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

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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**

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

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

<table>
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<th>Enabling</th>
<th>Controlling</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Enabling (<em>Bourhis and Dubé, 2010</em>) or seeding (<em>Thompson, 2005</em>) i.e. non prescriptive</td>
<td>Controlling collaboration</td>
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<td>Investments perceived as indicators of competence strengthen intrinsic motivation (<em>Amabile et al, 1996; Deci et al, 1999</em>)</td>
<td>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 (<em>Deci et al, 1999; Osterloh and Frey, 2000</em>)</td>
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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
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)