

## Chapter 13

# Fitting EMS to Organisations

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*A major purpose of an electronic meeting system (EMS) is recording data, which allows the production of an immediate and unbiased report. But reports produced by commercial EMSs have some weaknesses that make difficult the organisational integration of meeting results. In order to contribute to the solution of this problem, it was developed a new system supported in the concept of communication genre and genre system. A prototype was implemented and used in corporate environment. Preliminary results from its application showed that this approach contribute to a better fit to organisational needs than the traditional EMS.*

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of genre had its genesis in the literature. In that context, a literature genre considers a category of literary works that, having the same fundamental purpose, will present similar structure and will obey to similar norms. Its systematic study started with Plato, in the Republic, and Aristotle, in the Poetic, that sought to typify the literary works according to its common characteristics. During centuries, this concept was used either as mere form of organising the literature either as a way of imposing rules to the literary creation. Consequently, it originated so much strong oppositions as staunch defenders. This concept passed then for other areas of the artistic creation, like the movies and the television. More recently, it was incorporated in the organisational context (Yates and Orlikowski, 1992).

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A major purpose of an electronic meeting system (EMS) is to record data, allowing the production of an immediate and unbiased report. But those reports have some characteristics that can be seen as weaknesses in the perspective of the organisational integration of meeting results. It means that its characteristics make difficult the flow of information from the meeting to the rest of the organisation.

- Those reports are a digital replica of a printed reports, it means that some of the features supplied by multimedia are not presented in those meeting reports.
- Most of the reports are even longer than the printed ones, being even more difficult to “read” either by humans or by machines.
- Those reports are not adjusted to a specific target (specific process, department, agent or system).
- The meeting reports are not integrated with context or support data. It means that there are a great quantity of information related to a meeting that typically does not appeared in the final meeting report.

In order to answer those and contribute to the answer the problem of organisational integration of meeting results it is presented here a solution based in the concept of communication genre and genre systems. After a brief literature review related to the communication genres, the solution is here presented and prototype produced is also described, as well as its use in an organisational context.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Genres of organisational communication are socially recognised types of communicative actions that are habitually enacted by members of a community to perform particular social purposes (Yates and Orlikowski, 1992).

Linked to the concept of genre are concepts like repertoire of genres and genre systems. In fact, the set of genres routinely enacted by a particular community form what can be called a repertoire of genres. On the other hand, genre system is a complex web of interrelated genres where each participant makes a recognisable act or move in some recognisable genre, which them may be followed by a certain range of appropriate generic responses by others (Baserman, 1995).

Communication genre proved to be a very useful concept in the analysis of organisation communication. (Orlikowski and Yates, 1994; Yates and Orlikowski, 1992). In fact, it was used in several organisational areas with the purpose of making the diagnosis of communication. It was used with the purpose of analysing groupware (Orlikowski and Yates, 1998), in the analysis of Internet documents (Crowston and Williams, 1997) or in the analysis of meetings (Yoshioka, Yates, and Orlikowski, 2000)

The use of genre was complemented with concepts like decomposition and specialisation, in order to create more integrated frameworks to analyse organisational communication. (Yoshioka and Herman, 1999).

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