

BENEFIT-DRIVEN PARTICIPATION IN OPEN ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS: THE CASE OF THE SAP COMMUNITY NETWORK

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ABSTRACT

Organizations are creating social media platforms at the boundary of their company, bringing together interested individuals from internal and external sources for communication, collaboration, information exchange and content creation. This paper explores the participation behaviors that take place in such open organizational environments in order to identify the sources of benefit that exist in terms of business and work related activities. The focus on the emerging benefits arises from the fact that use of such tools and participation in such platforms is broadly based on a voluntary decision to join and thus adoption of Web 2.0 practices involves acknowledgement of subsequent benefits by potential users. The case of the SAP Community Network provided a rich context of behaviors and led to the finding that participation and active contribution is bound by the benefits people gain. Such benefits can be broadly understood in the extent of usefulness and the level of interest individuals hold for the content and the organizational ecosystem. The significance people place on these benefits indicates that the working environment is no longer confined within a single organizational environment and that subsequently affects individuals, organizations and communities.

Keywords: Organizational social media, Community participation, Participation behaviors, Participation drivers.

INTRODUCTION

As social media technologies continue to prevail in many aspects of organizational environments, exploring the benefits attained by their participants can provide significant insight into the impact of these technologies within the enterprise context. Incorporated within largely voluntary environments, these technologies thrive by persuading potential users of their subsequent benefits, which are arguably related to work and career. This is the main way of encouraging participation from internal and external resources, since the effective use of these tools

depends on gathering a critical mass of participants, where a diverse collection of independently-thinking individuals is said to be able to make more accurate decisions on the aggregate, a notion referred to as the wisdom of crowds [28].

This article explores the claimed benefits of individuals who are members of the SAP Community Network; an open, online and collaborative community powered by SAP and focusing primarily on areas of interest that the people in the SAP ecosystem are concerned with. Participation in this space is driven by the benefits people perceive, as individuals actively contribute and collectively create content in work and career related areas. Arguably, the value of those benefits constitutes an aspect of motivation that encourages them to maintain such participatory behaviors. The impact of those behaviors, however, can be analyzed along three dimensions as they affect the individuals and their professional presence, the organization and its open image, and the community and its emerging structure and content.

SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE ENTERPRISE

A variety of tools, including blogs, wikis, social networks, podcasts, social bookmarking and RSS feeds, have been developed under the umbrella term 'Social Media'. Their use has become prominent in the Web, substantially infiltrating organizational environments and enabling cross-organizational interaction and information exchange. In particular, social media are defined as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content [16]. The idea behind Web 2.0 is to build applications that harness the network effects to get better the more people use them [25]. This supports the philosophy of mutually maximizing collective intelligence and added value for each participant by formalized and dynamic information sharing and creation [13]. An open organizational social media platform is, therefore, a publicly open online environment hosted by a particular organization, and incorporating in its

functionality a variety of social media tools to foster the interaction of individuals connected by an interest in the organization, its products and its people.

Purpose and Potential

McAfee [22] by extending the underlining concepts of Web 2.0, coined the term Enterprise 2.0 to refer to those social media platforms that particular companies can utilize within organizational environments to improve among others the collaboration of their workers. One driving force of social computing, therefore, is the desire to create more capable computational infrastructures to support collaborative work and online communities, and to invent new types of social media for communication [33]. Arguably in this case, organizations incorporating such technologies can facilitate open collaboration and distribution of information across organizational levels and across organizational boundaries, introducing usage behaviors that include mass review, collective contribution, feedback and dynamic refinement of content.

As information proliferates on the web, one way to create a market differential is for organizations to draw on the expertise of their own user communities and organizational ecosystems [30]. According to different studies, businesses see these technological and social changes as a way of reaching out to new customers, reinforcing relationships with existing ones, and also connecting in new ways with their own employees [2, 4, 5, 8]. The emphasis is, thus, on harnessing external talent, keeping up with users, boosting demand for complementary offerings, reducing costs, shifting the locus of competition, taking the friction out of collaboration and developing social capital [29].

One of the structures that organizations are deploying to incorporate the different social media tools in their business model is the establishment of a network or a community, which serves as a platform that integrates the different tools to support communication and collaboration. Such structures therefore attain some of the features of communities of practice [37, 38], of online communities [7, 23], and of innovative user communities [9, 31]. Being defined as an evolutionary process of learning in groups [37], where people share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and deepen their knowledge and expertise by interacting on an ongoing basis [38], communities of practice have benefits attributed to the individuals who participate in them (professional development, social interaction,

development of trust and reputation building), to the community itself (problem solving, idea creation and knowledge quality), and to the organization that supports them (business outcomes and time savings) [24]. In addition, the emergent motivations behind sharing and helping behaviors indicate that individuals are driven by both intrinsic factors (e.g. enjoyment-based motivation, community-based obligation, community identification) and extrinsic rewards (e.g. better jobs, career advancement, self-marketing, peer recognition) [11, 18].

Companies therefore have the potential to communicate with their markets directly and establish a two-way channel of communication. It can therefore be argued that, organizations employ social media to establish communities around their brand, products and services, where they can stimulate discussions and conversations in an attempt to harvest invaluable customer and partner insight. Creating a diversity of new channels for communication, reach and learning means lowering the barriers and reaching out across the boundaries of the organization nurturing thus the external organizational environment in an attempt to find different ways of utilizing it.

User-focused perspective

As social media tie together the contributions of many and provide a dynamic that lets people volunteer to create a common good, it enables networked individuals in using the Web to engage in social interaction, contribute their expertise, share content and disseminate information [26]. One emerging aspect is the development of a participatory culture, which places a greater emphasis on the contributions of users to create and organize content and information [30]. This comes in line with set of behaviors that centre on the social rediscovery and reinvention of the rituals of sharing, namely the idea of the gift economy for the digital society [14]. A vital feature of the gift economy is that these behaviors are not oriented around financial transactions but on the gaining of status and particularly reputation in a group of peers based on the history of their participation [27]. Essentially complex social structures govern behaviors that are beyond price attributing status and prestige to those who contribute the most.

As people continue to be the main source of much of the relevant organizational knowledge, social media tools make it simple for them to express, share, and find that knowledge [30]. It therefore becomes about enabling individuals to have conversations in both

internal and external spaces. These networked conversations are enabling powerful new forms of social organization and knowledge exchange to emerge [20]. A number of studies have shown that knowledge exchange is motivated by moral obligation and community interest [34] with proposed motives including altruism, incentives to support one's community, reputation-enhancement benefits, and expectations of reciprocal helping behavior [17, 34]. The perception of knowledge being a public good, not owned personally but belonging to the whole organization or community has also prevailed [1], where the ability to provide interesting or useful information affects people's decision to contribute [6, 19, 21]. Within an interconnected system, participation can also indicate a signal of competency, a way to feel more engaged in the daily job or even an effective way to reinforce social networks [3].

As a result, we can observe a shift in the willingness of people to dedicate time and effort in creating and sharing content partly because the benefits they gain are useful and partly because those benefits bear an element of interest that enables an altruistic culture to emerge. Such a premise is supported by the data collected in this case study where the participant perspective is explored in terms of what such communities have to offer, what sorts of usage behavior takes place and what sources of benefit exist that people can relate to in order to continuously participate and contribute in such professional and open organizational social media platforms.

METHOD AND FINDINGS

In this article, we explore the SAP Community Network as an exemplar case in an attempt to understand how social media platforms are organized, what types of usage behavior they foster and what sources of benefit does the social collective yield. The data presented here is indicative of the behavior and activity that takes place in this online space and the quotes used illustrate a representative sample of the raw data.

An exploratory perspective was undertaken in the design, and the data collection and analysis. The research questions maintained this exploratory stance by asking how people use this platform, what benefits they gain and what sources of value they have identified. Apart from the primary data that includes 26 interviews, secondary data sources that help to further answer the research questions have also been taken into account including online materials available from the site including blog, wikis, and

forum entries written by users of the platform and documents made available by SAP including articles and slide presentations written by employees. The sample of individuals interviewed is broadly divided into three groups of participants, namely:

- non-SAP employees, users of the community including customers, partners and other individuals (11 interviews – 42%),
- SAP employees, users of the community (10 interviews – 39%), and
- SAP employees, members of the community support team (5 interviews – 19%).

Interpretation and understanding of how the community functions also included personal participation in the community and engagement in activities of mainly browsing and searching within the different spaces for a period of time close to twelve months.

The Platform

The SAP Community Network (SCN) ([https://www.sdn.sap.com/irj/scn.](https://www.sdn.sap.com/irj/scn)) is an integrated platform with a number of dedicated spaces, which among others includes the SAP Developer Network (SDN) launched in 2003 and the Business Process Experts (BPX) community launched in 2006. SAP launched this initiative with SDN initially to create an online developer network across the globe. When a new stream of participants emerged on the platform, BPX was added to cater for their needs, expanding SCN into aspects of business process performance and optimization. SCN, recently reaching the two-million-users milestone, is powered by SAP's own NetWeaver and supported by social media tools and technologies to utilize the knowledge and expertise of its participants on subjects related to SAP's own products and services. Discussion forums, blogs, wikis, podcasts, download and eLearning materials are some of the functionalities offered that enable support to existing customers and partners in terms of problem solving and access to resources, while at the same time discussions are set off that generate content on ideas and issues that concern and interest the community members.

The platform is comprised of many different players, with different agendas, goals and purposes. There are customer-members trying to solve their problems, there are partner-members trying to prove their expertise and become more visible, there are employee-members trying to push awareness on things they work on, there are independent-members contributing to create a name for themselves or for the organization they work for, and there is also

corporate SAP indirectly trying to change the image it has to being more reactive and responsive to what its environment is talking about. Consequently, this community can be a different thing for different people, which results to a range of usage behaviors accompanied with respective benefits and value.

Usage Behavior

One of the first constituents in this community was the organizational push, necessary to build the foundations, establish the structure and create the initial content, particularly until a critical mass was reached and the platform started to become a more self-maintained space powered by the contributions of its users as peer review mechanisms were established. This then introduced new dimensions to usage behavior that range from consuming information and participating in conversations to moderating content and influencing the direction and the focus.

Participants have said to use this space as a resource for both people and information, and while they are there they can also write about the things they work on. Thus, they end up sharing their own experiences of working with the SAP products and gradually transform their participation behaviors from consuming to contributing. Not everyone is going through this transformative process, however. Many people are just happy to consume the information without giving anything back while others strive to reach the top in terms of showing and proving their knowledge and value.

“Getting involved with the community is a good place for resource and information. So I started as a non-active participant, just reading and getting answers from there. Then eventually I started being active, participating in blogs and projects, and other things like that.”

“I browsed all the forums and I found the top contributor at that point...his idea could almost match mine. So I thought since he can be number one then I could be as well. So from that time I decided to be number one in the forums.”

“So overall, I went from a lurker to a contributor fairly quickly. In those early stages I responded to questions I had the answers to and I felt guilty not to, if you have the knowledge why not share it. It is also assuming an investment for the future, if I do this others will reciprocate and we all be better down the road, knowing that someday there will be information to help me as well.”

Emerging Benefits

The effectiveness of communities like this one is initially based on their usefulness and relevance to one's day job and career. People are drawn to the content and the resources that emerge, and while the sense of community is being developed from the relationships that are formed people divulge into areas of interest and passion, exploring thus new and creative ideas. The search and identification of value derived from the use of such tools can undertake a variety of forms including user-generated content, connectivity, interaction, problem-solving, community building, and individual recognition and reputation. All of these however are evidently bound by an adequate level of creative participation and the means that encourage and motivate such participation.

Problem Solving

The idea of getting questions answered and problems solved through technical forums is not new, but their use in conjunction with other tools creates an effective environment of searching for information, asking questions, and evaluating the answers given. Participants declared this problem solving aspect of the community to be very effective in terms of the speed and quality of responses given. The fact that the community is made up of experts from different areas of the SAP space makes their contributions invaluable and makes information seekers reliant on their help to solve some of their daily issues and challenges.

“...another aspect of the community is that it serves as a problem solving forum. You will find that a lot of the contributions are in and around solving customer problems.”

“They get help on their jobs, they get hands-on help on how to implement/run SAP...SAP on the other hand, saves a lot of cost through SDN in terms of support. Instead of calling the support services, they search the forums maybe somebody already answered that question or otherwise they post a new thread and get an answer in 20 minutes, and from the perspective that they can relate to.”

“This networking leverage works for me as well, if I don't know the answer, SDN is one of the first places I go to find the answer if someone already asked that question or find someone who will know the answer.”

Learning

Participation and active contribution in such environments can also be about building on existing competences and capabilities; that innate aspect of wanting to be ahead of the curve that results to ongoing learning and development. Participants stated that learning never ceases to occur. The scale of the SAP space means that people cannot cover all areas and the fact that they are open to feedback means that the community can collectively direct them into unexplored areas.

“...I get to learn a lot myself; I stay sharp because I can see what other people say and what they are doing. It can spark things in my mind, which is part of the exchange.”

“Basically it is a learning curve; I learn from the community, I commit, I engage. The stronger I am in the community, the stronger my feedback will be, the stronger I grow. It is all about growing.”

“When the SDN was launched I immediately thought that would be very beneficial for me to build my competence by going in there, being active and seeing what people were asking, what problems they had and trying to help solve these and also trying to solve my own problems. So in the start it was about building my competence.”

Communication, Reach, Interaction, Connectivity

Reach and access to like-minded professionals was said to lead to new prospects as passionate individuals come together in groups and take on new projects. Being able to maintain a network available at your disposal at any time to ask questions, connect to and interact with has proven to be an enticing venture. A global network of customers and partners means that people can reach outside their organization and link with experts in areas of interest and collaborate on common initiatives.

“There is no other way I could do what I do without open technologies, I could not have had access to the people I do without these tools.”

“For people like myself who are sole workers, or work for small companies or are telecommuting, that [online] presence becomes more vital because you don't have that water cooler interaction elsewhere.”

“I feel lucky to be part of this group because otherwise I would never have this kind of

exposure to these different problems and ways of thinking.”

Sharing of Information, Knowledge, Expertise and Ideas

The community can also be a rich pool of information, expertise and knowledge. The scale and diversity it has reached means that interest can be gathered even on the most niche areas and people can have the audience to push and evaluate a diverse range of ideas and thoughts. Participants claimed to use this space as a channel for sharing. Being able to find other people in the same interest areas within the space of SAP makes sharing more effective as users provide content to the right audience.

“It was a great way for me to structure my thoughts and get things down on paper. I felt that I had something to share which other people could be interested in and the SDN community also gave a platform to communicate my ideas and my thoughts instead of having to build my own separate blog and trying to attract people to that, so SDN gave me an audience for my thoughts in a way.”

“Definitely, when I get comments and feedback on my work, that's invaluable because you don't want to create work in a vacuum and you really need to have that perpetual feedback loop with your constituents. It is like you are putting yourself out there and you are taking a constant temperature around the relevance of what you are doing, whether it matters to people, what their concerns are...I do subscribe to the notion that no single person has some type of expertise that transcends everybody else's, so by creating a dialogue on a blog where people also post that really helps to give you a context.”

“Apart from getting information, I also write. I use SDN to evangelize about things I am interested in, about certain topics that are close to my heart.”

Community Building

A sense of ‘we’ exists in this community. The people that are passionate about the idea and the concept of having a network of like-minded individuals have managed to form really strong relationships, associating themselves with the environment around this brand, developing thus a sense of belonging. Participants declared that their use of the community transcends into other areas apart from SAP-related

issues. The fact that the community brings together people from diverse locations, backgrounds and professional areas, enables social diversification that creates interesting discussions and develops similar passions.

“The community right now is my family. Some of my best friends are in this community right now. They became my best friends because of the relationships we developed in the community. It is always more fun to work with your friends. For me, it just turned out to be my little SAP family.”

“I suppose you can say it almost like, if SAP is our religion SDN is our church where we come to not pray but commune and exchange ideas and recognize each other.”

“But for me, I almost feel obligated to help. Of course I don’t get paid for what I do in the community. I see them as my extended family so I feel that I have got to help them; help people get more knowledge.”

Recognition, Reputation, Thought Leadership

There is a shift into people steering their own careers by maintaining an online presence and visibility around the areas of interest where they want to associate their name. That is where recognition, reputation and thought leadership become identified as benefits for the individuals who want to differentiate themselves in their broader professional networks. Participants stated that recognition in particular is definitely part of this community as people appreciate what you do for them because it is essentially valuable. Trying to establish oneself as a thought leader, however, requires dedication in terms of time and effort in order to accelerate a concept, expand and build on it, to make a real contribution that others will appreciate.

“For me it was a reputation thing; trying to build my reputation persona outside my own company. With the web 2.0 generation of tools it gives you an opportunity to build your reputation and career outside your job. What I always say as my motto lately is: “take your career into your own hands, separate from your job”. And that’s what active participation in the community can do for you.”

“Part of how you differentiate yourself in the field currently is by both making a contribution and becoming a thought leader in a particular area. It is more about figuring out what you are good at

and what you want to be known for, and then essentially turning up the volume in that area by blogging, podcasting, etc. I was very intentional in what I did, in that I wanted to be remembered for focusing on SAP skills and careers.”

“...the marketization of these tools is remarkable; it has given the opportunity to put the spotlight on many industry and technology experts who would have otherwise remained hidden behind several layers of BPs, who are more conventionally the mouthpieces of organizations.”

Creativity

The community also enables people to create an outlet for their creativity. Participants said that when the purpose of creating content is about expressing an idea because there is that feeling of having something worth sharing, recognition and reward take a secondary position. Having an audience that gives feedback, encourages ideas and recognizes people’s contributions provides an invaluable resource for professionals, interested in exploring different dimensions of their job.

“One thing that it has to do with is the adrenaline of being creative. For me it is a little bit addictive, from the personal feeling of doing something useful and from the feedback of others that it is actually useful.”

“...I enjoy being creative; the underlined, sort of primal desire. I have an idea and I don’t want that idea to die, because if it stays up there it dies, so I get it out into the community. So an idea evolves; it’s your idea, you throw it out and see how people grab it and run with it. So it is interesting to see how your ideas interact with others. If there is no response you either leave it to that or find a different context for it.”

“Also, sometimes you might be against the wall and all of a sudden you might get an epiphany; you want to share that, people can follow these easy steps to get this done and not struggle with it like I did.”

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Each of the benefits identified constitutes a significant enough reason for an individual to participate and contribute in social media platforms. Collectively, they also create a rich environment of activity and behavior. The evidence of anticipated benefits is fundamental for these platforms because of the necessity for a critical mass of participants. To

encourage and drive participation, individuals need to be convinced that the platform is comprised of useful content and that content will be professionally interesting. For that reason, the emerging benefits identified can be divided into two broad categories. The first one is defined in terms of usefulness, and involves those benefits related to learning, information-seeking, and problem-solving, and the second, is defined in terms of interest, and involves those benefits related to idea-generation, recognition and creativity (See Table 1).

Table 1. Emerging benefits

USEFULNESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem solving • Learning • Communication and Reach • Interaction and Connectivity • Sharing of user-generated content
INTEREST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generating and exploring ideas • Visibility • Recognition, Reputation and Thought Leadership • Community building • Creativity

The level of usefulness realized, and the extent of interest involved based on these findings, were reportedly sufficient drivers for individuals to maintain continuous participation and contribution behaviors. These two broad categories support the array of behaviors that exist in such environments, and range from the value-gain attitude to the altruistic ideal [10, 11, 12, 17, 18]. Users of such platforms are in the position to decide whether they would prefer to passively consume the information and resources available or to actively contribute and collectively create content. This therefore means that lurkers as well as contributors will be present, selfish as well as altruistic drivers will manifest, and time-wasting as well as creative work will occur. Social media platforms are created on the premise of being open, flexible and voluntary, so both ends of behavior will be present as negative attitudes cannot be eliminated.

These findings indicate that there are some common trends in behavior with participants of open source projects. Hars and Ou [11] suggest that those who work on open source projects view their participation as an investment from which they can expect future returns such as self-marketing, peer recognition, and revenues from related products but also as a driver of personal need, self-determination, altruism, and community identification. The context, however, is

different. In open organizational social media platforms, individuals do not work on a particular project with defined tasks to be carried out, but rather operate as a community of professionals who share an interest in a field of work. This is similar to what Wasko and Faraj [35] defined to be electronic networks of practice, where participation is open and voluntary; knowledge seekers have no control over who responds to their questions or the quality of the responses; knowledge contributors have no assurances that those they are helping will ever return the favor; and lurkers may draw upon the knowledge of others without contributing anything in return. Wasko and Faraj [35] continue by stating that individuals in such environments contribute their knowledge when they perceive that it enhances their professional reputations, when they have the experience to share, and when they are structurally embedded in the network.

Open organizational social media platforms, however, represent a new context where participants can freely share and create content in an online environment of professionals, but that environment is hosted by a particular organization. Hence it cannot arguably operate in the complete absence of influence or commercial interest, as different agendas are being driven from different actors in this type of open interactive environments. The fact that a particular organization hosts the platform raises questions. Are the community initiatives really community initiatives or to further the organization’s commercial objectives? Does the organization listen to its participants or is it all about marketing? Are individuals really driven by altruistic ideals or is everything done for the prospect of getting clients and further work?

The Impact of Benefits on Individuals, Organizations and Communities

The context in which the identified behaviors and the emerging benefits take place constitutes a challenge in understanding the underlining reasons for such behavior. Three main perspectives are implicated in benefit-driven participation within open organizational social media platforms; the individuals, the organization and the community. Each of them involves a different set of issues to be considered when evaluating the impact of this research as well as undertaking further study.

Individuals’ Participation Behaviors

The potential for access and interaction offered by social media tools has created a new range of

compelled behaviors. Internal resources are no longer sufficient and the abundance of information online builds additional pressures. It is evident from the findings that people have incorporated the use of such platforms into their daily routine, while some have even taken up a leadership role by deciding to moderate part of the content and help to define its structure. Workload, in this respect, increases and participation behaviors become self-imposed rather than voluntary. Individuals can access more information, can reach more relevant resources, can easily contribute to existing content, and can be more visible while doing that. This means that they are able to demonstrate expertise, create a name for themselves, and associate themselves as experts in their field of work.

In the Web 2.0 era where there is evidence that knowledge workers value such exposure, it is safe to argue that self-imposed pressure to participate is just part of how you carry out your daily work. It comes across in the findings that people feel the need to make themselves visible especially if their job description involves some form of consulting or freelancing work. Their network of contacts expands into such online environments where they can show credibility through their voluntary contributions and gain important contacts, client prospects and any other form of work-related recognition. This can partly explain the dedication in terms of time and effort put forward by professionals in sharing information and creating content. The other part can be explained in terms of expectations for reciprocal helping behavior [15, 34]. Kankanhalli et al [15], define reciprocity as the belief that current contribution to electronic knowledge sharing systems would lead to the future request for knowledge being met in the presence of weak pro-sharing norms. Accordingly in this case, if people consider such resources to be invaluable then they can be driven to share their experiences and help each other as a way of paying it forward and creating a future investment that they might need to use further down in their work.

Further research is, therefore, required to identify and assess the relevant constructs of the described behavior. As participation and contribution centers on the individual's choice, it will be significant to identify what constructs are involved in such usage behavior and what is their statistical significance.

Organizational Social Media Strategies

It is revealed that organizations are becoming aware of the activity that occurs in their broader

organizational environment and are finding ways of bringing that external interest onto an integrated platform in an attempt to find ways of making the most of it. That includes opening new channels for communication, creating affiliations towards their brand, and incorporating external expertise into things like customer support, community development and user-generated content. Arguably, what this means is that organizations are enjoying cost reduction in terms of customer support and organizational learning, while they are also fostering evangelistic activities. When non-employees, participants of this network, share their experiences with the organization's products and services, offering assessments, suggestions and improvements, it can be considered as indirect marketing. Such user-generated content is also perceived to be more credible because these people have no vested interest in the organization. This changes the image of the organization as one which engages, listens and reacts to its environment, by initially allowing these people to talk freely on their platform, and also responding in a non-corporate manner through their employees' participation. The organization therefore can have many faces on this platform that make external communication more personal.

One thing that is crucial for an organization to reach this level, is the need to attain a critical mass of relevant and active contributors that will establish a self-sustained environment, where aggregation, independence, decentralization and diversity prevail and enable notions like the wisdom of crowds to drive decision making [28]. Given that the emerging benefits identified bear a sense of value and importance to the individuals, organizations are the ones that need to promote and encourage such behaviors if these platforms are to flourish and organizations are to experience such rewards. The challenge, however, lies in the vicious cycle that exists, where people are initially driven by useful content and useful content is driven by people.

This diverges into areas of theory and research that are concerned with motivational factors. Further research can identify the sequence of actions involved in initially engaging and subsequently incorporating individuals' contributions within open organizational social media platforms. Such a process model can indicate how organizations motivate and maintain participation from external resources in a hybrid open environment. In terms of practice, the subsequent challenge for organizations is finding ways to monetize ventures and ascribe tangible value benefits to social media initiatives. For instance, it will be interesting to see what level of cost reduction

exists in terms of customer support, training and learning ventures, and what level of clients have been driven by the content and the environment fostered on such platforms to purchase products and services.

Community-based opportunities

Communities can be seen as knowledge repositories at the edge of an organization incorporating efforts from both internal and external resources. Interaction for the purposes of sharing information, knowledge and expertise creates further opportunities. The social aspect of communities enables relationships to be created, common interests to be identified and collective efforts to prosper. According to the findings, this has led to community building, idea generation and creative activity to take place. When people spend part of their working time in environments like this, community-based projects and initiatives emerge from the social collective. Here is the challenge, however, who directs and influences these initiatives and who benefits from them, when the organization is watching, and its employees, customers and partners are part of it.

In terms of both theory and practice, such community-based initiatives need to be identified and explored. From the secondary data, a few initiatives in this community network have been identified at their early stages so further research is required. It will be interesting to see how community-based projects are initiated, who takes part in them, what outcomes do they yield, and how are the individuals, the organization and the community affected.

CONCLUSION

By focusing on this community network, primary and secondary data was collected to support the use of social media tools in the enterprise context; exploring thus the usage behaviors that take place in such environments and identifying the claimed benefits people obtain in their participating and contributing to open professional social media platforms. Behaviors identified in activities such as contributing content, participating in discussions, reaching out to others, and sharing ideas, thoughts and experiences, are claimed to yield diverse and valuable benefits in line with the professional culture. It should be noted that the findings come from a single case study which may affect their generalization, but this study primarily aims to contribute towards the early stages of theorizing [36].

As such, the focus on the context in which the identified behaviors occur is significant and leads to

implications in assessing and evaluating the data. This study has shown that people cross organizational boundaries to perform their daily work as well as to explore different aspects of their career, which implies that the working environment is no longer enclosed within a single building, with information value shifting outside traditional organizational boundaries. Organization and community theories are intertwined as individuals' behaviors swing back and forth into both contexts. Organizations that manifest such environments at the edges of their network are in a position to best utilize the value generated in terms of support and innovation. Employing a community to help solve problems, give feedback on new products and services, and create proprietary content for free, develops a softer economy that incorporates reciprocity and reputation currencies as an emerging reward system, with individual members having a prominent presence as they drive the content and thus the activity identified within such open organizational social media platforms.

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