Chapter XX
The Potential of Enterprise Social Software in Integrating Exploitative and Explorative Knowledge Strategies

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this chapter is to investigate the potential role of social software inside business settings in integrating knowledge exploitation and knowledge exploration strategies. These strategies are approached through the lens of dynamic capabilities, organisational learning and knowledge lifecycle models. The authors argue that while current enterprise Information Technology (IT) systems focus more on knowledge lifecycle processes concerning the distribution and application of knowledge, enterprise social software can support knowledge exploration strategies and leverage knowledge creation and validation procedures. We present secondary data from the utilisation of enterprise social computing tools inside

two companies for that matter. The first case illustrates how social computing tools were deployed in an international bank, and the other presents the employment of these technologies in an international broadcasting company. The authors suggest that free-form and pre-defined structures can co-exist in bounded organisational environments, in which knowledge exploitation and knowledge exploration strategies can harmonically interact. This chapter concludes with some managerial implications and future research avenues.

INTRODUCTION

During the last decade, industry and scholarly communities have equally highlighted the importance of managing organisational knowledge and posited that intangible assets form a critical enterprise resource asset (Metaxiotis et al., 2005; Davenport and Prusak, 1998). Knowledge management has been previously associated with the exploitation and growth of the organisational knowledge assets (Davenport and Prusak, 1998) aiming at increased operational efficiency and continuous time-to-market improvement. Yet, recent developments associate knowledge strategies with the ability of the organisation to explore and identify critical changes of the external operating environment, ultimately renewing its internal knowledge base and core competencies (Bhatt et al., 2005). Hence, the mere existence of strong organisational resources and capabilities appear to be inadequate for obtaining long-term sustainable competitive advantage.

The term "Enterprise 2.0" promptly followed the widespread of the so-called "Web 2.0" and dominated the discourse surrounding the utilisation of business concepts in relation not only to enterprise information applications, but also to associated managerial approaches related to our post-industrial age (Bughin, 2008; Hamel, 2007). The use of the decimal point in the term implies a proposed discontinuity from previous forms of organisational contextures, emphasising on a suggested transformative role of social computing inside companies (e.g. wikis, blogs, podcasts, RSS (Really Simple Syndication), Instant Messaging, social bookmarking, etc) (McAfee, 2006). Now,

there is a heated debate between sceptics who argue that the term "Enterprise 2.0" has nothing to offer other than basic managerial selections regarding the utilisation of generic networked business applications (Stenmark, 2008), while supporters claim that the term conveys something new: a flexible and adaptable perspective to organisational knowledge strategies (Bibikas et al., 2008; Ip & Wagner, 2008; Kosonen & Kianto, 2008; Marfleet, 2008; Patrick & Dotsika, 2007; Coakes, 2006; McAfee, 2006) and a key driver towards the development of dynamic capabilities (Shuen, 2008). Has Enterprise 2.0 some actual meaning or the term should just be approached metaphorically? In this paper, we explore whether Enterprise 2.0 can provide strategic business value affecting key knowledge processes and adaptive capabilities of organizations.

The remaining of this chapter is structured in five parts: The first presents the research approach and study methodology. The next section explores knowledge exploitation and knowledge exploration strategies through the lens of dynamic capabilities theory. The third part presents some of the main characteristics of Enterprise 2.0 and investigates the potential of social software in the future of organisational information and knowledge management systems. We argue that these technologies can help towards the integration of exploitation and exploration knowledge strategies. The fourth session presents secondary data from the utilisation of enterprise social computing tools inside two multinational companies. Finally, suggestions and managerial implications are presented along with future research directions.

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