Microblogging in Project Management: Improving Project Communication and Documentation with Status Information

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ABSTRACT

Microblogging represents a significant change in enterprise communication, shifting from a push to a pull model where information consumers subscribe to relevant information sources. Especially scenarios with high degrees in information quantity and complexity may benefit from this approach. This is the case for project management, which can well be supported by microblogging tools. This paper introduces the technology’s concept, motivates use cases and discusses two examples as well as available software tools.

Keywords: ActivityStreams, EnterpriseMicroblogging, NetworkedCommunication, ProjectCommunication, ProjectDocumentation, TeamCollaboration

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, modern Web 2.0 tools are being widely used in business. The successful service Twitter.com shows how the new approach of microblogging – the public distribution of short text messages – simplifies information sharing and collaboration of distributed teams. This paper has been written to help project managers to understand and successfully apply the principles of microblogging to improve project and team communication.

Following the simple principles of Twitter, microblogging is now also being used as a new means of communication in projects within and across professional organizations. Besides the support of information exchange via short messages, tagging – the simple assignment of keywords to pieces of information – becomes the core mechanism to foster project information and knowledge management.

Based on two years of practical experiences with microblogging in the IT and research sectors, this paper shows how microblogging
can help to improve project communications substantially. Initially, the core elements and usage patterns of microblogging and the resulting paradigm shift from direct to networked communication will be explained. The benefits of microblogging for project management include higher transparency and responsiveness, support for self-organized and highly mobile teams, continuous documentation and networking between team members and stakeholders.

Further, the paper defines requirements for microblogging services and tools. Based on real-life project cases, the authors explain and demonstrate emerging patterns for communication, collaboration and documentation processes in project microblogs. A brief comparison of microblogging software vendors and evaluation criteria helps with the selection of appropriate tools. Finally, the paper discusses the effect of widespread use of microblogging on the communication culture within project teams. A discussion of open research issues on microblogging concludes the paper.

MICROBLOGGING AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Microblogging is a technology deriving from the public internet. It’s most famous example is the free service Twitter, which has defined the understanding of microblogging. This section starts with briefly introducing the concepts of Twitter-like services. Further, it discusses the applicability of microblogging in project scenarios before it finally gives an overview on available software solutions and selection criteria.

Basics of Microblogging

Microblogging can be seen as paradigm shift in communication principles (Barnes et al., 2010). Members have their own public microblog where they post short updates without having to address them to a special addressee. Other users can be ‘followed’ by adding them to one’s personal network. An aggregated view of all updates by followed microblogs appears in chronological order on the user’s start page. In order to enable easy information publishing, microblogging services often support a wide range of contribution possibilities. For example, messages to Twitter can be posted via mobile text messages, desktop clients or several third-party applications (Java et al., 2007).

Parallel to the adoption beyond internet users, Twitter and microblogging in general became a subject of research. Due to its unique approach, researchers from different disciplines are interested in the topic. Two general kinds of research works can be identified in the existing body of knowledge: A first group contains research which explains the approach using statistical description (Java et al., 2007, Krishnamurthy et al., 2008, Huberman et al., 2009, Zhao & Rosson 2009) or in building theory for predicting user behaviour (Barnes & Böhringer 2009, Günther et al., 2009). The second class deals with microblogging in special use cases and is mostly design science or case study oriented as these works go beyond Twitter and develop further approaches for supporting, e.g., enterprise information management (Böhringer & Richter 2009, Barnes et al., 2010) and e-learning (Ebner & Schiefner, 2008, Skiba, 2008) with microblogging applications or research technological foundations (Passant et al., 2008, Sandler & Wallach, 2009, Assogba & Donath, 2009).

Status-Quo of IT-Support in Project Communication

Today, IT-tools are being widely used to support project communication in business environments. While telephone and email are most common, also web-based communication tools, e.g. web document management systems, wikis and weblogs have been introduced especially to support distributed project teams. Happ et al. (2006) provide an overview of web 2.0 tools in use for project management. The main concern of these web-based tools lies in the central storage and distribution of important, mainly formal documentation.
Role of ICTs in Socioeconomic Development and Poverty Reduction
www.igi-global.com/chapter/role-icts-socioeconomic-development-poverty/22666?camid=4v1a

Design of an Integrated Project Management Information System for Large Scale Public Projects: Iranian Case Study
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