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→ Knowledge Communities

As announced in the last issue, Claude Baudoin took part in the 3rd biennial Knowledge Communities Observatory (KCO) on June 11-12 at the Kedge Business School's campus in Toulon, France. Here is a summary of the takeaways.

Knowledge management was a hot topic at the end of the 1990s and the early 2000s, and is now less visible as a corporate initiative (we have Gartner to blame for this, in part, since they closed their KM practice in a "declare victory and retreat" move. But knowledge *communities,* or "communities of practice," have been quietly implemented in many organizations, especially larger corporations. In addition, they are an active subject of academic research, often using pompous (and grant-attracting) names such as "a theory of social learning," "value creation in social learning spaces," or "cross-boundary learning in a landscape of practice." This focus on communities prioritizes people and processes over technology, which seems appropriate since we now have many tools at our disposal (content management, wikis, etc.), which was not the case in the early years of KM.

Communities are often where innovation can take place in an organization. However, most exchanges between industrial participants ended up discussing the "corporate hypocrisy" that undermines communities and innovation. Employees are "encouraged" to participate, but are given no time to do so, and already suffer from punishing workloads impeding their involvement. They are also encouraged to "take risks" with innovative ideas... but failure is commonly punished. "Who allowed you to do this?" is an often-heard question, even in academic circles (e.g., study at Université du Québec). To succeed, communities must be open, have regular events, be structured into smaller specialized groups, and have a clear justification that involves how it relates to the enterprise (study at Université Grenoble-Alpes).

HEC Montreal, the Canadian branch of French business school HEC, is actively studying communities through case studies. They discussed the case of Ubisoft, a game development company, that replaced a traditional matrix organization with a flexible "projects and communities" one.

Communities are supposed to have a channel to communicate ideas to executives, but it was noted that these are "weak signals" that management often has trouble hearing. Some intermediaries between the communities and management need to be put in place (case study of SPIE Batignolles, a large construction company, performed by Kedge). The appropriation of community ideas by management tends to stop when business is bad.

The use of a "dual ladder" to recognize the expertise of community participants who do not aspire to management roles has been adopted in large enterprises, but many have abandoned it because of its limitations (study by Ecole Polytechnique and CNRS).

There were very interesting discussions about expanding communities to outside partners, resulting in co-creation consortia such as Braineet (117 members including EDF, Unilever, Renault, etc.). This results in a completely different way of managing projects. Orange (telecom) and Bürkert (fluid control systems) are an example of two unrelated companies that organized joint forums as a result of people having met at an event, then serendipitously discovered that they could actually start a joint project on connected objects.

The academic flavor of the first day was balanced on the second day by industrial testimonials. Participants from ENGIE, Framatome/AREVA, Schneider and Expleo, in addition to the companies already mentioned, openly discussed their successes and challenges.

Industrial IoT Maturity Assessment

The Industrial Internet Consortium's Resource Hub< now offers a web-based IIoT Maturity Assessment tool, designed to help companies get a baseline for their current IIoT maturity as well as track future progress. The tool uses a range of questions about the adoption, usage and governance of IIoT to help an organization assess and improve its practices. The IIoT Maturity Assessment is available in three levels of analysis: Quick, Standard (both open to everyone) and Detailed (IIC members only).

SIGGRAPH 2019

The annual leading conference on computer graphics will take place July 28--August 1 in Los Angeles. Five tracks will cover production and animation, research and education, arts and design, gaming/interactive, and new technologies. Details here.

Seen Recently...

"Senior Decisioning Architect" job posting made me chuckle. Isn't "decisioning" applicable to ALL the architect flavors?

-- Brenda Michelson, "Technology architect exploring the interplay of arts, technology, and information - because the future is integrative."