In Blogs We Trust: Their Nature and Nurture in Organizations

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Summary Revised, Draft Dissertation Proposal .ppt
Assertion

There is enough substance in the proposed study

• Combining blogging policies;
• Disposition to trust and perception of trust;
• Organizational climate;
• Blogging; and
• Their addition into existing models
Blogs: New Medium, New Message

• Arguably a new, participatory medium
• The essential elements are social -- sociability, linking, authenticity
• Technical features -- Ease of use and linking promote collaboration
• Hypothesis: Organizational climate and trust significantly affect adoption and use of blogs. There is a virtuous circle.
• Need to manage risks, the downside of blogging.
Research Question 1

What are organizations’ blogging policies and how they relate to stated goals and objectives? What are the processes and configurations in firms that produce or are perceived to produce positive results?
Research Question 2

Do firms attach special importance to blogs because of the need for virtual teams, collaboration with remote partners, network organizations, and other modes of operation driven by the Internet and globalization?

What is the mix of sociability, affective trust compared to cognitive and knowledge management goals?
Research Question 3

Do blogs, k-logs, and wikis contribute to an organizational climate encouraging trusting behaviors, knowledge sharing, and knowledge creation?

Hypothesis: Yes.
Research Question 4

What are the multi-dimensional trust levels of the firms surveyed? That is assessing trust as a personality variable, trust in fellow employees, and perceptions of structural trust in the immediate department, and the organization as a whole.
Research Question 5

What are the perceptions of, and changes in, the character of debate and discourse within the organization coincident with blogging activity? For example, can changes in communication patterns and sociality be documented?
Summary of Key Variables

• Blogging policies and practices
• Trust (multi-dimensional)
• Organizational Climate (multi-dimensional)

• Approach: See how the above fit into existing models
Trust

• Multi-dimensional and can cross levels of analysis.
• Involves risk
• Fukuyama (1995): “... the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest and cooperative behavior based on commonly shared norms on the part of members of the community”
Trust

- Fukuyama considers trust more important than financial or physical capital.
- Allows delegation and interdependence; reduction of transaction costs, or details in contracts.
- Trust has recently grown in research importance due to the Web, e-commerce, and virtual teams.
- Not a free resource — requires resources to maintain in firms (Houtari & Ilivonen, 2004)
- Key concept is spontaneous sociability.
Mayer, Davis & Schoorman (1995)
Definition of Trust

• “... [T]rust . . . is the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party.” (p. 712).

• In the firm there is mutual risk-taking between the employee and the firm.
Factors of Perceived Trustworthiness

Mayer, Davis & Schoorman Model (1995)

- Ability
- Benevolence
- Integrity

Trust (by trustor) → Perceived Risk → Risk Taking in Relationship → Outcomes

Trustor’s Propensity
Limitations of Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, (1995) Model

- Dyadic model
- Serva, Fuller & Mayer (2005) conducted a field experiment and demonstrated an effect for reciprocal trust among interacting teams. In doing so they extended the theoretical model of Mayer, Davis & Schoorman (1995)
- Note: Trustworthiness (of trustee) $\rightarrow$ Trust (i.e. risk-taking) by trustor (Mayer & Davis 1999)
The Many Faces of Trust

- Dispositional trust from Psychology & Economics (General trust in others)
- Institutional Trust from Sociology (Trust in the structures/organizational climate)
- Interpersonal Trust from Social Psychology (Trust in specific others / situations, e.g. bloggers?)
- (Following McKnight & Chervany (2002))
The Many Faces of Trust (cont.)

• Calculative vs. Non-calculative Trust
• Non-calculative trust is associated with desirable employee attitudes such as “commitment,” and “volitional attention.”
Organizational Climate

• Org climate is the concrete expression of organizational culture
• Multi-dimensional
• Some examples: Fairness, Affiliation, Innovativeness, Attitude toward knowledge sharing, Anticipated reciprocal relationships, Subjective norm – on sharing
Organizational Culture and Climate as Resources of the Firm

Organizational climate dimensions have been linked to productivity gains. (Patterson, Warr & West, 2004)

Knowledge Management (KM) is a Common Goal . . . To which Blogging can contribute . . .
Blogging

• Blogging is hypothesized to reflect, as well as contribute to Commitment-based HR practices (Collins & Smith 2006) and an organizational climate of openness, and psychological safety (Edmondson 2004).
Extension and Replication Proposal

• Extending the trust model(s) to include organizational climate
• Replicating and extending climate models by adding blogging behaviors
• Patterson, et al. (2005) have a multi-dimensional validated climate measure linked to productivity, etc. but it lacks a trust dimension
Next Step: Combining Trust and Organizational Climate with Blogging

• Several climate models include some trust elements
• Trust dimensions can be added
• Validated measures exist
• Provides a comprehensive framework in which to view blogging
• Need to settle on one, maybe two climate models
Climate as Enabler of KM

KM Enablers

Collaboration
Trust
Learning
Centralization

(Climate)

Knowledge Creation Process

Organizational Creativity

Organizational Performance

Adapted from Lee & Choi (2003)
Climate as Antecedents of Effective KM

- Autonomy
- Organizational Climate
- Cooperative Learning
- Work Satisfaction
- Work Performance

Add Blogging

Adapted from Janz & Prasarnphanich (2003)
Climate and Intention to Share Knowledge

- Anticipated Reciprocal Relationships
- Organizational Climate
- Attitude toward Knowledge Sharing & Subjective Norm
- Intention to share Knowledge
- Add Blogging

Adapted from Bock, et al. (2005)
Research Model (Conceptual)

Organizational Climate

Trust Environment

Individual Trust

Blogging Policy

Blogging Behavior

Individual Outcomes

Organizational Outcomes

Blogging Behavior

Individual Trust

Trust Environment

Organizational Climate

Individual Outcomes

Blogging Policy

Phase 1 (Dissertation)

Phase 2 (Future Longitudinal Study)
Organizational Climate

Trust Environment:
- Trust in mgmt
- Trust in colleagues
- Psychological Safety

Individual propensity to Trust

Blogging Policy

Blogging Behavior

Organizational Outcomes:
- Financial

Organizational Outcome
- Climate

Individual attitudes on:
- Trust
- Knowledge sharing
- Commitment
Organization(s) to be Researched

• Despite the hype, blogs not widely used in intranets (Cayzer, 2004)
• Businesses of varying sizes and industries of great interest. Financial data readily available for public firms.
• School systems would be a revealing area
Hypotheses about Outcomes

• Trusting organizational climates correlate with numbers of employees blogging at, and about, work
• There is a “virtuous circle” of a trusting organizational climate and blogging
• Social networks will be broader with blogging and the social & professional contacts of blogging will be as important as KM issues.
• More weak social ties – Granovetter (1973)
Data Collection & Analysis

- Most blog research has been rich but based on small samples with interviews
- Need more systematic survey of organizational (1) policies, (2) expectations of management, (3) employee attitudes and behaviors
- Make a contribution on the dissertation – addition to the organization climate models -- while laying the ground work for a longitudinal study:
  1. Content / classification analysis of blogging policies
  2. Structural equation modeling of survey data
Additional Research Approaches

• Surveys of policies on blogs and blogging. Correlate policies with financial performance. Limitation: Public companies

• Best practices lists: correlate with blogging. (Already known to correlate with financial performance.)

• Ethnographic studies

• Focus groups concerning contrasting blogs
Experiments – Lab Opportunities

- Leader type experiment: Use CEO actors who present blogging policies of the firm. Possibly mixed in with other assertions of the values of the firm. The subjects rate the firm on trust and climate variables. Use the same actor, but vary the content to create conditions.
- Subjects with business experience better than those without.
- Impact on Prisoner’s Dilemma games
- Role of apologies in blogs
Experiments -- Field

• Lab or field experiment varying existence, content, or policies of blog in firm:
  – Vary the emphasis on personal material.
  – Anonymous vs. Identified
  – Moderated vs. unmoderated
  – Look for trust and perception of climate as dependent variables.
  – In contacts with spokespeople, look for firms already having related processes including employee surveys, suggestion programs, etc.
Proposed Dissertation Scope  -- Details to be Agreed-Upon

• Survey of public firm policies and practices on blogging; correlation with financial performance. Additional comparisons with “Best Places to Work” firms.

• Survey (online) of org climate, trust, and blogging behavior in opportunistic sample of firms.

• Lab or field experiment on the impact of differing blogging policies.
Anticipated Contributions

• There is a lot of information on personal blogging but less on inside firms. Will add valid statistics

• Theoretical insights on the impact of blogs on desirable social behaviors, particularly trust, organizational climate, and knowledge sharing.

• Contributions to practice.
References and Draft Surveys at:

http://www2.hawaii.edu/~smithdan/blogs&trust/blogpage1.html

http://inblogswetrust.blogspot.com/

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