Foreword

Social beasts as humans are, personal relationships and their intertwined networks are at the core of business. The foundational concept of exchange of product and services stands on human relationships that must be tended and developed, not just acknowledged. And technology has systematically transformed the landscape of business and personal networking, increasing its rate, its scope, and transforming societies and the nature of social networks in its course. It is coincidental but fortunate that this book's editors are based in Portugal – a country whose Renaissance seafaring ventures led the former Daily Express foreign correspondent, the late Martin Page, to call it "The First Global Village." Back then in the Age of Discovery, astronomical and navigational technology knitted the world tighter, and the ensuing transformation is reflected today still. The walnut-sized caravels and carracks were not trying to change the nature of the world and human relationships, but still they did. So perhaps while modern social networking software seems pitiful in comparison, we should heed this historical note and remember how tiny technical solutions may generate goliath consequences.

This book provides a rich set of perspectives, analyses, and examples on the application of social networking to businesses and organizations. The relevance of insights that can be acquired from this content must not be dismissed, for the walnut-sized pieces of technology at the heart of most social networking software strike at the heart of social networking, and therefore, at the heart of business. The typical veil of distance is being lifted from our contacts: business contacts are not just logos on cards and ties, voices on the phone, hands over the counter or desk. Not just someone approached professionally at the occasional talk over agreements and prices, or strategically at a networking event. Rather, business contacts are now evermore present in their customers' and partners' lives as people who liked a Web page or comment; as humans, who booed a crime, who shared their tastes and thoughts on cultural or everyday items and events. While a quagmire of public relations, not much can be gained by shying away from these challenges. The human dimension of business is now part of its credibility and public trust. As companies that occasionally try to entrench themselves behind corporate communication walls find out, customers and stakeholders now discuss matters publicly, and not just with their close friends, family, and co-workers: we know what flavour of ice-cream, book styles, music pieces, and opinion pieces our social networking contacts enjoy or abhor – or at least, what they want the world to know they enjoy and abhor.

Bound together more tightly by social networks, this new landscape makes one wonder if a "selling the Brooklyn Bridge" scenario cannot be again in the wings for the non-software networked, as people's awareness of their environs extends dramatically towards more geographically and culturally-diverse contacts, experienced closer and proximal by the added dimension of human substance provided by social networks, and the trust, confidence, and credibility that such entails. While a worrying proposi-

tion for some, I embrace it as we must always do for the future. Not just for its inevitability, but for its promise of a closer, more humane society – and for businesses and organizations, of novel landscapes of opportunity.

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