Chapter 8
Towards a Model of Employee Weblog Usage: A Process-Oriented Analysis of Antecedents and Consequences

Philip Raeth
EBS Universität für Wirtschaft und Recht, Germany

Stefan Smolnik
EBS Universität für Wirtschaft und Recht, Germany

ABSTRACT
The recent rise of Web 2.0 ideas, principles, and applications has significantly affected the communication and interaction in social networks. While Web 2.0’s Internet usage and benefits have been investigated, certain questions are still unanswered: whether benefits such as enhanced collaboration and knowledge sharing also apply in an organizational context and whether there are more, still uncovered, benefits. Since research on the corporate adoption and use of Web 2.0 technologies is still in its early stages, neither qualitative nor quantitative models that could provide answers have been proposed. As a starting point for further developing this research stream, the authors collected and reviewed the literature on internal corporate blogging. Then the framework by Ives et al. (1980) was chosen to categorize the identified 25 articles for further analysis. The paper describes building a conceptual model and identifying the antecedents and consequences of employee weblog usage within corporations. The findings of the review suggest that employee blogging in corporations is a social and an organizational phenomenon. Individual perceptions and attitudes, peers, and cultures have a crucial influence on weblog usage, while the organization and its culture provide a framework.

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INTRODUCTION

The Web 2.0 movement made its first public appearance at the O’Reilly Media Web 2.0 Conference in 2004. Since then, Web 2.0 has not only been discussed in the mass media, but has also drawn the attention of academia, starting with the ACM’s Communications (Vol. 47:12) special issue on the “Blogosphere.”

In addition, Web 2.0 tools have also started gaining popularity within the corporate world. A 2008 study by Gartner indicated that that year half of all US companies would use wikis (Morse, 2008). Other companies choose to implement weblogs or social network applications (Cross, Liedtka, & Weiss, 2005). The motive for using such software in the corporate environment is usually to improve communication with customers and business partners, and to encourage collaboration within the company (Bughin & Manyika, 2007).

Although the corporate Web 2.0 research community has made progress recently, the research area is not yet well structured. Most studies have an exploratory character, investigating the understanding of Web 2.0 tools’ internal use. Some studies focus on organizational characteristics, others on user characteristics related to weblogs, while still others investigate the content of weblogs. In order to promote further understanding, the factors influencing weblog usage as well as benefits resulting from its use need to be assessed. The antecedents and consequences of system usage have been an issue in research for several decades (Andrew; Burton-Jones & Straub, 2006; Ives et al., 1980; Trice & Treacy, 1988). We therefore align our study with this research stream and explore weblog usage through a literature review examining events prior and subsequent to usage.

A literature review can be applied to a mature topic as well as to one with a much smaller body of literature. In the latter case, the goal of a literature review is initial theorizing (Torraco, 2005; Webster & Watson, 2002). Our aim is therefore to gather literature that discusses the antecedents and consequences of corporate weblog usage. We ultimately propose a conceptual model summarizing our findings.

The next section describes the background of weblogs in corporate environments and of system usage in general. Subsequently, we briefly present the foundations required to build our conceptual model. This includes the conceptual framework to which we refer, our perspective on literature reviews, and the basics of process theory. Thereafter, we describe the chosen research method and the pursued research process. Next, we present and discuss the results of our study. The conclusion summarizes the results and outlines the implications, limitations, and contribution of this research.

FOUNDATIONS

Corporate Weblogs

Weblogs are websites in which an author, or a group of authors, publishes articles sporadically, or at regular intervals. Weblogs on the Internet are often created by individuals or small groups. To date, research on weblogs has focused on the motivations for blogging (Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, & Swartz, 2004), the genres, and types – such as use within public relations and politics (Kelleher, 2008; Trammell, 2007) –, as well as technical aspects (Du & Wagner, 2006). The number of corporate weblogs is increasing steadily (Du & Wagner, 2006) and their application areas are very diverse. Some corporate weblogs are only for internal use, but companies also apply this technology to market communications and public relation tasks (Cross et al., 2005).

System Usage

System usage has received wide attention in the information systems (IS) research community. Researchers have focused on a variance-based and process perspective. Variance research has to date