

Enterprise 2.0, Where Is It Boldly Going?

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ABSTRACT

The use of social networking technologies in business environments will not necessarily lead to the same patterns of use which are found in non-commercial settings. This workshop will include case studies of such usages, and theoretical reflections on the same.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

K.4 [Computers and Society]:— Organisational Impacts, Computer supported collaborative work, Reengineering. Social Issues, Employment

General Terms

Management, Measurement, Design, Economics, Experimentation, Human Factors.

Keywords

Enterprise 2.0, Social Networking, Web 2.0, Organizational Behaviour

1. INTRODUCTION

The development and spread of online services and facilities for social networking has enabled the development of relatively mature social arrangements and practices. They have produced high participation rates amongst a variety of social groups which are mostly, but not exclusively under thirty years old [1, 2]. The technologies have been explored and exploited in a variety of contexts where an economic dimension to the relationship is a non-existent or insignificant concern for the participants in their relationship. These range from formal and informal support for educational activities [3]; healthcare in many places [4, 5]; public libraries [6-8]; democratic engagement [9]; and the usual range of friendship activities [2] amongst others.

There is, of course, an economic interest in the revenue generating potential of these activities even though this has proven elusive at times [10], or has fallen outside standard economic models, [11-14]. However, many recognise that there

may be significant economic benefits for enterprises through the use of social networking technologies within their organisation by making fruitful connections between disparate and disconnected elements. This idea then naturally extends to the thought that there may be similarly valuable ways of connecting to suppliers and customers, and enabling customers to connect to and support each other. This is the prospect of Enterprise 2.0.

2. ENTERPRISE 2.0

Improving communications, connections and dependencies between the members of a supply chain is well-known for its ability to generate benefit for all participants [15], and the end user of a product can be a major source of innovative ideas for the alert businesses [16-18]. The users of various open-source products are also well-known for their willingness to support other users, and have a generally supportive approach to the products themselves [19]. There is, therefore, a tantalising potential source of commercial benefit available to enterprises that can use social networking technologies to release value within their organisation and supply chain, and to enable customers to help one another [20]. Businesses in many sectors of the economy are exploring and experimenting with these options, and are taking it as given that benefit will follow, [21, 22].

Using social networking tools to deliver value to a business requires, however, that several key issues are addressed. These derive from the simple fact that while we may be social and sociable at work, and with clients and customers, we have a clear sense of the sociality being differently constructed. Amongst the factors which will need consideration are the following:

- Overwhelmingly within social networking contexts, participants do not recognise one another as profiting in any simple way on the activities of each other. Introducing a potential for this might have a severe consequences for how the technologies are used and understood. Even if the sums are small, the symbolic value may be more important than the monetary value, [23]. Furthermore creative production within social networks may be orienting to a different economic structure, [24].
- Connecting groups which have previously been somewhat distant from each other can make it very difficult to establish a common communicative regime which allows a clear sharing of ideas. These may be groups from different parts of a firm, or maybe external parties, but the problems can be as great as building links in an interdisciplinary team.

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- Interaction through these technologies, can increase the sense of surveillance and monitoring which in turn can have negative effects on individuals' morale.
- Changes to the flow of information through an organisation can have important effects on the hierarchical relationships within it and the exercise of authority and control.

This list is undoubtedly incomplete, but the purpose of the workshop is to invite the presentation of case studies covering both successful and problematic uses of social networking technologies in various organisations. Understanding communication across the various practical, cultural and commercial boundaries which are present in these cases, and the differential effects of the economic and other motives which are present in a commercial environment are essential if the prospect of Enterprise 2.0 is to be realised.

3. WORKSHOP

The goals of the workshop are:

- Provide a forum for the presentation of cases from this newly emerging practice.
- Delineation of the key challenges which face the Enterprise 2.0 agenda
- Discuss what theoretical perspectives can be brought to bear on this key issue
- Outline a research agenda for future work in this area.

Presentations reporting on the experience of working on specific implementations, and theoretical reflections on the prospects for Enterprise 2.0 in the light of other studies will be invited.

In the light of the papers submitted, the organisers will group and thematise the presentations, and so as to allow the identifications of key issues in this area. Subject to the numbers present, the workshop will divide into small working groups to delve deeply into particular topics before a collective report back at the end of the day.

The organisers will provide a digest of the day's discussion which could provide a valuable way of focusing the papers to be rewritten as a special issue of a journal.

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