

Chapter 2

Collaborative Mediation: How the Power of Collaboration in Social Computing Demands Greater Thought Diversity

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ABSTRACT

Individuals are the generators and consumers of content, and in doing so, make up a substantial presence in the literate internet, above and beyond the formal media outlets that make up the minority. Accelerating the explosion of content are Web 2.0 interactions, where participants are encouraged to engage with primary content. These social spaces are a platform, supporting often-overlooked micro-interactions referred to in this chapter as digital fingerprints. In parallel, companies construct web experiences that uniquely deliver Internet inspired experiences. However, the competition that divides popular Internet destinations is absent in well run intranets. Collaboration and cooperation among internal web properties offer a unique opportunity to organize people and information across disparate experiences. An example of such a solution is IBM's Enterprise Tagging System, a collaborative classification and recommendation service that knits employee identities and destinations together through fingerprints. The benefit of creating such a common service also exhibits the side effect and power of the relative few participants. It introduces the desperate need to consider how actions and relationships affect user experiences. The success of social systems requires a high level of diverse participation. This diversity is what ensures the mediation and influence of co-creation and collaborative filtering is not overly narrow.

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INTRODUCTION

People residing and employed in an Internet connected country having awareness to MySpace, YouTube, Facebook and Flickr experience a duality of their personal versus business persona. With the growing and changing generations, those identities are often blurred where the appropriateness of content cross networks unintentionally but often with some consequence. (Horowitz, 2006; Morello et al., 2006; de Zengotita, 2004; Florida, 2002; Howe et al., 2000) Individuals leverage these social spaces to create, share and manage content about themselves, their family and their friends. Increasingly, they have similar technology counterparts in their workplace. As they engage with the wide variety of primarily web-based social spaces, they rate, tag and comment on these assets, leaving digital fingerprints – “not only was I here, but I have something to contribute!” The attitude that what any individual thinks is worthy of persisting, in of itself, raises the volume of everyone’s voice. Participants are the generators and consumers of content and in doing so make up a substantial presence in the literate internet, above and beyond the formal media outlets that make up the minority.

Casual compilation of statistics from 2009 shows MySpace touting 130 million unique users monthly, making it one of the giant profiling information sharing sites. (Stelter, 2009) Consider that Facebook in the same year, a competitor to MySpace, attracts 222 million unique users monthly contributing over 28 million photos per day, larger than social spaces focusing on photo sharing such as Flickr. (Facebook, 2009) Delicious, a social book marking site has at least 53 million posts covering 25 million URLs tagged with approximately 125 million tags. (Keller, 2007) Technorati, a blog-tracking site, monitors over 110 million blogs and over 250 million pieces of tagged social media. (Technorati, 2007) While current statistics as recent as 2010 show

fluctuations in active users and traffic, overall the amount of content and places to create content has only increased.

Several offerings introduced and created by IBM’s Technology and Innovation team correlate with external social experiences, specifically around wikis, blogs, media sharing and profiling. The Company’s wiki platform has over 360,000 employees participating in 26,000 wikis, managing over 500,000 pages. IBM’s internal media library has serviced over 6.7 million downloads in its first 18 months, by 200,000 employees contributing over 29,000 pieces of media. Adoption is rampant although these services are not supported directly by the corporate IT function, rather nurtured and matured through IBM’s Technology Adoption Program. (Chow et al., 2007; Orlov, 2005)

The Digg community, a network of internet users who vote for what is hot, is 56% controlled by 100 of the users. (Saleem, 2007; Seomoz, 2006) Wikipedia contains millions of articles that match or rival traditional encyclopedic references and yet 50% of the content is created by 2.5% of the users. (Horowitz, 2006) Social offerings within IBM reflect similar ratios of a contributor to a beneficiary. The active participant has a disproportionate impact on the community in a variety of ways. We have a confluence of massive content generation, critical core communities and the digital fingerprints that a wider number of users generates.

Social spaces are the platform where people leave digital fingerprints, sharing who they are and what they are interested in experiencing. Content creation is extended beyond traditional digital media (i.e. blogs, wikis and forums) to include social and interaction fragments (i.e. rating, tagging and commenting). Each of these interactions creates relationships between people, activities and content. In a world of increasingly virtual interactions (including activities in 3D worlds) in an ever-increasing fragmentation of

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