Chapter 7

Using Web 2.0 Social Computing Technologies to Enhance the Use of Information Systems in Organizations

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ABSTRACT

In the perspective of managing the Intellectual Capital (IC), the user friendliness of User Generated Content (UGC) tools may be preferred over the Information Systems platforms offered in the majority of organizations. Based on a review of literature and actual practices, this chapter focuses on aspects related to user practices of social networks and web tools that could be useful for corporate platforms; its aim is to improve the use of corporate platforms by informing both the research academy and managers about effective practices. Case studies are presented to understand how UGC can be used to implement new ways of sharing information and communicating more efficiently in organizations. Knowledge and IC management systems for teaching and learning are presented, in order to better assess whether or not this technology is effective to support knowledge creation and sharing in an academic and business setting.

"The new technologies have provided us with tremendous potential. Web-based technologies, especially the new Web 2.0 Social Computing technologies, now enable us to search the world and better know what the world is searching for; allow us to self-publish, through blogs and websites, and share knowledge with the world; and enable mass collaboration through wikis, as inspired by pioneers such as Wikipedia. Through the blogosphere, we can now capture our new lessons, insights, ideas and opinions, and much better know and influence what the world is thinking and feeling." Dr. Ron Young, Chief Knowledge Officer, Knowledge Associates International, UK (Young, 2008)

INTRODUCTION

During discussions with the top leadership of 10 Information Technology (IT) companies on the methodologies for sharing knowledge, suggestions provided by top executives to Gupta (2008) included:

- Soliciting feedback
- Asking questions
- Telling people what you plan to do before doing it
- Asking other people for help; asking someone to work with you in some way – however small
- Telling people what you are doing and more importantly why you are doing it
- Asking people what they think
- Asking them for advice
- Asking people what would they do differently
- Not just sharing information but know-how and know-why

All these suggestions look simple and easy to apply, especially when we think about the tools and advice offered freely on the Internet, to manage knowledge but only a few organizations apply them. The concept of knowledge creation often refers to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) and their model of knowledge conversion between tacit and explicit knowledge. The knowledge creation model developed by Nonaka and Takeuchi treat organizations as cognitive and epistemological entities; therefore, their discussion on the topic remains very much at an individual level (Hong, Kianto & Kyläheiko, 2008). Employee reluctance to communicate and share knowledge still exists even if the theory suggests differently. In the last few years, many organizations realized that they own a vast amount of knowledge and this knowledge needs to be managed in order to be useful (Gupta, 2008). Sharing is about being more open at work and in our relationships with other

Figure 1. A drawing representing social networks on the Internet in 2010

people. Organizations must help people to build networks which facilitate relationships because organizations have always used humans to transfer the knowledge across the firm; this in turn, has a positive impact on employee satisfaction (Gupta, 2008). In our everyday private lives, this is exactly what social networks (try to) do: help people share information. The question we ask about the ergonomics and interaction between the users and the social network is: how can companies improve the use of their information systems platforms by applying key success factors of social networks such as Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn?

Facebook (http://www.facebook.com/) is a social networking website that is operated and privately owned by Facebook, Inc. Users can add friends and send them messages, and update their personal profiles to notify friends about themselves (Wikipedia, 2009a).

Twitter (http://twitter.com/) is a free social networking and micro-blogging service that enables its users to send and read messages known

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