Investigating Weblogs in Small and Medium Enterprises: An Exploratory Case Study

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Investigating Weblogs in Small and Medium Enterprises

Weblogs
- in general
- corporate Weblogs
- internal corporate weblogs

Case study
- artefact
- experiment
- survey

Conclusion and hypotheses
Weblogs

- websites on which entries are commonly presented in reverse chronological order (Paquet, 2003)
- new form of ‘mainstream personal communication’ (Rosenbloom, 2004)
- suitable for both experts and ‘ordinary’ people (Wagner and Bolloju, 2005)
- versatile medium – from spontaneously releasing emotion to supporting community (Nardi et. al., 2004)
- have limited interactivity (Gumbrecht, 2000; Herring et. al., 2002)
Corporate Weblogs

- in the form of organizational blogs (Kelleher and Miller, 2006)
- employees diffuse information to the public (Efimova, 2004)
- heralded a paradigm shift in the way companies interact with customers (Dwyer, 2007)
- supporting knowledge work in the Enterprise 2.0 (McAfee, 2006)
- contribute to codification and personalization of organizational knowledge (Kaiser and Müller-Seitz, 2005)
- however, further empirical studies on the topic of internal weblogs are requested (Grudin, 2006)
Internal Corporate Weblogs: Empirical studies

Internal Blogosphere of IBM: Weblog network as social graph based on electronic traces, network analysis (Kolari et. al. 2007)

Large-scale enterprise: Motivation of blogging individuals, strengthen weak ties, encourage disparate departments to go in contact (Jackson et. al. 2007)

Blogosphere of Microsoft: Where, how and why do employees blog? External vs. internal blogs, sharing passion & revealing human side of a company (Efimova and Grudin, 2007)

Large-scale enterprise: Challenges of weblogs in internal communication, fulfill strategy implementation goals and foster informal interactions, climate and culture determine success (Kosonen et al 2007)
Internal Manager Weblog

Internal manager weblog (ICT-SME, 50 employees)

- Lack of empirical studies in companies
- Lack of empirical studies in SMEs (but forming majority of all enterprises)

Case Study Research

- Phenomenon & context not to be separated, use multiple sources of evidence (Yin 1984)
- Exploratory study: generating hypotheses to test in further studies
- Why was a weblog used? How did it affect knowledge transfer? ..
- Limitation: One Weblog in one SME. However cases are no sampling units
**Internal Manager Weblog Artefact**

Qualitative perspective: What does the manager tell his employees?

Quantitative perspective: How often did the manager talk to his employees?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>month</th>
<th>number posts</th>
<th>number comments</th>
<th>min gap between posts (in days)</th>
<th>max gap between posts (in days)</th>
<th>avg gap between posts (in days)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10.3</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Internal Manager Weblog
Extending research scope

From electronic traces (SNA) to offline actors

Fig. 1. Social graph of the manager weblog

- Measures of network approaches are meaningless, here
- How does this weblog interfere and interface with offline nodes?
Internal Manager Weblog Experiment

Research questions

- How do actors perceive the weblog in the context of knowledge transfer?
- Benefits for employees when reading?
- Rationale of just one comment?

Shut down weblog

- Request employees on recent post
- 28% replied, 22% were able to recite last post
Internal Manager Weblog Survey

6 questions concerning weblog reading practices - towards readers (50%)

- interest in the tasks manager is carrying out
- read weblog in office only
- 50% browse weblogs for newly created posts once a week, some more infrequently
- weblog perceived as uni-directional channel
- perceived low frequency of posts (criticism)
- perceive an improved knowledge transfer
- ..
Internal Manager Weblog Survey

4 questions concerning weblog reading practices - towards non-readers (50%)

- forgot existence and/or URL
- not to be read via web-based feed readers
- no email notification
- no relevance in published content
- ..
Internal Manager Weblog
Some hypotheses

Weblogs will be read if provide relevant content not to be drawn from alternative sources

- Frequency of posts is a key factor for weblog success
- Commenting may lead to a change of of the knowledge workers perception of the weblog
- Access restrictions will conflict with reading practices
- Lacking skills count for ineffective utilization
- Promotion is inevitable
- Internal weblogs are able to improve knowledge transfer in principle