The importance of trust in gaining acceptance into an existing Community of Practice

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KMRC, HKPolyU & HKKMS

Context
Two projects in the Knowledge Community subjects of the HKCyberU M.Sc. In KM program

Master of Science / Postgraduate Diploma in Knowledge Management

Core Subjects
- Management of Innovation and Technology
- Business Intelligence and Data Mining
- Enterprise Knowledge Portals
- Knowledge Communities
- E-Learning Technologies and Practices
Guided by a mentor, over 14 weeks, a syndicate of 3-4 participants either

1. Pick a domain, identify potential members, promote and establish a community; or
2. Study an existing (public or proprietary) community, identify problem(s), introduce interventions (if needed) and observe reaction, provide assessment and recommendations; or
3. Resurrect a dormant community
4. Study, support and enhance the knowledge sharing and learning in the existing subject community
ISE5605
Knowledge Communities

A case study of motorcycle community - eBike
www.ebike.hk

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Agenda

- Background of eBike
- Project objective
- Scope of the study
- Methodology of the study
- Focus: 5 aspects
- Challenges for future community development
- Recommendations
- Lessons learnt
eBike Background

- What is eBike?
  - eBike is a Hong Kong motorcycle community. eBike purposes to enhance technical knowledge, road safety awareness and share information to motorcyclists.

- A brief history of eBike
  - eBike was established in 2002 and found by Uncle Yeung (羊叔) and his friend Horse Owner (馬主).
  - At very beginning, eBike was an online forum which purposes to gather all motorcycle lovers together, providing a communicate platform for discussion and organizing activity.
  - eBike has become a community which provides technical knowledge and information about motorcycle.

- eBike currently has about 12,000 registered members on the forum, and about 150 active members.
- eBike also has member card scheme, which requires membership fee. Member card holder benefits:
  - Gasoline discount at Esso petrol station
  - Road service discount
  - Free legal advice

These are benefits to the members who pay the subscription fee. Yet this member card registration does not limit their right to contribute and share online nor join the activities organized by eBike.
- Online content is generally open to public for reading for free. However, public cannot contribute online without online registration, no matter he/she has a membership card or not. So registering online is the entrance barrier of this community.
Project Objectives

1. The objectives of this study focus on:
   - Understanding eBike culture in terms of
     - Mutual trust between members,
     - Sense of belonging,
     - Knowledge sharing, and
     - Acquaintance of new and old members
   - Diagnosing the online community forum interface from user’s perspective

2. Provide recommendations and assist eBike to become
   - The most popular motorcycle community in HK
   - Multi-national motorcycle community

Scope of study

- Analyze the utility and the use of eBike’s web site by the community and how this utility can be enhanced
- Compare and contrast of eBike and iBike as iBike is in the same domain as eBike
- Compare the eBike community to other biker/motor cars communities (locally and in Mainland China) and analyze the collaborative technologies used
- Formulate recommendations within their current structure and capabilities to the community leadership
  - Long term: require more detailed planning to implement
  - Short term: something that can be implemented before the semester concludes
Methodologies of the study

- Interview with Uncle Yeung, the owner of eBike
- Community activity observations/conversations
- Sharing session with iBike team, another project team
- Survey for the members

Findings

Recommendations

5 areas of focus

- Acquaintance of new and old members
- Community forum interface
- Knowledge sharing culture
- Mutual trust between the members
- Sense of belonging
### Community forum interface

**Owner:**
- Mainly text, not much images
- No taxonomy system concept
- Quality of knowledge: high (~30 postings/day)
- No technology enhancement since setting up (c.f. Mainland forum, more appealing)

**Survey:**
- Forum interface is too old.
- Features of the forum are not up-to-date and not advanced to meet the needs
- Outlook of the forum is not appealing compared with other communities of its kind.

(Q.2 of Survey Part 3)

**Activity:**
- They are happy with the interface
- A platform to share “tricks” & skills (free parking space, shortest routes, cheap fuel)
- Share “tricks” in the perspective of female motor-cyclists

**iBike team:**
- Mainly text, not much images
- No concept of a taxonomy
- Quality of knowledge: not consistently high. Some facial expression icon
- “Commercial” background – bias

**Findings:**
- An interface to share experience. It is a knowledge base for new motor-cyclists to learn
- Lack of images and no taxonomy system will make the interface less appealing and not easy to search

### Screenshots of eBike

- Posting about a Private gathering
- Homepage of eBike
Screenshots of Community forums in Mainland China

http://www.xcar.com.cn/
http://www.chinacars.com/
http://bbs.pcauto.com.cn/

5 areas of focus

- Acquaintance of new and old members
- Community forum interface
- Knowledge sharing culture
- Mutual trust between the members
- Sense of belonging
### Survey question and results about “mutual trust” between members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why do you recommend your friends to join eBike?</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. 只因陸續@Coco為參考, 原來的態度駐此活動在下面加入。</td>
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<td>2. 之前無興趣推出, 想去試試。</td>
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<td>3. 對於副標題的觀念不接受, 對於線上預約的活動不接受。</td>
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<td>4. 另外</td>
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<td>5. 有了新的活動計畫，</td>
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<td>6. 未受活動外的影響</td>
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<td>7. 下次打算</td>
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<td>8. 提到副標題時會直接去創意。</td>
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<td>9. 沒有時間</td>
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<td>10. 感覺到這樣活動很有意思，</td>
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<td>11. 可以在活動中幫忙安排時間。</td>
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</table>
**Mutual trust between members**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Owner:</th>
<th>Survey:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- New motor-cyclists join the ride trip with old members: promote road safety</td>
<td>- 61% of participants believe eBike could provide solutions to solve their problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Quick response for the questions posted online (average an hour): eager to help</td>
<td>- Survey result shows member trust each other. E.g. “相識的會員比較正經及正氣” and “真正幫到手解決有關電單車的問題”.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity:</th>
<th>iBike team:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Exchanged phone numbers - support in case of accident free of charge</td>
<td>- Too many members, not easy to build up close relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Add to Facebook/MSN</td>
<td>- Members adopt a more “easy going” attitude as many answers come up with a facial expression symbol</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Weekend ride: gain driving experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>- New ones trust the experienced to accompany them to drive on highway</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>Findings:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mutual trust can be reflected by response rate of the questions raised &amp; content quality, not the no. of postings/membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build-up through two interfaces: face-to-face and online</td>
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<tr>
<td>With this, they can self-help each other to build up harmony in their domain &amp; real life</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## 5 areas of focus

- **Community forum interface**
- **Sense of belonging**
- **Knowledge sharing culture**
- **Mutual trust between the members**
- **Acquaintance of new and old members**
Sense of belonging

Owner:
- Consistent no. of online members (~30-40 in a single timeslot) and in face-to-face official events (~ 50-80 each time)
- Rejuvenate the community with other interest group discussions to build up even closer bonding

Survey:
- 50% of forum members hold eBike member cards
- 47.2% of eBike members do not join other motorcycle communities
- 25% of people stay in eBike because of sensibilities

Activity:
- New comers in receive a warm experience in the online forum
- Many members have known each other for years. Trust underpins much of their social life
- Attend official gatherings whenever they can

iBike team:
- Too many members, less serious talks
- Majority: senior members; little new ones
- Commercial reason to ban the postings, members cannot share what they want, not easy to build up sense of belonging

Findings:
- Warm welcome and face-to-face gatherings help to build up sense of belonging
- Too many members may create a “ignore” feel which is not pleasant to new members to result a loss of members and knowledge base
- Autonomy to express can satisfy members’ need and build up sense of belonging

Activity:
- New comers in receive a warm experience in the online forum
- Many members have known each other for years. Trust underpins much of their social life
- Attend official gatherings whenever they can

Survey questions and results about “sense of belonging”
Survey question and results about “sense of belonging”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than once per day</td>
<td></td>
<td>47.2%</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Twice a week</td>
<td></td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Every three days</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every one to two weeks</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every two to four weeks</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once or not at all</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than once per month</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than once per month</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered question: 36
Answered correctly: 36

5 areas of focus

- Acquaintance of new and old members
- Community forum interface
- Knowledge sharing culture
- Mutual trust between the members
- Sense of belonging
Knowledge sharing culture

Owner:
- Good explicit online collaboration: official in-class/site visit gatherings to promote road safety and technical skills
- Private events: tacit knowledge transfer
- No commercial background: autonomy to express
- Branding: willing to share, quick response time
- Self-discipline: culture to minimize smiling face postings to improve content quality

Survey:
- eBike member has freedom to share
- eBike members are willing to share
  - 38.9% of members usually post new question on the forum
  - 36.1% of members usually post answer on the forum

iBike team:
- Response time is quick
- Survey removal from the online forum: commercial decision
- Lots of non serious posting: smiling face

Activity:
- Willing to share expertise knowledge in online forum (explicit knowledge) and events (tacit knowledge): autonomy to express

Findings:
- Knowledge can be share in 2 perspectives: explicit (online forum) & tacit (events)
- Non commercial background: autonomy to express/share help to foster a good knowledge sharing culture
- Disciplined/pleasant environment + members with a “heart” are essential

Survey questions and results about “knowledge sharing culture”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I have learned a lot from sharing knowledge on eBike forum.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>73.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I have contributed to sharing knowledge on eBike forum.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>49.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I have benefited from knowledge sharing on eBike forum.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>45.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I have learned a lot from sharing knowledge in events.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>60.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I have contributed to sharing knowledge in events.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Knowledge sharing culture
Acquaintance of new and old members

Owner:
- New members are welcomed by the old ones
- With a mind to share and to contribute: “Harmony” is the tradition
- Many events: anniversary celebration, in-class seminars, site visit, camping, “morning ride” in the second Saturday of each month

Survey:
- 94.4% of current member would recommend their friend to join eBike
- Only small percentage of members feel difficult to join the circle of existing members. E.g. "舊會員有少圈子，新會員少發言" and "會員人仕關係小圈子化嚴重 外人止步"

Activity:
- New motor-cyclists meet experienced ones and went out together to build up confidence
- Experienced share experience while new ones bring in new ideas: “give and take”

iBike team:
- Haven’t attended any face-to-face events before
- Online forum, too many members and postings, hardly build up acquaintance

Findings:
- Culture in harmony and face-to-face events help to build up acquaintance
- Acquaintance within a community is based on harmonious culture, quality sharing, “give and take”

Survey question and results about “acquaintance of new and old member”
Challenges for future community development

- Maintain and grow memberships
- Alternative social networking tools (e.g. Facebook)
- "Competition": other motorbikes communities as it is not difficult to build up new communities of the kind due to the advancement of technologies nowadays
- Community forum interface: many appealing online community forum with eye-catching images and videos feed in Mainland China. This will be the trend for motorbikes communities moving forward
- Continue to ensure high quality content
- Technology enhancement costs – as they have no commercial parties funding support

Recommendations

- Build upon existing efforts of eBike (more acceptable, tertiary benefits )
  
  Ranked in terms of ease of implementation

1. **Post Pictures and videos of events**: exposes ebike, draws periphery members to the core group

2. **Use visual media in the web site**: visually appealing informs the community more effectively, supports founders desire to enhance site (David Gurteen, Creating a Knowledge Sharing Culture 1999 Knowledge Management Magazine article)

3. **Support the interests of core members**: Periphery members benefit from core member activity (Diane Gabrielle Trembley, 2004 University of Quebec)
Recommendations

4. **Have regular events**: builds a sense of community and promotes face to face contact (National Research Council of Canada 2004 study supports all of the above, I.L Kondratova and I Goldfarb)

5. **Build connections with motor bike businesses**: eBike members represent a portion of the customer base, business observation and/or collaboration can positively influence business efforts to support customers (Jerry Ash, Building a Knowledge Sharing Culture)

Lessons Learned

- Group efforts need to support community interests (community has something to gain)
- Phrase questions carefully, keep community sensitivities in mind (recreation v business community)
- For breadth of feedback use multiple quantitative and qualitative methods (interviews, questionnaires, observations etc)
- When possible, use primary language in dialogue (context is better understood)
eBike private event on 11 April 09

Jenny’s present from Uncle Yeung after the interview with him
The importance of trust in gaining acceptance into an existing Community of Practice

Eric Tsui
KMRC, HKPolyU & HKKMS

iBike participation pattern - days of week

Number of message posted

Mar 14 (Sat) Mar 15 (Sun) Mar 16 (Mon) Mar 17 (Tue) Mar 18 (Wed) Mar 19 (Thu) Mar 20 (Fri)

2001 1174 2783 3291 3331 3214 2555