Chapter 11
Participation in ICT–Enabled Meetings

Katherine M. Chudoba
Utah State University, USA

Mary Beth Watson-Manheim
University of Illinois, Chicago, USA

Kevin Crowston
Syracuse University, USA

Chei Sian Lee
Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

ABSTRACT

Meetings are a common occurrence in contemporary organizations. The authors' exploratory study at Intel, an innovative global technology company, suggests that meetings are evolving beyond their familiar definition as the pervasive use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) changes work practices associated with meetings. Drawing on data gathered from interviews prompted by entries in the employees' electronic calendar system, the authors examine the multiple ways in which meetings build and reflect work in the organization and derive propositions to guide future research. Specifically, the authors identify four aspects of meetings that reflect work in the 21st century: meetings are integral to work in team-centered organizations, tension between group and personal objectives, discontinuities, and ICT support for fragmented work environment.

INTRODUCTION

Meetings are "a focused interaction of cognitive attention, planned or chance, where people agree to come together for a common purpose, whether at the same time and same place, or at different times in different places" (Romano & Nunamaker, 2001, p. 1). Meetings are pervasive in contemporary work life, serving as important forums where social relationships are created and changed in organizations (Schwartzman, 1989; Weick & Meader, 1993). Time spent in meetings

appears to be increasing (Romano & Nunamaker, 2001; Stephens & Davis, 2009) and meetings are prevalent across all levels of workers (National Research Council, 1999) as a mechanism for collaboration, coordination, information sharing, and decision-making (Tropman, 1996).

Though meetings would appear to be a stable and mundane feature of organizational life, we suggest that the practice of meetings is in fact changing dramatically with the pervasive use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). We present an exploratory study conducted at Intel Corporation where participation in meetings has evolved beyond an activity that is perceived as peripheral to work to one where it is an integral part of the work. The taken-for-granted image of individuals sitting around a table engaging in verbal discussion is no longer the norm. At Intel (and in many other organizations), meetings are frequently enabled by ICT, specifically voice and audioconferencing, screen sharing (such as NetMeeting®) and document sharing (e.g., through a Web site or shared file storage), to enable the participation of geographically distributed individuals. This technological change is reflected in evolving work practices, which include new expectations about who participates, what participation looks like, and more generally, how work gets done when people meet. Understanding the role of ICT in changing the way meetings are enacted provides insight into the conditions under which employees work, as well as the infrastructure that is necessary to support work.

We begin with a review of the relevant literature, including the practice lens and prior research on traditional meetings and GSS-supported meetings. Then we describe our methods and the findings from our qualitative analyses, which are reflected in the form of propositions derived from our data. We conclude with a discussion of our findings, including implications for research and practice.

BACKGROUND

Practice View

Because work and use of ICT can be highly intertwined, it is important to have a theoretical perspective that helps make sense of their relation. In this paper, we adapted Orlikowski's (2000) application of a practice lens to analyze the interaction between ICT use and meetings. A practice lens focuses on human agency and the open-ended set of structures or work practices that arise through recurrent human activities. The approach uses people's everyday activities as the unit of analysis, and examines the structural and interpersonal elements that create and are created by these activities (Schultze & Orlikowski, 2001). While offering a broad perspective on which to base an investigation of meetings, a practice lens encourages a focus on specific work practices and the structures and norms associated with them. It provides guidance about what factors should serve as the focus of an investigation, rather than providing a predictive framework of cause and effect relationships that are examined. In our adaptation of the practice lens view, we focus on practices as organizational members report them and use the insights that emerge from these practices to generate propositions to guide future research.

Figure 1, adapted from Orlikowski (2000), shows the relationship between agency and work practices and their constituents. Work practices of social systems are enacted through recurrent human activities and are mediated through settings, norms, and interpretive schemes that guide human action. Settings include the context that supports meeting activities such as participants' physical location and technology; norms, the codes of conduct and etiquette that guide and regulate the activities; and interpretive schemes, the categories and assumptions that give meaning to the activities. By examining meetings as

Related Content

Problems and Pitfalls in the Evaluation of Adaptive Systems
Stephan Weibelzahl (2008). *End-User Computing: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 168-179).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/problems-pitfalls-evaluation-adaptive-systems/18179

Exploring the Relationship between Institutional Context, User Participation, and Organizational Change in a European Telecommunications Company
Tom Butlerand Brian Fitzgerald (2002). *Advanced Topics in End User Computing, Volume 1 (pp. 128-157).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/exploring-relationship-between-institutional-context/4429

Diffusing Management Information for Legal Compliance: The Role of the IS Organization within the Sarbanes-Oxley Act
Ashley Braganzaand Ray Hackney (2010). *Computational Advancements in End-User Technologies: Emerging Models and Frameworks (pp. 93-111).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/diffusing-management-information-legal-compliance/38088

Assessing Customer Perceptions of Website Service Quality in Digital Marketing Environments
Yi-Shun Wangand Tzung-I Tang (2003). *Journal of Organizational and End User Computing (pp. 14-31).*
www.irma-international.org/article/assessing-customer-perceptions-website-service/3770

In or Out: An Integrated Model of Individual Knowledge Source Choice
Yinglei Wang, Darren Meisterand Peter H. Gray (2013). *Innovative Strategies and Approaches for End-User Computing Advancements (pp. 40-60).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/out-integrated-model-individual-knowledge/69611