

Discussion of Enterprise Social Networks' Success: Case and Empirical Studies

Masterarbeit

zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades „Master of Science (M.Sc.)“ im Studiengang
Wirtschaftswissenschaft der Wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen Fakultät der Leibniz Universität Hannover

vorgelegt von

Name: Yücel

Vorname: Aylin Ebru



Prüfer: Prof. Dr. M.H. Breitner

Hannover, den 30. September 2015

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1. Introduction

Due to the increasing importance of internationalization, project work and expert knowledge in companies, the demand for effective communication and collaboration tools is growing. Technology suppliers have responded by providing Enterprise Social Networking (ESN) systems (Stieglitz & Meske, 2012: 36). These systems integrate core corporate activities and functions to facilitate information and knowledge sharing and storage, expert finding and relationship building (e.g. DiMicco et al., 2008.) Moreover, employees feel a certain enjoyment by using an ESN system (Interview 3) and a feeling of belonging to the company (Han, Söras, & Schjodt-Osmo, 2015). Hence, ESN systems serve as an important key driver to increase efficiency and productivity and therefore create competitive advantage.

The implementation and use of ESN systems, however, is confronted by a number of legal, technical and socio-cultural barriers. In addition, there is a high pressure to justify by the stakeholders (Stieglitz & Meske, 2012: 36). For that reason, various interests of several stakeholders must be taken into account. Decision makers have to justify their investments by showing the costs and benefits. In order to improve the ESN system, system stakeholders have to understand the impact of the information system (IS). Furthermore, users' motivation to participate depends on the perceived usefulness of the system to perform tasks. Therefore, information about the systems' success, how the system is used or can be improved is important (Richter & Riemer, 2013a: 1). A research with more than 1000 organizations by Gartner Inc. shows that although social technologies are employed by 70 percent of the organizations, most initiatives failed. The approach has only a success rate of 10% (Rivera & van der Meulen, 2013). That is why, there is an increasing demand to understand and justify the success of these technologies. Although it may be more desirable to measure system success in terms of monetary costs and benefits, such measures are not suitable for Social software. Instead, critical success factors form the basis for practical measurement of ESN success and performance in an organization. Companies can identify a set of critical success factors to measure qualitatively which success criteria they have met and where improvement is needed. Consequently, following research question shall be answered:

RQ: Which factors determine the success of Enterprise Social Networks?

A large number of studies have been conducted to identify factors that contribute to IS success. Based on the logic framework of the IS Success Model by DeLone & McLean (2003), the aim of the present thesis is to propose an ESN Success Model. This proposed success model takes critical success factors and characteristics of ESN systems into account. Furthermore, recommendations for every phase of the ESN lifecycle for fulfilling the critical success factors will be stated. This can help organizations understand the implementation process, assess their situation, plan for improvements and provide guidance on how to move towards realizing the strategic potential of the ESN system. To show, that the critical success factors can be used in practice, a maturity model for two companies will be conducted.

The study is structured as follows: In Chapter 2, the present state of research regarding Web 2.0 applications is shown. Furthermore, the underlying theory (IS Success Model by DeLone & McLean, 2013) and the state of art of ESN system's success is represented. Following that, the research design is represented in Chapter 3, including the data collection process and the data analysis. The results are separated into results from the literature review (Chapter 4) and results from the qualitative interviews (Chapter 5). Afterwards, a phase model for the implementation of an ESN system is presented in Chapter 6. The results are discussed in Chapter 7 and recommendations are given in Chapter 8. Chapter 9 shows the limitations of the present study and in Chapter 10 the conclusion is drawn and an outlook for future research is given.

10. Conclusion and Outlook

The aim of the present thesis was to identify critical success factors that play an important role in the implementation and usage of ESN systems and, thus, in measuring ESN systems' success. Based on the logic framework of the IS Success Model by DeLone & McLean (2003), eleven measures regarding the service quality, information quality and service quality were discovered. In the course of the thesis, new factors that are relevant for the success of ESN systems but which the IS Success Model does not explain, were identified. Thus, the model cannot be used without modification. Therefore, the measures of the dimensions organizational factors (top management support, corporate culture, project management, corporate communication, implementation and definition of strategy) and individual factors (user characteristics and motivation) were added. This highlights the important role of the socio-cultural aspects by implementing ESN systems. This leads to a broader view of the IS as a socio-technical system in which the organization is a key driver.

The factors most mentioned are top management support (9), corporate culture (6) and project management (6). However, the success of an ESN system also depends on the characteristics of the employees (6). These are age, culture, job position, technical knowledge and Social Software affinity. The most frequently mentioned critical success factor of the technology dimension is the ease of use: (5). The introduction should therefore not be regarded as a technological project. Rather, the joint design of both the technical system and its social environment is necessary in order to implement a value adding ESN system. According to Neumann et al. (2011) performance measurement systems need to be embedded in the lifecycle of an IS. Therefore, the ESN lifecycle (1) initialization, (2) planning (3) introduction, (4) operations and (5) onward / upward were distinguished. The classification of the critical success factors in the ESN lifecycle show that in all phases of measures for the successful fulfillment of the critical success, factors need to be performed. Furthermore, the identified critical success factors have been studied in the context of a maturity model for two international operating companies. In this way, it was shown how critical success factors can be used and the success of the system evaluated. Furthermore, with the maturity model recommendations regarding further steps and actions can be drawn.

The Web 3.0 with stronger usage of mobile devices and semantic approaches in the context of ESN systems, present future targets for theory and practice. Tags are available for the description of information, whereas the semantic describes the relationship of information. This can

be used to search for information more effectively and efficiently. Although metadata is already a suitable help for the information provision, the information between contexts and the distinction of ambiguous terms is missing. Due to the enrichment of data with semantic technologies, it is possible to search within the currently unstructured IS more efficiently and gather information (Back, 2008: 81). Gartner's Hype Cycle for Social Software in 2015 shows that collaborative customer interfaces are on the rise. This brings new challenges with respect to data protection but also for the quality information as information then is not controllable since the information quality is the customer's responsibility (Drakos & Sussin, 2015).

As a conclusion, the relevance of ESN will be rising in the future due to new intra- and inter-organizational cooperation, increasing dynamics and employees generations.