

Case Study: Emerging Networked Event Collaboration

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Abstract. This work-in-progress paper describes two different cases of collaboration and knowledge networking within the setting of a live event. Emerging technologies for collaboration between different actors networks being co-located and distributed teams or communities of practice stresses new ways of participation and modalities (on-site, distributed/networked, mobile/stationary). First case describes an intra-organisational community of practice, and the second an inter-organisational teamwork to deliver a live event. Both cases use different 'social media' technologies to lever networking and enrich the event experience. The open arena collaboration raises some key attributes for further research: seamless and simple social networking; 'mashup' / integration of contribution spaces; extension of conversation prior, during and after an event.

Key words: collaboration, community of practice, knowledge networking, mashup, social media

1 Introduction

The act of participation and collaboration is one deeply engraved pattern amongst us human beings (Bacon, 2009; London). Our brain capacity is far reaching when it comes to adaptation. The senses we use to communicate remains the same, but our tools change as well as our everyday pursuit. Teamwork (Sampson, 2008) is a well-researched area, as well as knowledge management but the use of emerging technologies give some cues to future networked coactions.

Regardless if the actor networks sit within the very same organisation, or in a multitude set of spaces and time zones, there is a everyday use of Internet as one of the main networking collaboration space. Networking is inbuilt in the spines of how Internet was brought to mind, but lately the social fabric have become even more present. The popular terminology to capture this change, is sometimes coined web 2.0 (O'Reilly), that represent a mixture of emerging technologies, such as wikis; blogs; rss and different forms of simple web integration, 'mashup'; and social tags or folksonomies; and communities or digital-social-hubs (i.e. Facebook). The most obvious change in all this is the social construct of higher end-user participation and end-user generated content. Ease of use, and simplicity to access Internet wherever you are either being mobile or stationary further increases the interaction and collaboration. Users share ideas, concepts, content and connect in a speedier modality than ever, and when the Internet plumbing have gotten into so called microblogs (i.e. Twitter) we are seeing the dawn of the collective mind represented as continuum of triggers, the stream (Spivak). Groupwork, teambuilding and collaboration have never been easier. All this, stands in rather stark contrast to traditional computer supported collaborative work (CSCW) (Orlikowski) and information management practice that has been undertaken within the corporate walls for decades.

When corporations embark into this new arena with highly connected business models and networked collaboration, using the emerging technologies, such as 'social media', that behaviour change it termed Enterprise 2.0 (McAfee, 2009; Tapscott et al., 2008). But the art of cultivating a community or network of practice (Shirky, 2009; Rheingold, 2003) and pull resources into a digital habitat (Wenger et al., 2009), is still mainly happening at the fring of the organisation. In this scene collaboration raised due to an event where resources do gather in a common interest, and through a set time. There are opportunities to sense cues to future collaborative work.

2 Background

Two similar but still different event driven experiences reflect the need to coordinate, collaborate with a specific outcome and timeline. Highly time-stamped, as they both represent live events for knowledge creation. Both cases have co-located and distributed networked resources, where the first all participants work at the same enterprise and the second case several actor networks contribute in the collaboration.

Themes on knowledge networking

1. Intra-organisational
2. Inter-organisational

When pulling together a teamwork effort, to create any information and knowledge to be shared we all agree that being co-located will the best way to deliver. But one cannot squeeze all resources into one spot, without a great effort and to a high cost, so we daily rely on distributed networks to get things going. This raises the research question:

How do we get knowledge flows seamless with different modalities to interaction, prior, during and after an event?

3 Research method

This paper, will mainly contribute into the interpretative case studie research, but the attribution and use of relevant research tools has not been fully set into action for these two described cases. Hence, this paper should be positioned into more work in progress practice and case descriptive themes.

Disclaimer to the less rigor method use, will be contrasted with the illustrative and interesting notions to use of emerging technologies, that will be a starting point for more elaborate and rigorous research going forward.

The researcher have taken notes, undertaken interviews with participants in the two separate events through mainly digital means, such as questions and answers in i.e. Google Wave, email conversations, and twitter conversations. All these conversational threads, have been used to get back to representative actors that participated in the events.

Respondents in case I: Guest Speaker who acted as the external resource in the mainly internal community of practice event; Event responsible Consultant Manager; and lastly a set of technical /developers consultants (3).

Respondents in case II: University professional ‘blogger’ and Communications Manager; Corporate Communications Manager and lastly two active students that participated in the actual competition live in Boston.

Lastly, the researcher where heavily involved in the development of the conversational and collaborative spaces and did participate as one actor/coordinator in both of the described events. The used technologies are Google Wave, Apps, Docs, Moderator, Reader, YouTube; Yahoo Pipes, Flickr; Twitter, Facebook, Sharepoint, Yammer and several other social media related tools.

4 Case I: Intra-organisational. A consultancy firm with a Community of Practice, being experts within enterprise content management.

How does one expand a live event experience into a multichannel knowledge flow?

The setting, 150+ in the Community of Practice and a corporate body with 1300+ in several countries. A two days event off-site and a nice location with invited guest artists with a fixed thematic endeavour. Prior to the event a [wave](#) conversation emerged to develop the agenda, shared ideas to the joint outcome after the event. The internal [SharePoint](#) collaborative space and a [Yammer](#) mixed the channels, but the main pre-event contribution emerged in [Wave](#) to trial real-time-multi-user-wiki experience, and to expand the pre-event conversation to the guests as well.

At the event, a live HD-Video broadcast were set-up to capture and stream the guest artists to everybody not being on-site. Collaboratively participants contributed to the vivid and lively wave conversation, and posting internal *tweets* using Yammer to get cross talk within the whole corporate body. The idea generation from the event, used a tailored [Moderator](#) series, were distributed resources could add questions to the participants, while listening to the video streaming experience and following the simultaneous contribution channels.

Outcome? Well, it took awhile to get all accustomed to [Google Wave](#), but when 90+ peers work from one highly connected place, in time and space. Things do emerge and new ways of knowledge contribution in a never before seen fluid way, really made the event a success. The distributed approach to invite people to an onsite experience while being away, really worked well and several 'spot-on' questions in the idea-generation in [Moderator](#) that converged well into the stew. Good quality streaming and video/sound and fun new conversational spaces enlightened all participants. [The art of community](#) is a social construct, and the [digital habitats needs stewardship](#). Hence the ideas and knowledge creation pre-event, during the event and after have been building blocks in the internal Sharepoint environment.

5 Case II: Intra-organisational. A live Tech Business Case Competition, with students, University and Corporate resources co-located and distributed

Will open-spaces and Internet based (i.e. 'social media') collaboration improve knowledge networking?

The setting, 16 teams with 64 MBA students from top Universities from all over the world were invited to a 24h race, where they would develop a tech business case and present it to top-corporate management. Winner gets 25 000 USD. The joint taskforce from the [corporate world](#) and [University](#), wanted to tap into the [collective mind](#) and [the stream](#) ('social media' use amongst smart MBA students anno 2010), to capture the vivid online conversation. This years quest '[Navigating the sea of Connectivity](#)'!

Prior to the event several different means were used to collaborate, [Google Apps/Docs](#), [Wave](#), email, teleconferences, and inside the corporate walls [SharePoint](#) spaces. Different means to develop a coherent plan of actions and activities, simply put distributed-teamwork. To [engage](#) the students before arrival [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), [Flickr](#), [Twitter](#), [Linkedin](#), and a [University Blog](#) and [corporate dot com](#) sites were used. At the event a very distributed team from both the corporate and university worlds acted both co-located at the University site and on the Net. All competing teams were given a Twitter accounts, and shared principles for participation and contribution were used. To glue all channels together a social tagging scheme were proposed. Given that the teams managed to aggregate the online conversation regardless of contribution space in a coherent way, using [Google Reader](#), [Twingly](#), [Tinker](#) and [Yahoo Pipes](#). This mashup tinkering and pragmatic approach delivered a very comprehensive and easy to use flow. During the 24h race the tweets from the different actor networks melted into one social tag space, and cascaded into live-blog entries and Facebook page updates. The same path emerged from video, sound and picture uploads. The co-located competing teams used many different tools, such as [DropBox](#), Google Docs and [Slideshare](#) in their knowledge creation before presenting to top-management.

Post event, the ambition is set to develop a collaborative story telling based upon mashup technologies and i.e. Wave conversation (to be told in future posts)

6 Discussion:

Apophenia, the spontaneous perception of connections and meaningfulness in unrelated things. Traditional collaborative spaces, i.e. old school Notes used during the 90' and today's corporate use of SharePoint have [well documented draw backs](#), so will new emerging technologies in the social

media and mashup spaces ([Enterprise 2.0](#)) unleash new ways of knowledge sharing internally or externally? Given these two very simple cases, there are some tangible cues:

- [Mashup](#), bringing all channels together and all actor networks. Filtering is key, since we all act as individuals in the ecosystem of our everyday life. Simple integration works.
- Being social! Well, network effect runs the show! Constraints given the mission impossible to squeeze everybody into one room, will find its remedy using social media tools.
- Open collaborative spaces unleash innovation. Serendipity will be a beacon when we all connect. Cross talk inside the corporate walls or on the Net glues the collective mind into an emerging tapestry.
- Simplicity rules, low-cost and fast deployment of context specific collaborative spaces. Technical infrastructures and information interoperability between platforms, a modular architecture. [Disruptive Technologies](#) runs innovation.

These new tool-kits to undertake teamwork as in both cases; do give us new means to solve the problem. A richer experience! But one obvious warning to all this, it is not about the tools. The social fabric will emerge, and we do not always know which tool kit that will fit for purpose. The answer to the questions raised based upon the experience from these two separate events is:

- To get knowledge flows seamless, one have focus on simplicity of contribution and integration
- To expand a live event, one have to have orchestrated and well governed approach, spiced with loads of pragmatism
- Emerging technologies for collaboration do improve the outcome
- Are there any patterns of the collective mind? Yes, make-do and pragmatic tinkering works regardless of technology. We as humans adapt!

A fun notion to all this, is that prior to the events in the two cases, SharePoint worked pretty good to capture the preparation, but ones the event went live the distributed teams needed to mix modalities from being mobile (using Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Youtube and texting) and stationary producing blog entries, content and presentations. Micro-coordination had to cope with this multitude of channels and modalities. By no means this happened to be workflow, or traditional document management. The actors do not have SharePoint on their mobile device yet, but a set of social media tools.

7 Conclusion

Given the light weight research method for these two separate cases, it will not be possible to deliver any rigid conclusion, but the trials using these emerging technologies within the 'social media' realm do act as simple starting point for future research within Knowledge Networking. All participants used as respondents in the two seperated cases exclaimed with one voice that the use of these collaborative tools and the social fabric to solve the teambuilding with a distributed team couldn't been accomplished through traditional means.

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