “because we felt that, as the number one vendor, they wouldn’t be interested in our small project. And we thought they would be too expensive. But we only had a month or so left before our deadline, so we said, ‘let’s give them a try.’”

## Flipping the switch 30 days later

“Not only was Jive Software responsive,” remembers Khanh, “but they understood our goals and objectives immediately. They very quickly drilled down to show us how the Jive platform could meet our requirements.”

Jive Software met their looming timeline as well. Because Jive’s hosted solution is faster to implement and has less overhead, TABS chose it over an on-premise solution. The TABS integration team, led by Ryan Battaglia, TABS curriculum development manager in the Education and Development Group, did a good job promoting the solution by creating teaser ads and a video promo that clearly positioned the capabilities and benefits of what was ultimately named Toshiba eXCHANGE.

“We flipped the switch after 30 days in beta,” says Terry. “We had zero issues.” The project team says that engagement with Jive Professional Services and the Community Playbook was pivotal to solidifying their business goals and clarifying everyone’s roles. Team member Ryan Battaglia gives this advice to anyone engaging with Jive. “If you’re doing it with Jive, don’t worry about it—just do it. They have a flexible platform that’s very stable—you’ll get where you need to be.”



A look at the Toshiba eXCHANGE community reveals a variety of entry points that helps users quickly find what they need.

## Toshiba eXCHANGE transforms the dealer network

TABS use of Social Business Software is a bread and butter application—enabling users to ask pertinent questions and quickly receive answers—addressing common sales concerns that they encounter in the field. The following are examples of the types of questions asked:

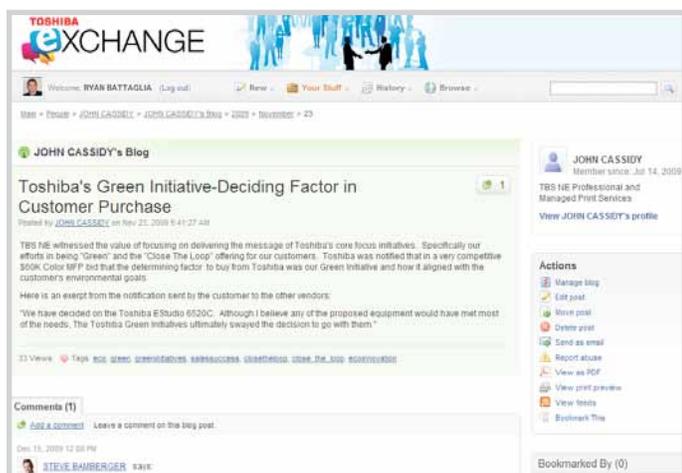
- I need help developing a Total Managed Print Services (MPS) program for my dealership—what resources does Toshiba offer to help?
- Does anyone have any successful strategies for selling a color system to a health-care provider?
- How do I calibrate the e-STUDIO color systems?
- Has anyone had any experience printing banners from a Mac?

And the answers came pouring in. Over 10 responses on the banner question, for example, including valuable tips and tricks and an unsolicited step-by-step video posted by a fellow eXCHANGE user.

“In addition, an almost immediate, overwhelming need to connect specialized functions manifested itself in the spontaneous creation of private groups of individuals who wanted to connect to peers,” said Steven Bamberger, national training manager, E-LEARNING.

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For example, dealers typically have only one or two color imaging specialists, he explains. “Now color specialists have hundreds of peers across the country with whom they can exchange pertinent sales information and experiences in a private group on Toshiba eXCHANGE.”



An example of a blog communicating a sales success because of Toshiba's "Green Initiative."

## Managing Facebook perceptions

Like many companies who adopt Social Business Software, the TABS team had to confront a lingering perception that they were creating an internal social network like Facebook and that the lure of social media would get in the way of doing business. Usage metrics quickly put that concern to rest. “We were able to show that the average user got on and off Toshiba eXCHANGE in 10 minutes,” says Steven. “That made it pretty obvious that they are quickly finding the important information they need during the day and getting back to business.”

## Economies of scale

The economies of scale became immediately evident, Khanh points out. For a company like TABS, which operates in a knowledge economy, this was key. The conversation threads on Toshiba eXCHANGE blossomed and, because the conversations weren't happening in the limited confines of email and voicemail, collective knowledge was leveraged widely—lightening the load of the sales and support team noticeably.

What's more, individuals across all the territories and channels seemed eager to share their expertise. The pent-up need to connect was endemic, and it created a spontaneous groundswell of activity. And, because so many of the community members were “born digital,” information sharing was creative as well as instructive, often including video instructions on addressing a product or network nuance.

## Measuring success—now and in the future

Early metrics revealed that adoption was immediate and huge, and user participation continues to trend upwards. Three months after launch, eXCHANGE was a hotbed of activity and had successfully met the metrics the team had established for level of engagement, how often content was posted and viewed, and how often videos were posted and viewed:

- 1,892 users participating in over 124 online communities
- 52 users created groups
- Over 735 discussion threads with over 27,136 views and 1,641 replies
- 303 user documents posted with 4,950 views
- 115 videos with over 1,443 views

The baseline metrics are early measures of the community's vitality and health, and Toshiba continues to work with Jive Professional Services to establish more detailed benchmarks. The team is particularly excited about getting a better understanding of their sales networks' engagement and sentiment revealed by an optional Jive module that allows Jive customers to track conversations around specific key topics and key interest areas.

## Big bang at the July Regional Summits

Bill Melo charged his teams to think differently, and they did. If the Toshiba sales network thought that the July 2009 Regional Summits were going to be slimmed down versions of past annual sales meetings due to the lagging economy, they couldn't have been more wrong. Dealers and subsidiaries at the Summits saw an invigorated company with new ideas, new technologies, new products, and new services. They also saw a company fully committed to the success of its sales network and confident in its future and the future of the industry. In a flat market and tough economy, Toshiba acted differently by looking for a way to do more with less and seizing the opportunity to launch a Social Business Software initiative. The payoff? They not only streamlined their corporate communications but helped their revenue-generating sales channels become more efficient and effective.

## Jive. First in Social.

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