ABSTRACT

The developments of new technologies, new scientific initiatives and a new globalized market are giving rise to new forms of collaboration, referred to as mass collaboration. This phenomenon is mainly derived from communities and self-organization, and is based on Web 2.0 technologies, services and tools. This new form of collaboration and technologies are giving rise of emergent social software platforms (ESSP’s) that are adopted by firms worldwide. The main aim of this research is to understand how firms are using such new technologies and collaborative efforts to assist knowledge sharing to achieve objectified knowledge. Central to this research is the proposed knowledge sharing cycle model, which has three main stages - internalization, externalization, and objectification. This model is adapted based on the findings of a case study of internal social media strategy of IBM Corporation. The findings indicate that ESSP’s can be used to support knowledge sharing practices and to help convert knowledge into its different forms in enhancing knowledge acquisition.

Keywords: E 2.0, Emergent Social Software Platforms (ESSP), Knowledge Sharing, Mass Collaboration, Social Media, Web 2.0

1. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society, collaboration is common, as it is proven to be effective for solving problems, building consensus, and easing decision-making processes (Straus & Layton, 2002). Historically, it has been governed through collaboration hierarchies, in which every contributor is controlled and supervised by other top participants, such as employees dominated by managers and customers controlled by organizations (Tapscott & Williams, 2006). However, through new technologies and scientific initiatives, new forms of collaboration emerge in the global market, predominantly initiated by communities and self-organizing agents. Organizations struggle to develop competitive solutions against challenges, such as user satisfaction, and the demand for relevant knowledge, useful applications and higher R&D costs (Wikhamn, Ljungberg, Bergquist, & Kuschel, 2011).
This form of collaboration, known herein as mass collaboration (Tapscott & Williams, 2006), enabled by the introduction of Web 2.0 technologies (O’Reilly, 2005), has led organizations to rethink their methods of creating business value and at the same time managing and distributing information. Furthermore, mass collaboration challenges many mature and established firms like BMW, Boeing, and Procter & Gamble to make second thoughts about their collaborative strategies (Tapscott & Williams, 2006). This is emphasized by the surprisingly high and increasing number of firms adopting Web 2.0 technologies and services in recent years (Libert & Spector, 2008), which help these organizations to create new and unique collaborative environments (McAfee, 2006). Web 2.0’s adoption is expanding especially for corporate affairs (Grossman & McCarthy, 2007; Hideo & Shinichi, 2007) so that organizations are able to improve their products and services, or even solve intractable problems (Tapscott, 2008).

Previous research has indicated that social media tools, like wikis, are becoming increasingly popular for managing knowledge and collaboration within enterprises. Some studies have contributed to this field by creating awareness among organizations about the benefits of using ESSP’s for knowledge creation. The value in capturing and creation is the capacity to skilfully manage, organize and carry out innovations in order to mobilize SME processes. The Chesbrough’s research in last decade emphasizes new advances and settings for the intersection between users and producers, suppliers and producers, or within open code software communities (Lichtenthaler, 2011; Huizingh, 2011; Enkel, Gassmann, & Chesbrough, 2010). The significance of the sharing and collaboration of knowledge that is mediated by social media is important to understand at its root level in order to come up with productive and sustainable solutions. According to Jan Ljungberg (2010), “IT opens up new possibilities, creates new challenges and functions as a disruptive force in the traditional innovation process.” The strength of competitive businesses is development of technological and innovative products based on new and complex technologies (Bertola & Teixeira, 2003). This new and complex digital world revolves around social media and technologies in one-way or another. An important factor in an organization’s success is, therefore, to protect and improve organizational knowledge as a source of continuous innovation (Bertola & Teixeira, 2003).

The concept of Enterprise 2.0 is quite young. Researchers argue that intellectual capital is the largest asset of any organization, serving as its greatest source of power (Druker, 1993; Toffler, 1990; Quin, 1992). These authors agree that the future belongs to those who are endowed with knowledge (Nonaka, 1996). We live in a knowledge-driven world, which therefore makes the “knowledge worker” the greatest single asset an organization can have (Druker, 1993). Proof of this is that some of the most popular management concepts developed over the past few decades have had specifically to do with knowledge (Huysman, 2002). Researchers and practitioners confirm that sharing knowledge improves organizational performance (Lesser & Storck, 2001). Often, organizations do not realize what they know, and locating and retrieving knowledge within organizations can be problematic (Huber, 1991). Furthermore, IT is being used as an enabler in most of the knowledge management initiatives (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). The research question this paper aims to answer, therefore, is: How is social media being used within firms to assist knowledge sharing and collaboration to achieve an objectified knowledge? Though the problem focuses on knowledge sharing, more emphasis is placed on ESSP’s. This paper restricts itself only the ESSP’s issues that are being applied and used in the case study.

The body of this paper is organized into seven sections. Section two discusses the literature on various IT tools for knowledge sharing and collaboration among peers. Sections three and four cover the theoretical basis and research methodology, respectively. Section five explains the social media strategy adopted by International Business Machines (IBM) in Sweden. Our analysis of the case is presented.
Is Updating Play or Work?: The Mediating Role of Updating Orientation in Linking Threat of Professional Obsolescence to Turnover/Turnaway Intentions


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