

Tweet Inside: Microblogging in a Corporate Context

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Abstract

With the advent of Twitter, Microblogging has become increasingly popular. The service is simple, easy to use and its success has company executives wondering if using the short message service in their Intranets would benefit organisational information sharing and communication. At the same time, others have cautioned against transferring social media inside the corporation as this might lead to importing unwanted procrastination behaviours. Against this backdrop, our case study explores communication patterns in a team that has adopted Enterprise Microblogging. By applying genre analysis, find that microblogging in this corporate context is vastly different to its public equivalent. We discuss our findings in light of contextual differences and the open nature of communication platforms, which impact on user appropriation. Moreover, we argue that decision makers should vest trust in their employees in putting microblogging to productive use in their group work environments.

Keywords: Enterprise Microblogging, Social Media, Enterprise 2.0, Group Work

1 Introduction

Whether in reporting on the tsunami in Southeast Asia or the elections in Iran - the Internet platform Twitter has found its place as a short messaging service in the public space. The service has gained popularity with media professionals, Internet enthusiasts and the average user. The idea of Twitter is for users to broadcast to the world what they are currently doing, called Microblogging. Messages are short (up to 140 characters), the user interface is simple, and a wide range of tools provides ubiquitous access. Twitter belongs to an emerging class of technologies termed Social Media. Having gained significant coverage from the popular press and management-focused media alike, organisations have begun trialling the application and use of these technologies in their

Intranet contexts, i.e. for facilitating collaborative processes among employees (e.g. McAfee 2009, Richter & Riemer 2009, Wagner & Majchrzak 2007).

As a growing number of providers offer platforms to facilitate what has been named Enterprise Microblogging (EMB), it remains unclear to what extent this service might present a potential for improving team communication and how it might be appropriated and used in a corporate context. Typical claims regarding its usefulness include the sharing of information and exchanging ideas (e.g. the “virtual water cooler”).

While platform vendors and consultants point to the potentials these platforms yield, little is known about what impact social media might yield in the corporate realm. In fact, many decision makers have voiced concerns that with the application of such technologies, organisations are at risk to importing some of the typical behaviours associated with the use of social media in the public Internet (e.g. Howlett 2009). While examples of business use of Twitter have been reported (e.g. in journalism), communication in Twitter is at the same time associated with largely hedonistic, egocentric, and leisure-focused behaviours (Naaman et al. 2010).

In this paper we report on a case study, in which we explore EMB use practices in a company, which has adopted and used an EMB platform for several months. We apply genre analysis to identify communication types and reason on the role of this new platform in the respective team context. For doing so, we compare our results with similar studies on Public Microblogging (PMB) in Twitter. Our results show that EMB as a phenomenon is vastly different from PMB. While in both cases the underlying technology is quite similar, appropriation and use in a corporate context are structured by the needs of the tasks at hand and by a shared group context. Communication is much less egocentric; instead it is oriented towards the needs of others.

We discuss our results in light of the particular nature of such platforms as open technologies. Our study has implications for information systems research and contributes to a better understanding of the nature of this particular type of artefact. In terms of practice-oriented implications, our study suggests that widespread fears of importing with social media the associated behaviours “into the intranet” are largely unfounded, as open technologies do not purport usage. To the contrary, decision makers should vest trust in their employees to appropriate technologies in a useful and fitting way.

Our paper proceeds as follows: Firstly, we introduce microblogging and briefly summarise recent research. In section 3 we introduce the case company and its EMB platform. Section 4 provides details on our study, while section 5 describes the different genres we identified. Section 6 discusses these genres in light of recent results on Twitter and provides explanations for differences of EMB usage in the two contexts. We also discuss implications for decisions makers and point to study limitations and future research. Section 7 concludes the paper.

2 Microblogging

Microblogging is quite simple and best explained by drawing on Twitter: On the web platform, users can post short messages, called tweets, which contain up to 140 characters. These messages appear in chronological order on the user’s public blog stream. Users can decide to ‘follow’ others and will then receive their messages. Messages can be created directly on the web or with a wide range of third party software solutions and mobile clients. While simplicity is often seen as a key success factor (e.g. Passant et al. 2008, Netskills 2010, Zhao & Rosson 2009), microblogging is not without controversy.

Critics argue that with Twitter an unprecedented mass of meaningless information is created (e.g. Pear Analytics 2009).

2.1 Research Investigating the Use of Twitter

Due to the widespread adoption by millions of users (e.g. Kazeniak 2009), Twitter and microblogging in general have become the subjects of research from different disciplines. Existing work focuses mainly on describing the phenomenon (e.g. Barnes & Böhringer 2009; Huberman et al. 2009; Krishnamurthy et al. 2008). Moreover, the use of Twitter has been investigated across contexts, such as political campaigning (Cetina 2009), as a form of electronic consumer word-of-mouth (Jansen et al. 2009), as a learning tool (e.g. Ebner & Schiefner 2008; Parslow 2009), or as a tool for social activism (Galer-Unti 2009).

Since our interest lies in understanding the proliferation of microblogging in the enterprise context, we draw on two studies that portray the ways in which individual users communicate with Twitter in the public space in order to later contrast and compare the findings with our study. Firstly, one recent study shows that 80% of Twitter users can be classified as so-called ‘me-formers’, who mainly make themselves the object of their communications. Just 20% are seen to be true ‘in-formers’, who post content that is targeted towards other users’ interests (Naaman et al. 2010). The authors identified several communication types, of which they discuss the four most frequent: 41% of all posts contain *information about oneself* (“I’m tired”), 25% are *random thoughts* (“Blue sky in Winter”), 24% utter *personal opinions* (“Great game yesterday”), while only 21% exhibit true *exchange of information* (“New Study on Enterprise 2.0: [http:// ...](http://...)”). In another study, Java et al. (2007) found four meta-categories of usage: 1) daily chatter, 2) conversations, 3) information/URL sharing, 4) news reporting, with a similar contribution between personal communication and information sharing. Most posts can be classified as daily chatter, while conversations account for 21% of the tweets, and only about 13% of all tweets share information / URLs.

While these results are in line with what the developers imagined the use of Twitter to be, i.e. to share what one is currently doing/thinking, it needs to be noted that informing behaviour still accounts for a significant proportion of communication, which shows that many users have found productive and professional uses for the service. Essentially, this is what inspired transferring the idea to the corporate context.

2.2 Enterprise Microblogging

Given the success of Twitter, a range of EMB platforms have emerged in the marketplace and corporations have begun to ask how they might exploit the potential of microblogging for internal/group communications. While platform providers claim a range of benefits, decision makers however have been cautious to warm to the idea. At the same time, a lively discussion on the benefits and risks associated with corporate social media has emerged in Blogs and other online commentary outlets. Among the concerns is that microblogging is only a temporary fashion, that nobody in the company will use the tools and that most organisations will not be ready culturally to implement social media (Marchionda 2009). Others deplore that many HR managers are entrenched in an optimisation and control attitude detrimental to the application of social media (Husband 2010) and that many organisations are not yet ready to open up to the idea of social media in the workplace (Meister & Willyerd 2009). Specifically, many company executives are agitated by the procrastination potential, fearing that the application of

microblogging might lead to importing to their intranets "the great chatter" associated with Twitter & Co, which would cause time wasting and productivity losses to the company (e.g. Duperrin 2009). In this context Günther et al. (2009) point out that for many executives the fear that EMB will ultimately lead to what they call a *low signal-to-noise ratio* ("You will get flooded with information") is a reason not to implement it in their corporate intranet

Notwithstanding, there are also many positive voices (e.g. Lynch 2009; Baines & Marshall 2009). In 2008 technology research specialists Gartner have added microblogging to their hype cycle. They forecaste a sharp rise in popularity and that by 2011 microblogging will be featured in 80% of enterprise social media platforms (Gartner 2008).

Our research is motivated by both the general lack of research on EMB and the controversial discussions on its potential use or abuse of in the corporate space. To our knowledge only two case studies exist, which provide descriptive accounts of EMB, the associated implementation processes as well as some success factors (Barnes et al. 2010; Böhringer & Richter 2009) But to the best of our knowledge, no study has taken a closer look at the actual usage and communication practices that proliferate on such platforms.

3 Introduction to the Case

Our case company is Communardo, a German software provider. One of its products is Communote, a platform for facilitating microblogging in an Intranet environment. As Communardo has adopted its own product, our study is based on an analysis of one of its internal divisions using the platform to facilitate their team and project communications.

3.1 Communardo Software GmbH

Communardo was founded in 2001 in Dresden and has since grown into a company of 180 employees. It offers software solutions and consultancy in the context of knowledge management, team collaboration and project & portfolio management. Employees work in knowledge-intensive projects, a fact which stresses the importance of team work. Typical software development and consulting projects last for 3-6 months and employ 4 to 10 employees. Corporate culture has been described as open and friendly, with a high willingness to share experiences, to cooperate and to help others.

IT plays an important role in the company; new technologies are implemented at an early stage internally to gain experience for future client projects. Collaborative technologies such as VOIP, instant messaging, wikis and blogs are part of everyday work practices, with EMB being the latest addition.

In 2008, inspired by an employee's suggestion, the management team decided to implement EMB in order to improve information flows across the company's organisational units and various projects. As the company had been growing rapidly, difficulties emerged with sharing information and ideas. The result was a large number of information silos, which reportedly became unmanageable. With EMB, management hoped to create what was called a "single point of truth". The decision was made not to adopt a public microblogging service due to perceived functional deficits (e.g. no rights management, few possibilities for search and filtering) and for strategic reasons (e.g. data protection, reliability). Since existing EMB solutions did not fulfil these requirements,

the company ultimately opted to develop their own platform, called Communote, combining the company name with the word “note”.

3.2 The Communote Platform

Communote is a browser-based platform, which evolves around the concept of multiple microblogs (blog streams), to which users can be added on a case by case basis. Technically it uses Web 2.0 technology (i.e. Ajax) and design (clean look & feel).

At first glance (see Figure 1), Communote looks a lot like Twitter, as the key elements are the same: the posting stream is the main element, a panel with filtering and navigation options is situated on the right. However, a major difference is the drop-down list on the top. This element is used to choose the streams in which to post. So, rather than to post in one large general stream as with Twitter (where users then need to configure their own personalised streams by way of creating a list of people they follow), Communote allows to setup blogs/streams deliberately associated with projects or teams. Users are then given access to these blogs, and can decide in which context to post. A user’s start page then shows a synthesis of postings from the user’s microblogs. Then, in order read the messages associated with a project, users can simply select the respective blog and read through the emerging stream of messages.

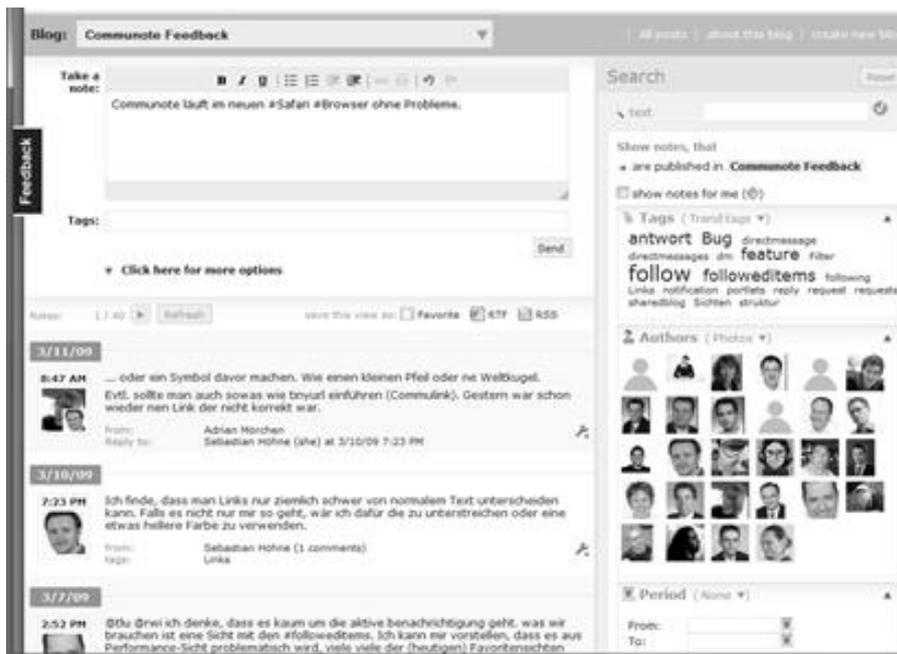


Figure 1: Screenshot of Communote

4 Study Overview

The main aim of our study is to explore EMB usage practices. For doing so, the study is based on rich analysis of a single case. By applying genre analysis to the texts collected from the case company’s EMB platform, we identify communication genres, which represent EMB communication practices. Then, to better understand the role of EMB, we compare and contrast our findings with Twitter communication patterns (as presented in section 2.2). While text analysis for identifying genres represents the main method applied, we also conducted seven face-to-face interviews with Communote employees.

Space restrictions don't allow us to provide first hand information from the interviews, but they nevertheless served as the basis to gain an understanding of multiple facets of the case and for guiding our sampling (see below). In this following, we provide an overview of genre analysis and spell out our case sampling and data analysis procedures.

4.1 Genre Analysis: Identification of Communication Practices

Genres are “socially recognized types of communicative actions [...] that are habitually enacted by members of a community to realize particular social purposes.” (Yates et al. 1999, 84) Genres develop over time as a response to recurring communication situations and in turn function as socially agreed upon templates on which group members routinely draw when they communicate with each other (Orlikowski & Yates, 1994).

Genres capture meanings and reflect practices of the communities in which they exist (Yates et al., 1999). As such, genre analysis can serve as an instrument to understand the communication practices of a social group, because “in identifying and labelling genres we try to capture the gestalt of the various components of the communicative act.” (Kwasnik & Crowston 2005, 80). Practices in turn can generally be defined as a “routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, things and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge”(Reckwitz 2002, 249).

A practice understanding stresses the routinisation of communication; with regards to technology a practice view directs researchers' attention to the technology-in-use, i.e. the ways in which different people use technology in particular times and places (Orlikowski & Iacono 2000). Communication technologies are appropriated over time and become embedded in emerging and situated communication practices, which are in turn reflected in the communication genres, which structure this communication.

In order to identify communication genres, we need to specify how a genre can be recognized. What can be observed in context is the communication events people engage in during their daily routines, such as a post (a written utterance) in a microblogging stream. Conceptually, a genre is a class of communicative events; communication events in turn are instantiations of a genre (Swales 1990). What “turns a collection of communicative events into a genre is some shared set of communicative purpose” (Swales, 1990, 46). Thus, purpose is the primary criterion by which to identify communication genres (Askehave & Swales 2001). The actual genre analysis can then be carried out using several techniques, e.g., document/text analysis, interviews, group discussions, ethnography (observation) and contextual inquiry (Beyer & Holtzblatt 1998).

4.2 Case Sampling

We selected our case company, as we wanted to study EMB-in-use (Orlikowski 2000), e.g. as opposed to the adoption process. Hence, we searched for an organisation that had already used EMB productively for several months. The number of such cases was rather limited, as not many organisations had experiences in this field. Notwithstanding, we found an organisation that had adopted EMB several months ago and was willing to share with us the data from their blog streams.

In order to arrive at a manageable data set, we then restricted the number of users and data points by selecting one team within the company. We selected the team that reportedly showed significant adoption. The team is a software engineering team (creating

knowledge management solutions). It consists of a team leader, four software engineers, two consultants and five support workers.

Finally, we only analysed those team blog streams, which already showed a significant amount of posts (at least ten), because some blogs were set up too recently, others focused on specific topics and contained too few posts. In total, we considered 10 blog streams for this paper containing 648 posts with a total of 36,867 words. All texts were extracted from the platform, saved and uploaded to the qualitative data analysis software atlas.ti 5.0 for analysis.

4.3 Data analysis: genre identification

Our genre analysis is based on text analysis, as communication manifests in the blog posts in the various streams available on the Communote platform. In identifying genres every blog post has been examined and coded according to communication purpose (What does this communication trying to achieve?). In doing so, two researcher have read and coded the texts one after the other, discussing and refining any possible deviations in interpretations along the way. This process is a circular process, typical for qualitative data analysis.

In a first round of pre-coding of a sub set of streams, we identified an initial set of genre candidates, which we discussed and refined as the basis for later coding of all streams. In the actual coding process, whenever a new genre candidate emerged, it was discussed, checked against existing candidates and when it indeed described a new kind of communicative event, the already-coded blog streams were recoded, until all streams were coded and no new genre candidates emerged.

We identified a total of 912 single genre appearances across the ten streams. While most posts have one purpose and are thus regarded as an instance of one genre, many of the longer posts represent different communicative events and thus contain more than one, sometimes several instances of different genres. On average 1.4 genres were assigned per blog post. In figure 2 we coded two complex blog posts exemplarily. Our genre analysis resulted in a total of 18 individual genres, which we subsumed under 6 top-level genres (see below).

Blog post #1

*"Connection problem with #ALE is solved.
But there is another problem emerging: The configuration of ...
@jkl can you please handle that?
Btw, we should prepare a support offer for #OJO. There is demand for support from them right now."*

- Update task
- Notify of emerging problems
- Delegate
- To Do

Blog Post #2

*"WuLa-platform is #Live!
Great @ejc @lue @esa
Need to send out support offer.
#Essa is next topic
We get a reference release from #HAS
@oha how do I do that?"*

- Update event
- Social Feedback
- To Do
- Ask how-to questions

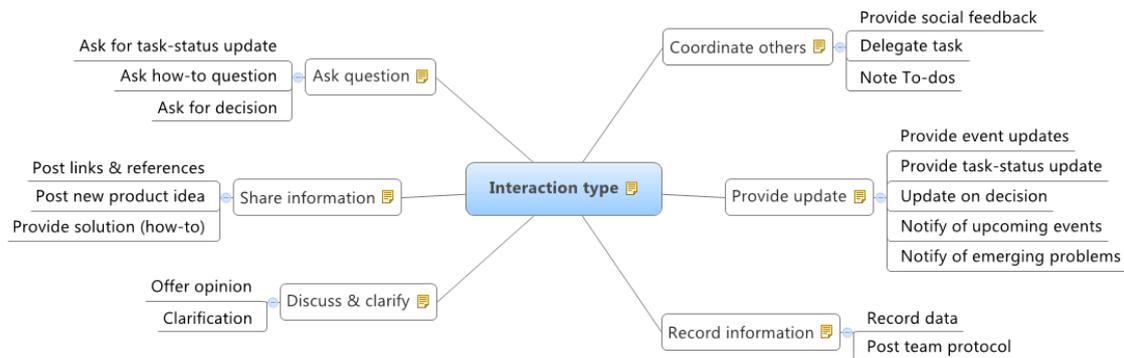
Genre codes

Figure 2: Two exemplary Blog Posts with genre coding

5 Team communication via EMB: the genre repertoire

The genre repertoire, being the result of our interpretation of the team members' written utterances on the EMB platform, reflects the team's EMB communication practices. As genres are identified by purpose they provide a rich picture of *why* users engage in EMB. It allows us to reason on the purpose or role EMB serves in this team context.

Figure 3 provides an overview of our genre classification, a list of 18 genres with examples can be found in the Appendix. The six top-level genres allow us to group single genres into meaningful categories. These categories represent distinct types of interactions, i.e. reasons for and ways of engaging with others on the EMB platform. All in all, we found that users post in order to ask questions, to share information they found elsewhere, discuss a project matter, coordinate others in the team context, provide updates on matters invisible to others and post information to be recorded for future reference. Henceforth, the following subsections can be read as the second part of »*Users draw on EMB in order to...*«.

**Figure 3:** Overview of genres grouped by genre categories (interaction types).

5.1 Provide updates

This genre category is by far the most common one (accounting for 43.8% of genre appearances – see figure 4); it represents the users' intention to provide others with information on what is going on in and around the team environment.

The single most important reason for someone to post on the EMB platform is to provide status updates of what one has just done or achieved (*Provide task-status update*). This genre was present in a total of 22.8% of all blog posts, which highlights the role of EMB as a task-related coordination medium and awareness channel for the team members in their day-to-day project work. With 12.8% the second most common genre is closely related (*Provide event updates*). People frequently inform others about events outside the immediate team environment and their resulting implications, e.g. communication with a client company or newly won contracts.

Three more genres belong to this category, but these are far less common: Users provide others with information on upcoming events (e.g. a client meeting or the inavailability of IT infrastructure: *Notify of upcoming events*), they alert others to an important emerging issue (*Notify of emerging problems*), or they provide an *update on decisions*, which they made with implications for others. The latter is frequently done by team leaders.

5.2 Coordinate others

The second largest of the six categories covers 20.9% of all genre instances. It reflects communication with which people aim to directly influence other team members and their tasks. For example, people frequently post items, which require attention by the team (*Note to dos*). While these items are noted for future reference, with *delegate tasks*, team members directly address others and hand over a task for completion. The latter often characterises communication between team leader and team member. Finally, executive directors and team leaders also account for communication in the *Provide Social Feedback* genre. Such communicative events aim to acknowledge the work of others to the entire group.

5.3 Share information

This category represents 15.9% of genre instances and subsumes genres characterising the sharing of knowledge and work-related information with others. This can be posting information that someone found outside the team context, such as URLs or references to interesting articles (*Post links & references*). Interestingly, this genre is often used by the executive directors, e.g. to provide the group with input and stimulate new ideas. Moreover, people also provide solutions to team problems or otherwise educate colleagues, e.g. in setting up a software or carrying out a task (*Provide solution/how-to*). Finally, people occasionally post ideas for new products (e.g. software modules) as a trigger for team discussions (*Post new product idea*).

5.4 Ask question

This genre category represents the need of users to acquire information from others. It accounts for 13.7% of all genre instances. The following are typical situations in which people draw on these genres: A user might need to know something about a product or a service in order to solve a problem (*Ask how-to question*). Team members, in particular project leaders, need to know the status of a task in order to get on with their own work (*Ask for task-status update*). Occasionally, users need to refer a matter to others for decision (*Ask for decision*). Not surprisingly, *ask for task-status update* occurs in only 2.5% of all blog posts, as most of the time there is no need to ask, since users regularly provide task-status updates (as shown above).

5.5 Remaining genres

While the first four categories account for about 94% of all genre instances, the remaining 2 categories represent communication we only very rarely observed.

The first category, *Discuss & Clarify*, subsumes communication which is interactive and part of discussions that span a small set of related posts. For example, people might clarify some particular aspect that is unclear to someone (*Clarification*) or utter a personal opinion (*Discussion & opinion*). However, utterances of a personal nature (“I think...”) rarely ever happened in our sample.

The second category refers to communicative events whereby users post information to the platform in order to *Record Information*, i.e. login data or contact details (*Record data*) or meeting minutes (*Post team protocol*). Some interviewees pointed to this practice highlighting that people post certain information for future reference, as it will easily be found via the platform’s search function. With these postings, neither an

immediate information need of others is served, nor do the senders expect anyone to immediately act on or react to this information.

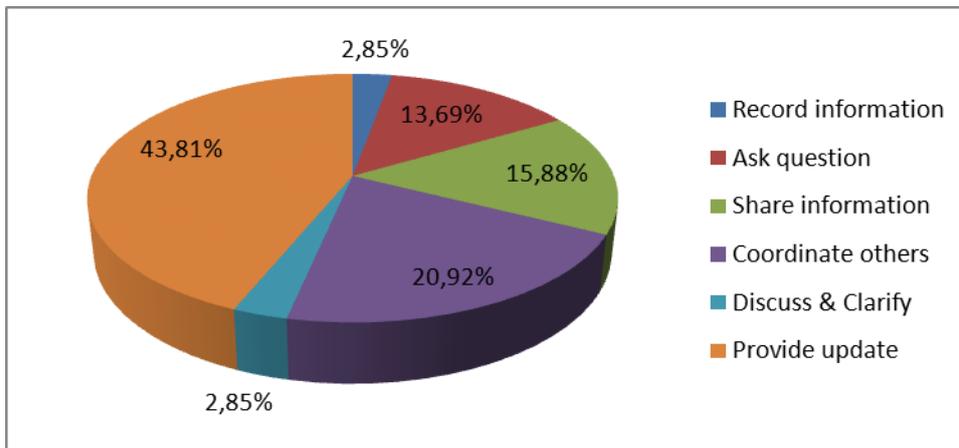


Figure 4: Distribution of genre appearances across the six top-level categories.

6 Discussion and implications

In the following we firstly discuss the above genre repertoire in light of the team context. Secondly, we compare our findings with typical communication patterns found on Twitter. Thirdly, we discuss implications of our results for practitioners. Finally, we point out limitations and sketch out paths for future research.

6.1 EMB communication practices

The genre repertoire identified above indicates that our case team has appropriated EMB to support two important team practices: 1) awareness creation and 2) team/task coordination¹.

Firstly, team members, through providing updates on various matters, actively engage in the creation of what has been termed (group) awareness, which is “an understanding of the activities of others, which provides a context for your own activity” (Dourish & Bellotti 1992, 107). While awareness emerges naturally in face-to-face communication, in technologically mediated environments, information about others and their activities, is not immediately present (Scupelli et al. 2005). Lack of awareness is believed to create coordination problems typically associated with distributed work (Rennecker 2005). Genres such as *Update Task*, *Update Event*, but also the posting of links to information on the Internet thus reflect communication practices of signalling awareness information (Riemer & Haines 2009).

A second EMB practice evolves around teamwork on shared tasks. For example, users post lists of to-do items, delegate tasks, make others aware of task progress, and ask and answer task-related questions (how-to). To a lesser extent communication is also concerned with coordinating team matters (e.g. provide updates on team events).

We conclude that EMB in the case team serves the role of an awareness creation and task/team coordination medium. These two roles were also frequently mentioned in our supporting interviews. At the same time, the above genre repertoire also reflects that

¹ We also discovered “simple problem solving” to a limited extent, but will only discuss the first two practices.

EMB is not used to support other team practices such as discussions or more in-depth collaborations, as reflected in the absence of a significant number of posts in the Discuss & Clarify category. Only very rarely do team members voice opinions. Also, there appear to be few discussions, i.e. chains of blog posts across the ten blogs with more than two posts related to each other.

6.2 Comparison with Twitter

Microblogging originates from and its perception has to a large extent been shaped by Twitter. Hence, we aim to contrast our findings on EMB with similar results on Public Microblogging. Drawing from our results, we see a fundamental difference in the ways in which communication in PMB and EMB is about self or the other. According to Naaman et al. (2010), on Twitter the most common communication genres are concerned with communication about *self*: Users 1) post status updates about themselves (41%), utter random thoughts (25%) or voice opinions (24%). The authors call this *Me-forming behaviour* as this communication is largely self-referential. Only 21% of all posts were found to include information with the immediate needs of *others* in mind, i.e. to make others aware of interesting information sources.

In strong contrast, in the corporate context of our case, team members communicate with the *others* in mind, e.g. by providing awareness information on tasks, events or decisions, by coordinating others or by sharing information. The main reason for this difference is likely to be that, other than in the public space, users in our case share a common context as they are part of the same organisation and team. Hence, communication takes place with a rich knowledge of the recipients and their needs. Microblogging in our case is very much a social endeavour, where people do not post to mainly present themselves and build a personal profile, but to contribute to team matters. Communication thus reflects two principles: 1) projection and 2) reciprocity. As one engages in microblogging (e.g. by providing updates), one projects one's own situation and information needs to the others in order to determine what information one sends to others (cf., Goffman 1967). At the same time one expects to be similarly signaled by others (i.e., reciprocity). The result is the emergence of shared practices of EMB, i.e. of awareness creation (cf. Riemer & Haines 2009). Hence, in this shared context microblogging evolves quite differently from what has been described as PMB, as it becomes embedded in situated group communication practices of awareness creation and task/team coordination.

6.3 Practical Implications

Our results have implications for decision makers. As argued above, some people have voiced concerns with regards to applying social media and microblogging in a corporate context, as this might lead to the importing of unwanted behaviours. However, our findings show that microblogging as a practice is highly context dependent. Moreover, our findings emphasise that communication and collaboration systems such as MB platforms are open technologies, which do not precipitate use; i.e., the artefact does not lend itself to or even determines a particular form of usage (Richter & Riemer 2009). Rather, such platform technologies need to be appropriated by their users in a particular context, thereby becoming part of rather different practices when compared across contexts.

From a practical point of view, there appears to be no need for decision makers to worry that EMB will import the hedonistic behaviours ("the big chatter") typically associated with Twitter. Rather, managers should vest trust in their employees to appropriate the

technologies in useful, focused and sensible ways. Obviously, we can only draw on the presented case to support this argument. However, given the particular nature of this type of technology and comparable research on similar technologies like Skype (Riemer et. al. 2007) or Social Networking Services (Richter & Riemer 2009) we are confident that social media in general and microblogging in particular can make a useful contribution to facilitating group work in a corporate context.

6.4 Limitations and further research

The above results and deliberations need to be viewed in light of the study's limitations. Firstly, we only explored one case (i.e. team), albeit a special and interesting one as the team has incorporated EMB into its daily practices. However, our research needs to be extended to a larger population of cases, e.g. to additional cases that have implemented the same platform (such as Communardo customers). Whereas our research provides a rich account of EMB, it does not allow generalising in a statistical sense. Quite to the contrary, we would expect EMB to be rather different in another organisational context. More data is needed to explore the richness and variety of EMB.

With regards to our case there are certain limitations to the conclusions we can draw, as our data did not cover general team media choice behaviour. Hence, we cannot fully specify the role of EMB in comparison to other available media. However, we are currently preparing a survey to find out about general media choice decisions made by the team members.

7 Conclusions

Our case reveals that microblogging in a corporate context can turn out to be very different to what has been observed on Twitter. Communication in our case is targeted towards providing awareness information for others and coordinating task and team matters. We have reasoned that a shared context and expectations reciprocity contribute to the emergence of such EMB usage practices.

Our findings suggest that decision makers should not be concerned to import unwanted behaviours to their Intranets when applying social media technologies from the public Internet, because appropriating such platforms is a matter of (re-)interpreting their core idea in a different context. Behaviour might be shaped, but is not determined by technological features. Managers thus should vest trust in their employees to be creative enough to know how to work with these technologies. While people might benefit from guidance in using the technologies, decision makers should not mistrust their employees' intentions and capabilities. To the contrary, team members in our case seemed to be happy to take onboard any new technology that helps them in getting on with the work.

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Appendix

Overview over all (eighteen) identified genres

Name	Explanation	Stylised Examples	%
Ask question			
Ask for decision	People refer something to others for decision.	"What should we do?" "Which alternative should we choose?"	3.94 %
Ask how-to question	People need to know something, solve a problem.	"Is product X capable of...?" "How should I do this?" "Will this work?"	7.23 %
Ask for task-status update	People ask for task progress.	"How far are we with...?" "#task: what's the status?"	2,2 %
Coordinate others			
Delegate task	Somebody or a group are asked to do something	"Can you please...?"	5.70%
Note To-dos	Tasks that need still be done are listed/posted.	"We need to..." "#open_issues: (list)"	10.08%
Provide social feedback	Success is appreciated and props are given	"Thanks to (list of people), well done!"	5.15%
Discuss & Clarify			
Clarification	Information is provided to clarify something.	"This is..." "They can..."	2.19%
Discussion & Opinion	Personal or subjective opinions are uttered	"I think..." "In my view..."	0.66%
Provide updates			
Notify of upcoming events	Others are informed about upcoming events	"Next week, please note..."	3.29%
Notify of emerging problems	Others are alerted to an (important) issue.	"I discovered the following..." "We have a problem:..."	3.72%
Provide event updates	People are informed about peripheral events such as phone calls, new project launches	"Call from @xyz, she wants..." "Team X wins new contract..."	12.81%
Provide task-status update	Someone has accomplished a task or gives an update on has progress	"I just created..." "Finished! Available here:..." "#task1: done, #task2: 50%"	22.78%
Provide update on decision	To answer questions about what should be done or which alternative be chosen.	"We do it this way..." "I decided we should..."	1.20%
Record information			
Post team protocol	The results of a collective (intern) meeting are posted	"Status meeting: (meeting minutes)"	1.42%
Record data	To store data e.g. to access platforms or phone numbers	"Mr. Smith, phone no:..."	1.42%
Share information			
Post new product idea	Others are informed about personal ideas	"I had an idea for..." "How about we build...?"	0.44%
Post links & references	URLs that are found especially relevant for a team or a subject are posted	"This might be of interest..." "Please see: http://www "	7.89%
Provide solution (how-to)	Know-how is shared with others to help them with their problems.	"In order to..., pls do..." "You should avoid..."	7.56%