

Chapter 54

Web 2.0 and Project Management:

Reviewing the Change Path and Discussing a Few Cases

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ABSTRACT

The so called Web 2.0 has, in many ways, created the conditions for people to use the power of crowdsourcing. Many business areas and experts are taking advantage of this phenomenon, but what we see is just the beginning. As individuals we are being culturally transformed by Web 2.0 and are ready to use many of these new habits in our working practices. The boundaries between tools and applications we use to interact socially and to work are becoming fuzzier and paler. Management, in general, and specially knowledge and project management have a lot to gain by combining all of these possibilities. This chapter focuses on the synergy of Web 2.0 applications and services and project management needs. To some extent, a knowledge management lens is used to comment and to discuss the issues. Later it examines the Brazilian situation of current project management practices and discusses some cases of our own experience. Also, to gain insight on the path forward, helping levers and possible hampers are identified and discussed in the text. In general, our case study observations indicate that the use of these tools and platforms has become more than promising, because as people become familiar with them, they are usually converted to it.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-4153-2.ch054

INTRODUCTION

This paper starts making introductory remarks on the affinity of web 2.0 resources and current project managers' needs, emphasizing how web-based tools can help their work. Next, there is a review and a historical perspective of the relevant literature describing applications of such tools that can be related to project management. Subsequently, there is a Brazilian panorama of project management practices. It follows a description and subsequent discussion of some cases of our own experience, trying to relate the users' perspective in terms of the conditions that helped them to adopt these tools and how they have helped their work. Furthermore, some cross-case inferences are conducted and a short longitudinal analysis is attempted.

This work tries to connect and make sense out of four chunks of information that the authors have come across with. They are: There is only a small body of literature assessing or speculating about the usefulness or leveraging power of the web 2.0 components for project management; the results of a large survey, conducted by the Brazilian section of the Project Management Institute, have shown that on the one hand web-based project management software is used in less than 40% of cases, and on the other, the five abilities that are at the same time classified as most valuable and most lacking are those for which potentially the web 2.0 seems to be promising to leverage; most of the of core issues concerning on how the web 2.0 can deliver its promises involve questions concerning the realm of or related to knowledge management; the experience of the authors on using web 2.0 components as complementary tools for managing projects in a variety of settings and conditions.

A knowledge management lens was used to help us dissect the issues of culture and common "language," or knowledge basis, that actually mediate the transfer and sharing of knowledge in a project setting. Our framework was geared to assess

- The project teams' culture and knowledge basis;
- The potential gains they see today with the use of the web 2.0;
- The gains actually perceived at the time that the cases occurred; and
- How their uses of web 2.0 in project settings have evolved since then.

Many new features of what is being called web 2.0 have spurred the imagination and creativity of application service providers. To frame its possibilities in a simple manner, we can just think of the demand growth if all the companies decide to outsource the hosting of all their web applications. As it was pointed out by Winans and Brown (2009), it is a fast growing business, and the easiness of scalability can be pointed out as a real lever. On the client's side, there are some issues of mind frame and of corporate computing architecture that will have to be sorted out before a large migration of the applications can take place. Also on the vendor's side, issues concerning the robustness and security of applications will have to be dealt with to assure smoothness in the clients' transition.

If one adds to cloud computing the affordability of larger bandwidth, mobility, virtual collaboration/meeting, work spaces, blogs, RSS, wikis, social bookmarking, social network platforms, with many of these services being able to handle multimedia, one grasps what is being collectively denoted as web 2.0.

Hoffman (2009) commented on an information technology (IT) survey of the "Nine Hottest Skills for 2009," which listed on 3rd and 7th places project management and web 2.0, respectively. His comments, from the IT perspective, list a couple of reasons regarding the possible synergy of web 2.0 and project management, summarized below. Concerning project management he points out that:

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