MOTIVATION AND BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN VIRTUAL KNOWLEDGE – SHARING COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Susanna Bill

Community of Practice (CoP)

- A diverse informal group of people sharing a joint need to develop a practice through creating and exchanging knowledge, in order to perform a task *(Wenger, 1998)*

- Enables knowledge creation and sharing through strong empowering relationships that tie people together across formal elements of the organization, like teams, departments and business units *(McDermott, 2000)*

- Communities need members to be active on both sides: actively sharing knowledge as well as actively seeking answers (*Ardichvili et al, 2003*)

- Open-ended issue whether communities can be initiated or managed externally

Motivation

Intrinsic motivation	Extrinsic motivation
The act in itself serves as the goal, *(Deci et al, 1999; Osterloh and Frey, 2000)*	The act satisfies the needs indirectly
Underlying psychological needs of intrinsic motivation are autonomy or self-determination and competence *(Deci et al, 1999)*	Outcome easier to predict, hence measurable
Especially important for emergent, ambiguous tasks *(Osterloh and Frey, 2000; Osterloh et al, 2002)*	Sufficient for predictable tasks *(Osterloh et al, 2002)*

Management intervention

Management engagement can be beneficial for a CoP to thrive and bloom *(Nonaka, 1994; Wenger, 1998; Probst and Borzillo, 2008)*

Enabling	Controlling
Enabling *(Bourhis and Dubé, 2010)* or seeding *(Thompson, 2005)* i.e. non prescriptive	Controlling collaboration
Investments perceived as indicators of competence strengthen intrinsic motivation *(Amabile et al, 1996; Deci et al, 1999)*	Perceived as restrictions from acting autonomously or control mechanisms of behaviors, the level of intrinsic motivation decreases since the intervention do not fulfill the needs for self regulation or competence *(Deci et al, 1999; Osterloh and Frey, 2000)*

Why contribute?

Organization

- Knowledge is owned by the community – a moral obligation to participate
- Cultural aspects of the organization: encouraging mutual supportive relationships between employees

Self

- Need to establish oneself as expert
- Time to give back to the community

Why not contribute?

Self:

- Self censorship: fear of loosing face, wasting other members time, fear of being ridiculed

Organization

- Lengthy review processes of posts or overly complicated guide lines

Why use the community as a source of new knowledge?

- A kind of encyclopedia: pose questions, retrieve answers
- Keeping informed of general developments in their profession
- Quickly integrate new members in the new place of work for them to become productive faster
- Bridge to overcome the issues of geographically dispersed organizations

Why not use the community as a source of new knowledge?

- No added value of the virtual community – face to face communities more efficient
- Communities are sprung out of intrinsic needs of members and cannot be created through management
- Problems "too unique" and cannot be duplicated

Conclusions

- Supportive organization culture key prerequisite for knowledge sharing
- Participants will be more prone towards sharing knowledge once they trust
  - that the other members will not misuse the information
  - the source of information to be reliable
  - the integrity of the organization as a whole and the competence of its members

Two forms of trust
- Knowledge based
- Institutional

How can such trusts be created

Knowledge trust

- Virtual communities based on building on existing face-to-face relationships
- Trust is a multi dimensional construct: openness, reliability, concern (for employees) and competence – members need to experience such characteristics of co-members
- Open-ended duality of the strength of weak ties

Institutional trust

- Transparency in organizational expectations and procedures
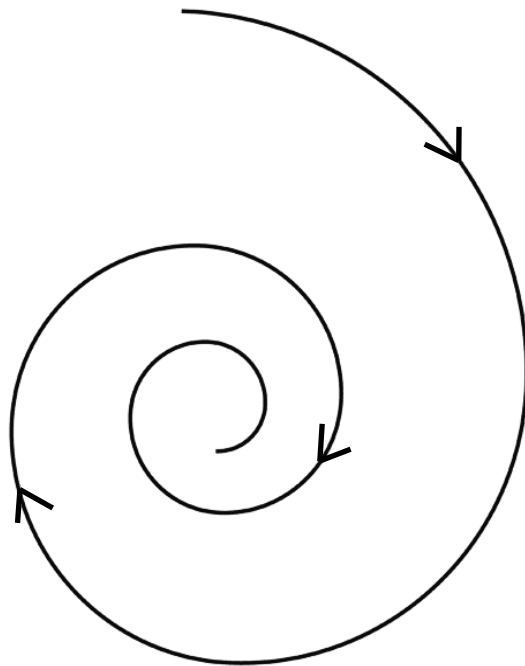- Demonstrate trust through action

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Theoretical base: Legitimate peripheral learning

Apprenticeship in a virtuous circle
Newcomers are invited to participate in the practice. As they increasingly master the practice of the community they gradually move from the periphery to the central of the practice.
➤ virtuous circle: the more members practice and learn, the more central for the community they become, motivating them to participate further

The virtuous circle is present through a set of indicators
➤ structural elements: tools, processes
➤ practice elements: shared ways of engaging

(Wenger, 1998)