

Outlook Social Networking Connectors

by Natalie Huha

In the latest release of Outlook 2010, users are embracing features such as Conversation view, Group Schedule view and Quick Steps. However, nothing has taken center stage for discussion more than the Outlook Social Connector (OSC) in the People Pane. The OSC brings a view of your clients' and colleagues' social activity straight to your Inbox.

The OSC is a simple add-in that creates a place to gather activity from Microsoft-partnered social networking websites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, MySpace and, as of July 2010, WindowsLive.

As you read your e-mail messages, you can glance down at the People Pane to view an aggregated collection of the recipient's social activity. Keep in mind, the social activity displayed is based on which sites you have permitted to connect via your individual social networking account(s).

The ability to stay socially connected creates a dynamic and immediate picture of your contact's activity. This could prove to be extremely beneficial for developing, maintaining and building relationships in a new world of social communications. On the flip side, it is important to understand the public and privacy settings of these sites.

Two key areas to understand, as referenced on Microsoft's Outlook Social Connector website are:

- Social networks can only match the e-mail addresses if they are already known to the social network (*i.e.*, a social

network such as Facebook won't know a person's e-mail address if it is not already associated with an account on Facebook).

- The information from a social network that's available in Outlook is based upon the person's privacy settings for that social network.

For firms planning to migrate to Outlook 2010, the decision to implement the Outlook Social Connector should be based on firm policies, culture and business needs. Users will also require proper training and education. However, if you choose not to implement social communications via OCS, think about what happens if your competition does choose to implement it. **ILTA**



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