



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

center . graz
Know

2nd Workshop on Social Aspects of the Web
**@ 11th International Conference on
Business Information Systems**

Alexander Stocker
(Know-Center)

Klaus Tochtermann
(Know-Center, Knowledge Management Institute @ TU-Graz,
Institute for Networked Media @ Joanneum Research)

<http://www.know-center.at>

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

6

Internal Manager Weblog Artefact

Qualitative perspective: What does the manager tell his employees?

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

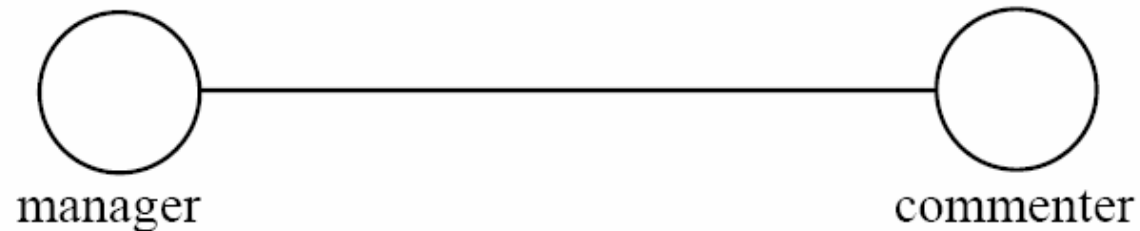
month	number posts	number comments	min gap max gap avg gap between posts (in days)		
May	8	1	0	5	1,1
June	5		2	14	5,6
July	9		0	7	3,7
August	3		2	21	10,3
September	2		8	18	13,0
October	1		19	19	19
November	2		5	24	15
	number posts (in total) 30		avg. total gap 5,8		

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