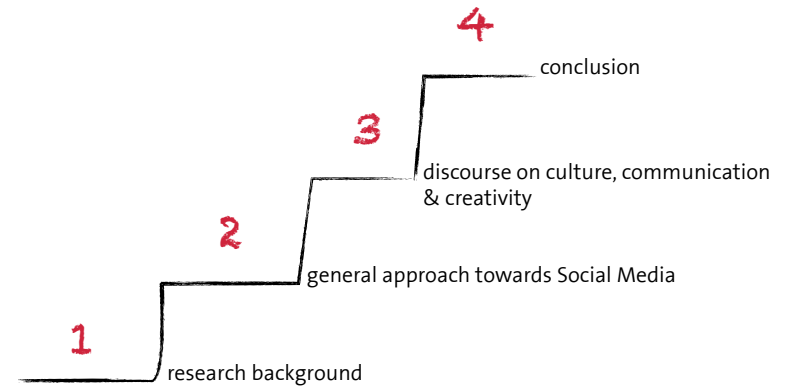# Social Media in Organizations:

fostering creativity and communication –
changing culture on their way
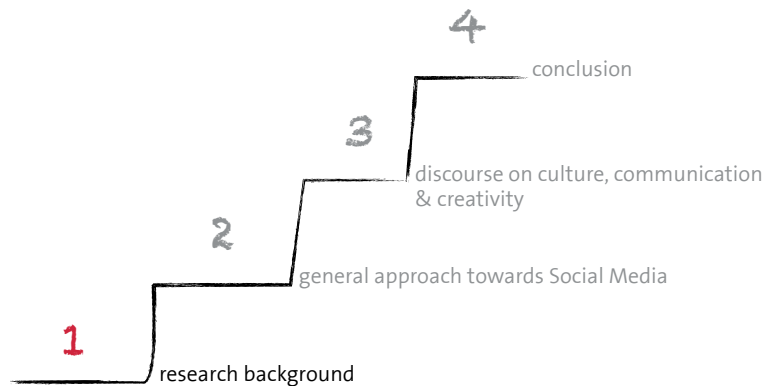
Prof. Dr. habil. Sabine Pfeiffer

ESA-Conference
„Culture, Communication and Creativity"
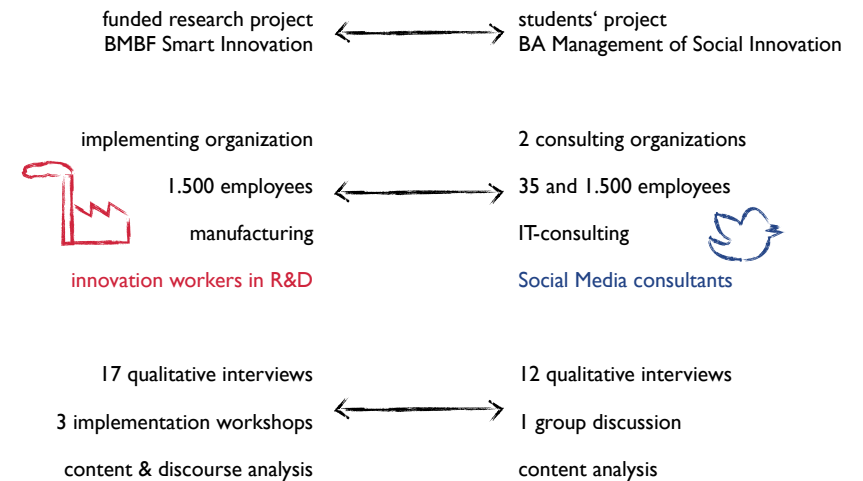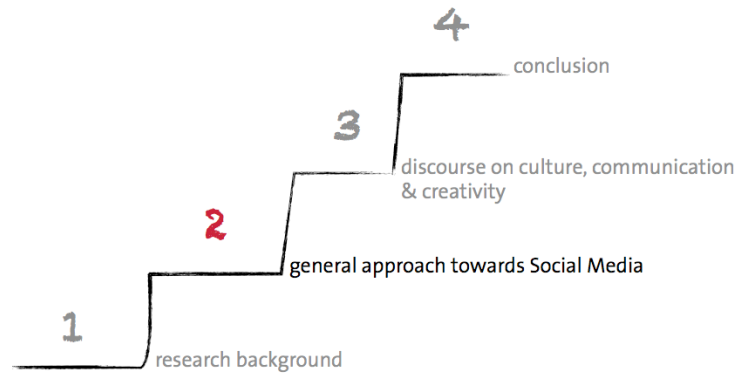Berlin 6th Sept. 2012

UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES MUNICH

ISFMÜNCHEN
Institut für Sozialwissenschaftliche Forschung e.V.

Steps

4 — conclusion

3 — discourse on culture, communication & creativity

2 — general approach towards Social Media

1 — research background

Steps

4 — conclusion

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two sided research background

funded research project BMBF Smart Innovation	students' project BA Management of Social Innovation
implementing organization	2 consulting organizations
1.500 employees	35 and 1.500 employees
manufacturing	IT-consulting
innovation workers in R&D	Social Media consultants
17 qualitative interviews	12 qualitative interviews
3 implementation workshops	1 group discussion
content & discourse analysis	content analysis

Slide 5

Steps

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Slide 6

product offered

Social Media tool for innovation/idea management (closed/Open Innovation).

product needed

Social Media tool for innovation/idea/knowledge management. First used in central R&D, later to roll out to engineers all over the company. Smooth-less integration into work processes and the existing IT-landscape.

Slide 7

general approach

Social Media is just one IT-product between others.

Social Media is now best-selled to the un-knowing.

Social Media is a cow to milk to the max as long as there are enough un-knowing companies out there.

Innovation is about having ideas, it is not the process of innovation that is at stake. Hence, the tool has no interface to IT-tools for project management, innovation management, or product lifecycle management.

„The user in general is dumb".

Interviewees use Xing and Facebook frequently, Google+ and LinkedIN sometimes, Twitter almost never. They do not use their own product at all.

Slide 8

general approach

Social Media is new and we have no clue whatsoever. That is why we need consultants. That is why we don't look into which tool to use, really. Some expert will show us the way.

Teens are using Twitter and Facebook, we are not. And: we, doing what we are doing, need something more serious.

Social Media somehow does something magic to foster creativity and communication. So maybe it is the solution for accumulated problems we experience for years: information overflow, or the long ago collapsed project of knowledge management.

Social Media is something that has to be bought, and then it has to be used. There is no calling for new processes of implementing or new use settings. We are not talking cultural issues here.
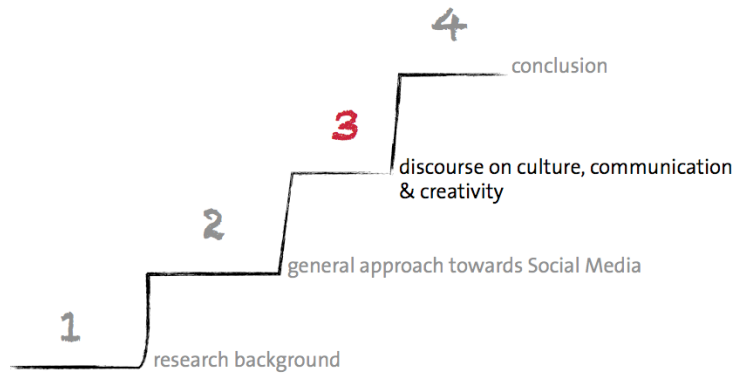
Steps

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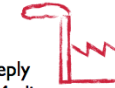…is an essential aspect of innovation work. Communication and innovation work are deeply intertwined. Hence, an IT-tool – be it Social Media or not – will just capture one side of the communication that is going on.

communication

…is what people do with the provided tool. The more „likes" an idea gets the more productive the communication. It has to measured, rewarded and stimulated by incentives time and again.

…is not really needed. Engineering is deeply innovative, there are more ideas than resources to develop them into successful products. Being innovative is considered serious had working and tough engineering. Innovation needs thorough planning but is embedded in tacit skills, too. Creativity is seen to be some asset needed in fashion or advertising, not in engineering.

creativity

…is what Social Media is supposed to foster. It is the magic bullet for marketing Social Media tools. It is a synonym for innovation. It is rhetoric with an almost cynical touch. It is not a part of the DNA of both firms: one doesn't see it in the design of the products, or the organization processes for designing and implementing the Social Media tools.

…is what it is. Its not a quality to be discussed or to be object of organizational design. Being in manufacturing, being engineers by heart, working in a small and family owned company: that determines culture. Period.
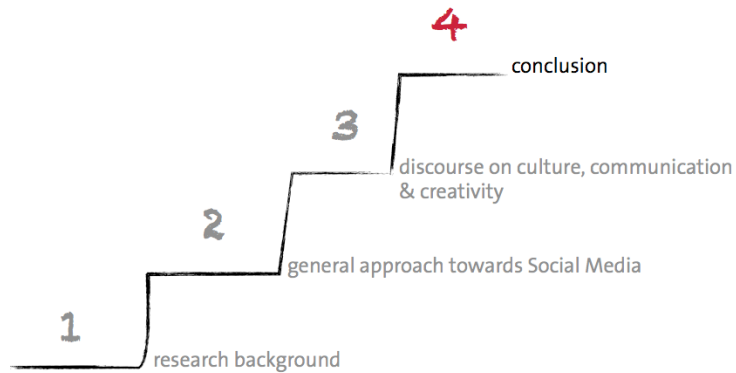
culture

…an abstract concept. Organization culture is somehow acknowledged as relevant for implementing Social Media Tools. But there are no ideas how to embrace culture in these processes or what that would mean for the consulting process.

Steps

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product
general approach
communication
creativity
culture

mismatch

match

Implementing Social Media in organizations: the 3 Cs

Creativity and communication not only need appropriate methods but a new organization culture.

Implementing Social Media needs to define first, what all participants understand talking about creativity and communication.

The process of implementing a Social Media tool reveals the hidden conceptions of creativity and communication of the participating employees and managers.

By that, they become debatable and changeable throughout the organization.

If this happens, the implementation process leads to a collective new understanding, changing the organizational culture on the way – no matter if the Social Media tool is implemented successfully in the end.

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talking creativity vs. working creative

creativity as a continuum of labor capability (Arbeitsvermögen, Pfeiffer 2004)

work action — subjectifying (associative thinking, trial&error, emotional)
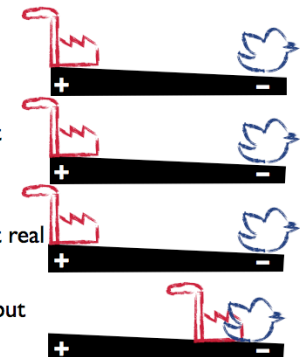
means of work — situation-adaptive, not only used but changed if necessary

objects of work — to be developed, anticipated, not yet real

work organization — situation-adaptive, not only lived in but changed if necessary

Thank you!

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Social Media in organizations: fostering creativity and communication – changing culture on their way

As innovation seems more and more relevant for business success, companies of all branches are searching increasingly for new methods that unfold their innovative capabilities. One of them take the center stage of this contribution due to its assumed potential to foster creativity and communication: Social Media is believed to unleash creativity providing a platform not only for a new quality of direct and iterative communication with customers (Open Innovation) but for idea management and knowledge management inside the organization as well. These hopes of a technical induced boost of innovative culture are dashed often enough, the aspired new level of creativity and communication seldom fulfills the observed outcome. Nonetheless, more and more organizations are opting for this path, hopping on the bandwagon. The proposed contribution discusses why creativity and communication not only need appropriate methods but a new organization culture. Further, the process of implementing Social Media needs to define first, what all participants understand talking about creativity and communication. Developing a collective understanding of communication and creativity throughout an organization (re-)shapes the organization culture. The process of implementing a Social Media tool inside the firm is not only about implementing an IT tool. The process reveals the hidden conceptions of creativity and communication of the participating employees and managers, and therefore makes those debatable and changeable throughout the organization. If this happens, the implementation process leads to a collective new understanding, changing the organizational culture on the way – no matter if the Social Media tool is implemented succesfully.

The paper shows what organizational actors implementing Social Media think about creativity and communication, how these conscepts are entwined in each other, and how these understandings not only reflect the organizational culture but are deeply embedded in it. The contribution will discuss these conceptual considerations based on empirical findings of two qualitative indepth case studies conducted between 2009 and 2011: The first is that of a German manufacturing company, a SME of 1.500 employees, giving insight into the understanding and change of creativity and communiaction (and therefore culture) along the implementation process of a Social Media tool for idea and knowledge management in the R&D departement. This inspection of a implementing organization is based on 17 qualitative interviews, interpreted by content analysis, and a discourse analysis (Keller) of three implementation workshops with 21 participants. These findings are framed and contrasted with 13 qualitative interviews conducted with German Social Media experts of globally active IT consulting firms asking for their experience in implementing web based idea management systems in organizations. This material reveals the implementors' view of communication and creativity and how they experience and also shape the culture of organizations they bring their Social Media tools to.

The empirical material, contrasting Social Media implementees' and implementors' understandings of communication and creativity and their related experiences with changing culture have not been published or presented before. The contribution provides a qualitative foundation for re-thinking the concepts of creativity, communication, and culture in organizations 2.0 and discusses theoretical consequences of the presented findings.