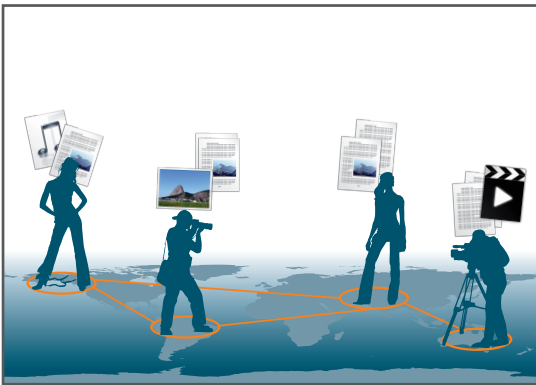


COMSTUDY

SUCCESSFUL VIRTUAL COMMUNITY BUILDING AND TECHNOLOGICAL SUPPORT



The success of new and participative applications of the Web 2.0 is deeply connected with the usage by virtual communities. The online encyclopaedia Wikipedia, the open source development of the operating system Linux, social networking platforms as Xing or Facebook, the video platform YouTube, the auction website Ebay or user

generated content at news forums: These and many other ventures are unthinkable without active users or without an active community. Their involvement is essential for the success of these Web-related projects. Hence, the question about successful community building is crucial and gets a lot of attention.

Overview of the study

The ComStudy is a study about (a) successful virtual community building, working with literature and project analysis, case analysis and expert interviews. It will describe concrete implementation strategies for different scenarios. Additionally, this study focuses on three essential functionalities of community systems which have hardly been researched: We will describe and compare realisations and systems, best-practice solutions and experiences with community building concerning: (b) the development and evaluation of meta information, (c) recommender-systems for community support, and (d) engagement indicators and reputation systems for community members.

a) Building virtual communities

There are a plenty of short reports, analysis and comments about successful and also unsuccessful virtual communities, but just few systematic analysis of these experiences.

The first part of the study, which comprises literature and reports, case studies of various virtual communities, and expert interviews, will offer help in decision making for different scenarios.

b) Meta information

Besides the contributions through content creation or upload, for example photos, text or videos, users are also generating meta information. This meta information is generated, either actively, for instance through tags, or indirectly or subconsciously through user behaviours. This part of the study focuses on new forms of generating meta information and how they can support communities. Realisations will be discussed and research reports will be analysed, dealing for example with tagging behaviour in communities or common usage of tag clouds.

c) Recommender systems

The content and meta information are the base for recommendations that can be given to users. These, for example, lead users to interesting, suitable or new contributions. Furthermore, other users or groups can be recommended via the system. An overview of current realisations and experiences with such recommender-systems as a service for users and communities will be given. This includes the description of technological concepts and realisations.

d) Engagement indicators and reputation systems

Engagement indicators give users feedback about their activities on a platform or by using a special technology and so can have a motivating effect. Reputation systems organise and illustrate how members are perceived within a community, for example through the number and/or quality of the postings. The focus of this main point is on the various methods, how reputation and engagement is recorded and evaluated as well as illustrated. A lot of emphasis is put on indicating how such systems are presented and how they function in order to support the community building and to add a true value – and not to be de-motivating for potential contributors.

Salzburg NewMediaLab
Kompetenzzentrum für Neue Medien

Rechtsträger:
Salzburg Research Forschungsgesellschaft m.b.H.
Jakob Haringer Straße 5/3 | 5020 Salzburg, Austria
T +43.662.2288-400 | F +43.662.2288-222
snml@newmedialab.at
www.newmedialab.at

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Contact:

Dr. Sandra Schaffert
Salzburg NewMediaLab
c/o Salzburg Research Forschungsgesellschaft m.b.H.
Jakob Haringer Straße 5/3 | 5020 Salzburg, Austria
T +43.662.2288-429 | F +43.662.2288-222
comstudy@salzburgresearch.at
snml@newmedialab.at
www.newmedialab.at