

An Interview With Rishi Chandra, Product Manager For Google Enterprise

Hello, my name is Lon Safko, co-author of *The Social Media Bible*, published by John Wiley & Sons, the most comprehensive book ever written on the subject of Social Media. And today we are here with Rishi Chandra, Project Manager of *Google Enterprises*, and we are going to be speaking today about *Google Apps*, Productivity Tools and Social Media, of course.



So, Rishi, really it is great to have you here today.

RC: Thanks for having me.

LS: Totally cool. Let's get started! Can you tell our listeners a little bit about who you are and what your background is?

RC: Yes, I am a Product Manager here at Google. I have been here for about two years, and I have been working on *Google Apps* ever since I started and it is a really cool project. I am really excited about working on it.

Prior to coming to Google, I just got my MBA from Stanford. I spent two years over in Palo Alto. And I had worked for a consulting company called Bain & Company. So that's it about my background.



LS: Okay and how long have you been with Google?

RC: About two years.

LS: Two years, okay! So you head up *Google Apps*. Can you tell us a little bit about *Google Apps*?

RC: Yes! The *Google Apps* is a set of business applications, which are hosted on the internet, or hosted on *Cloud*. The idea is, if you have heard of some of Google's more famous consumer products like *GML's*, *Google Calendar* and *Google Talk* and *Google Blog*, we actually take those consumer technologies and package it and bundle it in a way that enterprises and businesses can actually use it.

So, for example, instead of having a Gmail.com email address where you use the G-mail product, you can use your own company's email address, and access the power of your company's email infrastructure. That what *Google Apps* does at a [01:51.2]

LS: Oh, okay, okay. And then you also work with *Google Docs*.

RC: Yes, so as I said there are two core components to *Google Apps*. There is a messaging component, which includes G-mail, Docs, and Calendar. And on the collaboration side, which is the other element of Apps, includes Google Sites and Google Docs and a new product we have just recently launched, called *Google Video for Business*.

LS: *Google Video for Business*.

RC: Yes.

LS: Oh, I have never seen that.

RC: Yes, the difficult thing is we launched only two to three weeks ago, and we are really excited about taking, again, this idea of Google's Consumer Technologies and, in this case, Utube and being able to apply it to a business setting.

So being able to allow companies to upload their own video content and share it within their company, just as you see Utube do in the consumer world for them.

LS: Oh, that's pretty cool. And I think I did see that in this particular application it has a higher resolution, a higher quality.

RC: Yes, so we have done a couple of things that make it work in a business environment. They have done the across all of the services that we are talking about here. For businesses, they love the fact that we have very easy to use tools, very powerful tools, which can be hosted on the web. They get all the benefits of Google hosting it for you. You do not have to worry about it. As well as the fact that it works in a browser. So you do not have to install or maintain any type of hardware or software.

At the same time, businesses have a higher level of expectation around certain features than they do in the consumer world. So, for example, you need to have more control, more security and more functionality targeted for specific business-use cases. And that's actually what we have done with the video product, for example. We actually have it at higher resolution, it's more secure because you can actually share it with a set of people, and only a small set of people so that they will only be the ones to have access to that information. And we have IC administrative controls in there so that your IC administrator can administer the product just as you could with any other product.

LS: And that is exciting! I just love using *Google Docs* on projects, because I can set up different projects and get different people permissions. Anything we do for presentations or spreadsheets or Word, we actually can control it and collaborate.

I have one project, well actually *The Social Media Bible* where we have John Wiley accessing chapters and spreadsheets in New York and I am in Phoenix and I have people all over the country contributing, and it's all right there and it's all easy to use.

RC: Yes, and that is really one of the key benefits of *Cloud* computing. It is this idea that you have a single place for your information (so in this case it is on the internet) and most people can access it from whatever geography there in, whatever company they are a part of, or whatever device they are accessing it from; whether it be a mobile device or a computer or a laptop

That is one of the great benefits is that anyone can access it at any point in time. The other benefit is (as you were talking about) this idea of collaborating with multiple people in different places. You know, the biggest challenge we heard from both businesses and consumers is this idea of collaboration through email is a pretty broken process.

LS: Umm huh.

RC: So, for example if four or five people wanted to work on a document today, most people actually just email that out to five different people; each of them downloads an individual copy of that document, work off this (their own copy) and send it back. Now that one person has to recompile those different changes, and then if multiple people are working off of it with different revisions, you can see yourself getting into a pretty easy nightmare, pretty quickly.

And that's really easier and we are thinking of a new way for people to interact with each other and actually share information and collaborate on information. And that is really one of the key benefits of *Cloud* computing.

LS: And that really is the whole thrust of Social Media is being able to use user-generated content, trusted networks, some kind of "pulling people together" in collaboration.

RC: Exactly, and that is one of the key benefits that we recently launched earlier this year; a product called *Google Sites*.

LS: Yes!

RC: And what that product does is that it is actually a wiki. Now what a wiki means is that anyone can edit a piece of, like, a webpage for example. And with that webpage, you can easily create multiple pieces of data in one single place. So for example, if I have a Project Team, I can embed a *Google Calendar* in that *Google Site*, I can embed a document associated with that Project Team, I can associate videos with that Project Team. You can bring together all of these different types of rich, social information into one single place and have people collaborate on it in a very easy way.

LS: And that is something that I really appreciate about *Google Sites*. It is that you can bring an image; you can bring in any kind of rich media. And it is not just like a webpage where you are going to view it. You actually can access into these individual documents, make changes to them, and then really quite easily "click" and they are uploaded and updated right on the site.

RC: Yes, actually it is a monumental change with how people interact with webpages today. Most people, when they hear the word "webpage" they get really intimidated. It certainly makes them think of things like HTML and how complicated those are. *Google Sites* wants to make it as easy to edit a webpage as it is to use "edit" in a document.

Anyone can go do it who has permission to that site, and it is as straightforward as editing a document. You can edit text, you can pull different pieces of information in very quickly and easily, and with one button you can publish it to the set of people you want to share that information with. That's the real philosophy behind *Google Sites*.

LS: And that is so exciting because finally you are democratizing, you are setting up a system where anybody can access webpages and content. Because you are right, HTML and Javascripting...I've spent the last 10 years of my career just trying to keep up with it. But using *Google Sites* and *Google Docs* is just so easy. It is drag-and-drop, and click.

RC: Exactly! It is a great product because it brings together a lot of different places that use information and really highlights to business users in particular. There are certain technologies that they are just not use to using, but it really does enable much richer collaboration. Video is a great example of this.

You will find in the consumer world, video is actually very pervasive. Lots of people interact with video content all the time, but somehow it never made the transition to the business world. And what we believe is that there are a couple of reasons for that.

One is that it is just not simple and easy to do so; and that is where Google can really change the game there with our simple user-interfaces, which are incredibly powerful, to enable much richer collaboration. But at the same time it is incredibly expensive for most business to do something like that, because video in a very intensive application and most companies do not have the time, the bandwidth, or even the [08:44.9] to actually make it work for them.

And that is really where Google Apps can change the game. We can bring these really great, compelling, new Social Technologies into the enterprise and do so in a way that is very cost-effective for most businesses.

LS: And the emphasis really is on cost-affection, because if you were trying to do this six, seven, eight years ago, you had to have a huge bandwidth, you had to have huge disc drives to store video (because it is so intensive), and most companies, frankly, just could not afford it.

And that was the beauty part of Utube and now you have taken it a step further and given us business-quality video.

RC: Exactly, and it is pretty amazing actually, when you think of what's happened in the consumer world where storage has become much and much less of an issue for most users. In the business world, it actually still is a really big problem

One of the greatest examples and what really highlights that is, if you go to Gmail.com, for free you can sign up for a 7-gigabyte email storage on your inbox.

LS: Amazing!

RC: And most companies today still only give 500 megabytes to their users, even though they pay lots and lots of money to actually make the technology work for their employees. And somehow we have gone completely backwards.

LS: (Laughter)

RC: And that is why Google technology can really change the game here. With the premier edition of *Google Apps*, we give our users 25 gigabytes of email storage, which is just monumental, compared to what most businesses already give their users. So we can really change the game by giving more storage at a better price and giving more tools that actually incorporate these new Social Technologies in an easy way for the end-user.

LS: That truly is amazing! With the suite of products that you have it almost doesn't make sense for businesses to do it themselves; to buy the applications, to buy the storage and buy bandwidth. You provide it and it is top quality!

RC: Yes and the other element of this is that not only do you not have to buy hardware and software, but also Google will maintain it for you. And another benefit of the software as a service model, (this idea of *Cloud* computing) is that we continue to innovate and update the products over time and there is no need to install any new updates with it. Because it is over a browser, we can actually automatically update and add new features to *Google Spreadsheets*, or actually enable a chat in G-mail.

All those new features are rolled out all the time. In fact, we are actually trying to figure out what is the best way to communicate all the new and improved changes and functionality we are including in *Google Apps*. So we have to build an RSS feed to actually indicate to our users what changes are taking place. In 2007 alone, we had 40 major feature enhancements added; and this year already (halfway through the year), we've already surpassed that.

LS: Wow!

RC: We continue to innovate really fast in this new world.

LS: That is amazing! Let me just emphasize a little bit about *Cloud* computing. Many people still are not familiar with that terminology.

In the old days up until recently when you wanted to do work processing, or spreadsheets or presentations, you would have to go out and buy the software and then each year or so you would have to go out and pay again for the upgrades. And you would have to install it and then there was conflicts in your PC, you would have to have the memory in the CPU to drive it.

But, really, what you have done is take a completely different approach by putting all these applications available through a standard browser. I can travel anywhere in the world, anytime, log on, have access to any of the software, any of my documents, from anywhere in the world.

RC: Exactly! It is that simple and easy. No hardware to install, no software to install, and no security updates that need to be patched in. It just automatically is there for you and you do not need to worry about it.

That is really what we think, that with these tools that is how it should be done in most companies. Most companies actually do not have the bandwidth to really invest in with their IT dollars and to make sure that all this works. It is not a differentiator for the company at this point in time. Every company needs email. Why don't you move it to a service where Google can handle it for you, and then you can take those resources you have today and you can actually apply the things that actually do generate revenue for your business.

LS: And that is a great way of putting it. Don't put all your money into IT just maintaining antiquated systems, put you money into creativity and generating business, and let Google worry about the backend.

RC: Exactly! And I think we have had some great progress over the last 18 months, which is actually when we launched this product. We have over 500,000 businesses actually running on *Google Apps* today, including very large customers, like Google.com itself actually powers their entire IT infrastructure off *Google Apps*.

We have thousands of universities actually running *Google Apps*, including top name brands, like Notre Dame, Northwestern and USC. I think we have had this tremendous success over the last 18 months, and I look forward to having even more success going forward.

LS: And that's a really great point that you just brought up about schools. I was just about to ask that. I have to think that for the student, the teacher, the professor, and the administration; that something like *Google Apps* has to be a dream come true!

RC: Yes, it actually is. With universities today, we actually provide the service free. So it turns out that there is a great story with Northwestern, for example. It turned out the most of the students were already forwarding their email to a Gmail email address already because they just hated their internal email system. And so that's why the Northwestern IT departments said, "You know what, maybe we should reevaluate why we are investing dollars in something that students do not even want to use." And that is what brought them to *Google Apps* and today everyone is using *Google Apps*, they love it and tons and tons of more schools are actually signing up all the time.

LS: That's amazing! Really, the trick here is that almost everything that you do is free.

RC: Yes, exactly. We have two editions of the product. There is the standard edition which is primarily targeted for a non-profit organization, small businesses and infinity groups, and that is the free product. And we also have the premiere Edition which is the business product which includes higher levels of support and [14:55.3] associated with the product itself, API's integrating with your existing IT infrastructure and includes getting more capacity and more storage across the suite.

LS: And for the individual, the small business owner, the Mom and Pop, under 10 employees, the writer, the author; really Gmail, *Google Apps*, all of the things we talking about; that is completely free.

RC: That is completely free. If you have access to some very powerful productivity tools, like *Google Docs*, which includes documents, presentations and spreadsheets; you get *Google Sites* included with that. You have the Calendar solution, you get an email solution. So it is a very robust set of tools that you can actually use to power your small business, or to power your individual life as well.

LS: Geez, wow! And the other thing, too, is if one of our listeners wants to go out and set themselves up a Gmail account and to actually get involved in *Google Docs*, it is a pretty simple process?

RC: Yes. It should take you less than a few minutes to actually get up and running. If you want a new Gmail.com email address or if you have your own business company address as well, we set it up so that anyone can get up and running pretty quickly. Once you do, you can start creating new users and these new accounts are employed in a very simple way.

What is amazing is every time you create one of these new accounts, with that you are getting 7 gigabytes of storage on email, you are getting a powerful Calendar solution, and you are getting a document solution and *Google Sites*, *Google Video*. It is pretty amazing how quickly and easy it is to get up and running.

LS: And everything is interchangeable, too. You just put it into *Google Sites* and you can put your work processing, your spreadsheets, your presentations, JPEG's, all into this one package.

RC: Exactly. We try to make sure that it be a uniform set of tools that people use, because we found that everyone wants to use different aspects of the tool in different areas of their lives. So that is why we want to make it a uniform experience across *Google Apps*.

LS: And that is a good point, that not only are these tools useful for you business, but it is also useful for you personal life. Keeping the rosters of baseball teams or keeping tract of events for club and organizations.

RC: Yes, and it is perfect for that. I did *Google Spreadsheets* all the time for managing going to a bachelor party with my friends, and how we coordinated schedules. It is such an easy way to collaborate. It is just very compelling across your personal and your business plan.

LS: I love it! Is the new *Chrome*; is that part of your group?

RC: So *Chrome* is a new project that we recently launched. It is a new web browser that is available to day. It is not specifically tied into Google Apps. One of the advantages of *Chrome* is that it is incredibly fast to run a very complex web application and *Google Apps* is an example of that.

So *Google Apps* runs across any browser and that is the goal for *Google Apps*. We want to run across Internet [17:52.7] or *Firefox*, *Safari*, or *Google Cloud*. Whatever the user wants to use as a web browser, we intend to support.

LS: And that is one of the things that I do really love about you, also. It is that for different applications, I will use both *Safari* and *Firefox*, and everything comes up exactly the same. I have never had any compatibility issue with any browser. You just work everywhere.

RC: Yes, exactly. We want to fit where the users are, and again, that is the story of Cloud computing. We want to be as accessible as possible, regardless of what browser you are coming from, what device you are coming from, what geography you are coming from.

LS: So you are making the technology just completely transparent.

RC: Yes. Exactly.

LS: And anywhere in the world. I do a lot of speaking, so from week to week I may be in any part of the country or anywhere in North America. I just love the fact that whether I am in a hotel room or the ballroom, all I have to do is log on and I have access to all the information instantly, just with my Wi-Fi card.

RC: There are two great examples of that. A lot of people are more mobile today and they need to access information wherever they are. The real appeal of it is that the information should not be tied to a laptop and it should *Google Apps* not be tied to a desktop. The information should be able to follow you wherever you go.

And that really is what computing is all about. Your data is where ever you want it to access that data. That is the benefit of having your information inside Cloud. Another major trend that is happening is this notion of people are much more global in who they work with all the time. So I am going to have people who are in China or who are in Europe who I collaborate with and you just need to make the tools incredibly easy so that whatever geography you are working with it will just work with you.

LS: And that is absolutely true. Having access to your information not only do you have to have multiple copies of all the different applications that you are running on you laptop, on your desktop; but you constantly have to be synchronizing the two hard drives, especially if you travel. And then it is inevitable, you end up on the road and you are saying, “Oh my gosh, that word processing document isn’t on my laptop, it’s back on my desktop and I do not have access.”

RC: Exactly and that’s one of the killer features that *Google Apps* can provide. Wherever you are, you can get access to you information. And, again, this is the philosophy of Google. You want to made information accessible. That is the mission statement of Google and this is one of the key ways to do that. Wherever you are, you have access to your information; and it is secure access. So you have access to it and you can go and find it where ever you want.

LS: I like that key word that you put in there; secure, making all your information secure. And you can set different levels and actually pick who has access to what information through password protection.

RC: Yeah, and again that is one of the real advantages here. Think about how many times your laptop has been lost or broken or you hear about stories of laptops that are stolen and all the data on the laptop is itself. And the huge advantage of *Google Apps* is this. This actually happened to our President at Google. His laptop was stolen from a baseball game he attended and all the information was in *Cloud*. He got a new laptop and then opened up his browser and accessed all his information in a secure way. No one was able to get any of that information because it was all in the *Cloud*.

LS: You’ve got to love that. I mean, geez, how safe can your information be.?

RC: It is just a different model of how your data is being protected and again, Google has consider itself one of the most secure, if not the most secure, platform on the web and we continue to invest heavily on making sure that we have security policies in place to protect your data.

LS: That’s totally cool. So, really, I am just going to emphasize one more time, that the listeners need to really under that *Cloud Computing* is taking all of the applications, all the your data and information and is pulling it out of your laptop or desktop and is actually putting it out into cyberspace so you, or anyone you choose, can have access to all these applications and all this data, from any place in the world.

RC: That’s exactly right!

LS: Can you give me any specific of a company that has used it, that has given you some kind of a success story.

RC: Yes, we have several companies we have been working with and actually, they are very large companies. Bannina, that is Bannina SCI, is a large contract manufacturing company. They are actually a 10 billion dollar revenue company, they have actually rolled out *Google Apps* to 1,000 of their users, and they intend to roll out to up to 10,000 of their users over the next couple of years.

And the real key for them was two things. 1. It was a huge cost element for them to being able to provide these tools in a much more affective price point than they could with an on-presence standard solution that are available today. But the other side of it is they are a very global company and they need to have people collaborate in real time across these different geographies in a very simple way. This notion of having your information in the *Cloud* was one key aspect to them in terms of how they seek collaboration going forward in the future. So that is a great example.

Another company is a company called Taylor Woodrow. They are a construction company, actually based in the UK. From their perspective, they actually found that they are going to save £1,000,000 just by going to *Google Apps* for the messaging side, over the next three years. That is direct cost-saving that they are going to achieve, and on top of that they are still getting all these great tools beyond just email. There are getting these collaborative tools, they are getting a better *Calendar Solution*, they are getting instant messaging solutions, as well.

These are two great examples of companies that we have been working with and that are very large corporate customers that really have seen the value of *Google Apps*.

LS: And that is another good point that you bring up. Too often through these interviews that I have been doing, we tend to look at Social Media and technology as being US-central, and we have a tendency, as Americans, to ignore the rest of the world. And you just brought in a really good point, that it is a British-based company. So when you are talking about collaboration, you are really talking about global collaboration.

RC: Exactly right. These companies and lots of companies today and even in small businesses today we are finding have mobile workers and exactly they have to collaborate with international suppliers or customers, or what have you. They are not just based in a single geography anymore. Many companies have to work across geographies in a simple way.

LS: Geez. Is there anything else that is coming down the pike? Anything that you are working on, any other information that you would like to talk about, about *Cloud* and *Google Apps*? Anything you can share with us.

RC: Well, you know, as I alluded to before, I think the real killer piece about *Google Apps* is that we are going to continue to innovate all the time on this product. To be quite honest, what I am excited about is not just what we have today (which I think is an incredible product) but I think two years from now we are going to have an even better product.

And the great thing is all the uses that we have in *Google Apps* are automatically going to get those updates free and they do not have to install any hardware or software to make that work. And that's what excites me. As we get new technologies out there, whether it is a Social Networking tool that really makes progress in the

consumer world, but has not made progress in the business world, we can start bringing those technologies in and actually doing it in a very quick and easy way, because of this innovation model.

LS: You just have to love that. That is terrific! I know that our listeners, as soon as they are done with this podcast are going to want to run over and type something in. Where is the best place to start to get a Gmail account or to get involved in *Google Docs*?

RC: so if you are an IT administrator or a business owner, the place to go is Google.com/apps. That is where you can get information about the products that will enable your business.

If you are an individual user, want to get up and running on *Google Apps*, then go straight to Google.com/apps or gmail.com directly, and you can access them both from either of those.

LS: That is pretty easy. That is really terrific. I would really like to thank you, Rishi Chandra, Product Manager at *Google Enterprises*, for being here today and talking about *Google Apps* and *Cloud Computing* and *Social Media*.

Thank you so much!

RC: Yes, thanks for having me.

LS: This is totally cool and such great information.

This has been Lon Safko, the co-author of *The Social Media Bible*. Be sure to check out our other valuable media tactics, tools and strategies that can be found in *The Social Media Bible* book and its companion website, www.thesocialmediabible.com.

For more information about me, Lon Safko, why don't you go over to my site at www.lonsafko.com.

And, again Rishi, truly thank you again for being here today.

RC: Again, thanks for having me.