

The enterprise 2.0 story in Germany so far

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INTRODUCTION

Web 2.0 is already an incredible success story, even if it is only a few years old. The landslide spread of the Web 2.0 has also a deep impact on many German organizations, even if it is still not perceived so. Up to now many German organizations are using Social Software very cautiously.

Even if many that are using these tools are satisfied, they are just starting to see changes throughout the enterprise. However, as the first experiences have been made, there are the first attempts to analyze these.

The goal of our research in this domain is to identify success factors and barriers of the deployment of Social Software in German organizations. Thus, we want to create a better understanding for barriers and success factors concerning when and how to use Social Software in an enterprise.

SOME EXAMPLES ...

In the last month we learned of, saw or helped many organizations introducing wikis, blogs or social networking services. In this contribution we want to present some of these examples. Furthermore we discuss a pattern we identified in some organizations.

“Media choice as a barrier” @ Robert Bosch

Robert Bosch GmbH is the world’s biggest automotive supplier with about 270.000 employees. At the end of 2005 the central IT division of Bosch accomplished a study for an enterprise-wide wiki introduction. A goal of the wiki study was to select a wiki platform and to examine it during several tests. The platform was put productive at the beginning of 2007 and was since then at the disposal of every employee of Robert Bosch GmbH.

During the wiki introduction the variety of media turned out to be one of the most critical success factors. This means that none of the media used so far (F2F meeting, email, telephone, content management system etc.) can completely replace a wiki. Vice versa a wiki cannot replace completely any of these systems and so it is very difficult for an employee to choose the right tool. This was explained by [3] with the media synchronicity theory [2]. Thus, the challenge for Bosch was to arrange the mutual laps and transitions of all media as efficient as possible given the enterprise-specific context.

“Use with joy” @ DSV (German Ski Federation)

The German Ski Federation (DSV) is the umbrella organization of all German Ski clubs. The DSV represents the (national and international) interests of the German skiing and supports and forms athletes and coaches. The aim of a project established in 2007 is to improve knowledge and idea management for innovation in top-class sports through the establishment and implementation of an appropriate platform. The basis of this platform was a wiki.

Our biggest lesson learned of this project was: A platform cannot be simple enough. The more we reduced the complexity and options of functions of the wiki, the more the DSV people (trainers, etc.) were interested in using the platform. Moreover the users often argued that they wanted a platform that could be used “freudvoll” (joyful). From our experience it is not too easy to guaranty that “use with joy”.

“Flat hierarchies” @ Bundeswehr (Armed Forces)

The Bundeswehr had early recognized the potential of internal wikis. A first prototype, the “Bikiwedia”, was installed in 2005 as a non-moderated self-runner, got more than 6,000 articles within 16 months, but was erased after security debates. It was clear that wikis can also work within the traditionally strict hierarchical organization Bundeswehr as an ideal complement to the generally clearly specified information paths.

At the moment, the Bundeswehr is launching an 18-month experiment with the goal to increase the usability of the wiki philosophy based on a solid test concept. Especially quality management is considered highly relevant for the Bundeswehr wiki.

Open Research @ German Universities

We consider Open Research as collective research work in projects, publications and teaching by actors that are distributed among different institutions, locations and hierarchical levels. The research work is supported by tools that support information distribution, communication, coordination and collaboration across different time horizons. A central characteristic of Open Research is the opening of research work to existing and potential partners in and outside the organization, and the integration of a number of continuously developed tools to support the research activities.

The organizational investigation and the development and introduction of tools for Open Research scenarios are carried out by several German university partners. The goal of the interdisciplinary project is to collect requirements for intra and inter organizational cooperation environments for co-located and distributed teams in and around universities, to provide (technical and organizational) tools, and to study the effects of their usage. Our first step in this project was collecting the current state and the requirements of Open Research (groups/scenarios). This has been done in the form of (semi-)structured interviews and surveys in different groups and at different locations. In November we will make different kinds of Social Software available at Bundeswehr University - together with a usage/benefit oriented documentation of the tools based on the requirements analysis. We will also analyze their usage with the goal to further develop the tools and the documentation.

SNS @ IBM, SAP, accenture

A special point of interest of our research are social networking sites/services (SNS). SNS are defined by Boyd and Ellison [1] as „web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system“. In the last months we started to work out case studies of several companies that use internal SNS with the final goal to do a cross-case analysis. In semi-structured interviews we identified success factors of the use of the Bluepages (IBM), Harmony (SAP) and the People Pages (Accenture).

The SNS under review differ to a considerable extent with regard to both, its development and deployment process as well as in their subsequent use. This gave us the possibility to analyze the different user behavior and to recognize specific success factors and use barriers in the specific context.

Some success factors we identified are

- the integration with other services,
- the visible further development of the SNS,
- the clear recognition of the potential benefits,
- business purposes of the SNS in the foreground and
- recommendations of satisfied users.

FROM THE WWW TO THE ENTERPRISE

In some organizations we identified a mostly effective pattern: If a company wants to develop and introduce Social Software like SNS they orient themselves on successful WWW platforms. They try to deduce successful features of these platforms and to add the specific needs of their

companies. This deductive approach, as described above, is illustrated in figure 1.

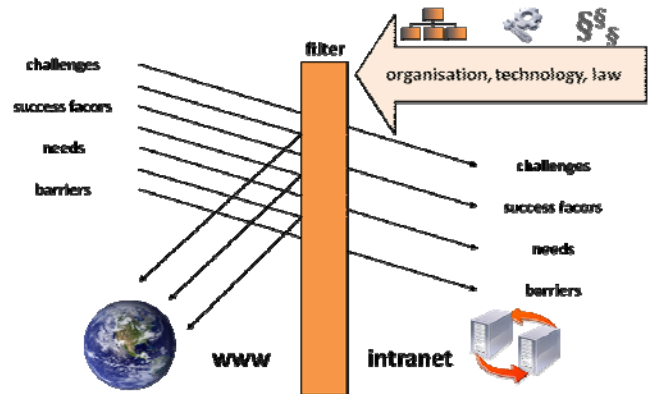


Figure 1: The adoption of Social Software in the enterprise

Of course this deductive approach can only work if the IT responsible of an organization is fully aware of two key elements: (1) The functionalities of the Social Software and their coherences. (2) The particularities of his organization.

The former determine the challenges (success factors, needs and barriers) of the Enterprise Social Software platform, the latter affect the company specific filter (illustrated above).

In our opinion it could be very helpful to develop a framework that contains all possible aspects of the filter above and categorize them into organizational, technological and legal facets.

CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

As shown above we studied several organizations that use internal SNS as well as wikis or blogs. We discovered several success factors and use barriers in the specific context of the case studies. We are eager to discuss our findings in the workshop.

Since many German enterprises are hesitating in deploying Social Software, we are very interested in learning about other examples of Wikis, Blogs or SNS in the enterprises of other countries, too.

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