

Co-authoring narratives and/of knowledge transfer in virtual collaborative networks: The InCaS experience.

Dr Lucia Garcia Lorenzo  
Social Psychology Institute  
London School of Economics  
Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE, UK  
L.garcia@lse.ac.uk

Potential themed Session for which the paper might be appropriate:  
Inter-Organizational Knowledge Creation through Informal Organizing

Abstract

To obtain competitive advantage in Europe, it is crucial for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to utilise knowledge efficiently and to enhance their innovation potential. However, managing and reporting those intangible assets systematically is not easy, especially for small organizations. To face this challenge, the collective research project "Intellectual Capital Statement – Made in Europe (InCaS)" on which this paper will be based, aims to develop and implement 'practical intellectual capital tool/s' suitable for SMEs.

The main research project hopes to implement Intellectual Capital statements - ICS or knowledge tool/s- in over 1.000 European SMEs, based on an EU-wide consolidated ICS methodology. To achieve this overall objective, the 3 research partners, 5 national associations of SME's and 25 participating SMEs located in six European countries are working on existing, but scattered, ICS/KM approaches in trying to identify common grounds as well as cultural differences and national and branch-specific requirements. "InCaS" puts emphasis on a practical approach, with maximum benefit regarding the improvement of exploitation of existing intellectual capital and unused innovation potentials. We hope SMEs will be using InCaS knowledge tools and techniques by the end of the project dissemination phase (Dec 2008).

One of the practical objectives of the project, which this paper will explore, is the creation of a wiki (a collaboratively written website) an encyclopaedia of the experiences of managing and disseminating organizational knowledge. The objective is to enable networking and knowledge sharing across organizations through the use of these tools (not only among the participating SMEs but also between the research partners and SME associations for instance). The tools have been designed along the lines of the new Web 0.2 trend in World Wide Web technology and web design. That is, creating "a second generation of web-based communities ...which aim to facilitate innovation, creativity, collaboration, and sharing among users."

Nowadays, the use of social networking sites, blogs and wikis is relatively widespread. The research being done on the use of this type of technical environments emphasises their support of social networking, of knowledge sharing and when used in (inter)organizational contexts, of collaboration and creativity. And yet; there is little mention in the literature of the way all those processes are being enacted: through the

creation, maintenance and support of collectively co-authored narratives and stories.

Based on the InCaS project experience so far, the paper will explore that gap: the role of co-authored narratives and informal storytelling as an instrument for the development of organizational knowledge supported by new social technologies.

Key words: inter-organizational collaboration, knowledge sharing, narratives, virtual social networking.

Dr Lucia Garcia-Lorenzo  
Social Psychology Institute  
London School of Economics  
Houghton Street,  
London WC2A 2AE  
Tel: +44 20 7955 7996