Trust Building in a virtual context: Case Study of a community of Practice

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Abstract: The Research Management Unit of Swiss Distance University for Applied Sciences (Fernfachhochschule Schweiz – FFHS) has experienced trust building processes in virtual environment amongst others in their work with Community of Practice (CoP). The establishment of CoPs has become their core business, that means that they have have planned and implemented such kind of learning communities for international companies and for university groups. According to the author, CoPs are perceived as laboratory for creating intellectual capital for which trust building is a pre-conditioned success factor. To identify trust building methods in a research environment in particular and in CoPs in general, using new technologies is the main aim in this paper. So, the broad subject "CoP and intellectual capital" will be constricted and the focus put on trust. A special focus is put on the virtuality element which has become very important with the raise of social media platforms in the business world. Following questions will be addressed in the paper: How is trust defined in a virtual environment, especially among researchers? How can you build trust in a CoP? How can the community leader influence this trust building? What is the role of different group members? Which influence does a deep organizational trust have on the success of a community?

To answer this question, foremost a theoretical analyses model for trust and its processes will be developed based on the three domains of intellectual capital which most authors have identified for the division of intellectual capital: human capital, structural capital and relationship capital. To cope with the technical dimension of virtuality, a new approach to the intellectual capital domains is elaborated. In the first place, at the level of human capital, the author describes personal characteristics and competencies (knowledge management skills) which enable trust building. Secondly, the level of structural capital focuses on technical aspect of the community and activities which foster trust building. Last but not least, the relationship level studies the trust building process linked to different roles and a new collaborative culture. As a case study for this paper, serves the community of researchers at the FFHS which collaborate through a virtual platform called eDolphin. The researchers, working for a future-oriented institution and eUniversity, come from different disciplines and promote an eLearning and eCollaboration approach in team activities and project management. The findings of the theoretical approach lead to its adaptation to the practical example of eDolphin. How was trust build in this case? What are the lessons learned which we identified during this community building process.

Last but not least, some theories and findings concerning community building on social media platforms are described.

Keywords: eCollaboration, Social Media, Communities of Practice, intellectual capital, trust building, new collaborative culture.

1. Introduction

In this short introduction the concept of CoP and the organisational context of the CoP are introduced. Swiss Distance University for Applied Sciences (Fernfachhochschule Schweiz – FFHS) as leading eUniversity in Switzerland is specialized in eLearning and eCollaboration and therefore works with different virtual methods to improve learning in project groups or among their students. Its Research Management Unit (RMU) in particular trains in knowledge management and eCollaboration and has therefore experienced trust building processes in virtual environment amongst others in their work with Community of Practice (CoP). The creator of CoP-concept Etienne Wenger defines them as an "Informal, self-organized, network of peers with diverse skills and experience in an area of practice or profession. It can be viewed as a social learning system which is characterized by three different levels: domain, practice and community." (Wenger 1998) Before the kick-off, the community members should define a common goal of the CoP, the negotiation of meaning of the key concepts and the practice for common activities. Often CoP are formed for solving a concrete problem and face certain challenges.
The group is then linked through the members' desire to support others (by sharing information) and the need to enlarge their own knowledge (by learning from others). So, CoPs are considered as an established knowledge management tool with which knowledge transfer shall be assured and space for creativity shall be created in order to fund new ideas; on one the hand on a personal, on the other

hand at an organisational level. Therefore, this community is considered a learning organisation and is in some articles also named *"Learning Networks", Learning Communities" and "Social learning networks".* Referring to the concept of learning, some authors link a CoP to the concept of Intellectual Capital (IC) and consider it as producer.

The Research Management Unit of the FFHS considers the planning and implementation of CoPs as their core business. As the have established a number of such organisations in the industrial and the public sector. This paper focuses on the Community of Researchers at their own University and how trust can be built in such a virtual community context. Almost 18 people were part of this community at the beginning. The case of researchers was selected because creating a community among researchers is even a more challenging process than community building among other professionals. Generally stated, researchers are individual players with a competitive attitude and huge specialisation in a particular domain. As the different research institutes of the FFHS work dispersed in Switzerland, the CoP was supposed to work virtually. All these facts are inhibiting for knowledge transfer in general and community building in particular; so that trust-building process demands a special attention and serves as a good case study for best practices about trust building in a virtual environment.
This paper is composed on literature research, outputs of workshops and project experiences. After an introduction in the trust theory and intellectual capital, the reader gets an idea about the specific challenges of trust building in virtual environments. Furthermore, different methods and good practices according the dimensions of intellectual capital will be presented through the case of a Community of Researchers and linked to each other in order to give a conclusion at the end of the paper.

2. Theoretical frameworks

Beside the concept of CoPs, two others are basic for this paper: Intellectual Capital and Trust – which later on are linked to each other through the networked learning concept.

Intellectual capital is defined as the "Collective knowledge (whether or not documented) of the individuals in an organization or society". This knowledge can be used to produce wealth, multiply output of physical assets, gain competitive advantage, and/or to enhance value of other types of capital. Most authors have identified three domains for the division of intellectual capital: human capital, structural capital and relationship capital. The theoretical analyses model for trust and its processes will be developed based on these three domains. Regarding intellectual capital and knowledge management, the notion of social capital enters the discussion, because social capital can often be localised in very specialized communities.

CoPs are perceived, according to the author, as laboratory for creating intellectual capital for which trust building is a success factor and therefore the focus is put on this aspect.

The concept of **trust** knows different approaches:

Niklas Luhmann differs between familiarity, confidence and trust. Familiarity draws the (asymmetric) distinction between familiar and unfamiliar fields and puts up with the familiar what is characterized by a common visions, symbols and norms. It is an unavoidable fact of life. Familiarity and confidence presuppose asymmetric relations between system and environment. Confidence is strictly related to expectations. Individuals repress unconsciously the fact that their confidence could be disdained. Contrary to this, trust thinks that the individual can choose if he wants to take a certain risk or not; two options are in place. In other words, trust is based on a circular relation between risk and action, both being complementary requirements. If the individual decides to take a risk that means to be trustful, he can reduce the complexity of the reality in which he lives. Moreover, the development of trust and distrust depends on local milieu and personal experience and on previous structural reduction of complexity. (Luhmann 1968)

In this paper we will especially refer to trust defined by Luhmann, because community members decide if they want to join and engage in a community or not in a conscious process which is basic for trust building. However, the concept of trust is also related to the confidence notion. A lack of confidence may mean a lack of trust, and lack of trust means that behaviour which presupposes trust will be ruled out.

Pircher reassumes this concept also states that trust knows a personal level and an organisational level and that the basis for organisational trust is the trust in a person. He names this mutual cooperation. For the context of a CoP-context the organizational trust perspective is fundamental as CoP are considered as professional networks. Therefore team work, free information exchange and a positive working ambience are a very important intrinsic motivational factor for CoP members (Winkler 2012und Hartmann 2012).

How can we trust be created in a broader organisation context and so be linked to the concept of Intellectual capital?

For linking trust and Intellectual capital, the concept of networked learning is crucial and will therefore be introduced. Knowledge is a social phenomenon which can be identified not only, but especially in informal networks. Furthermore, trust is a precondition for the community outcomes such as good practices, assistance in problem solution as well as new knowledge and innovation. Trust is therefore fundamental in a learning context. In this perspective the learner is considered as a self-organised, engaged person with meta-cognitive competencies to reflect his engagement and his learning methods in order to improve those (Bergamin et al. 2011). A community of practice considered as a social network should be an accumulation of self-reflective learners who interact in a social network. They are characterised by their know-how and fields of knowledge which are linked to each other (Bettoni, Eggs 2010).

Trust looms large in the debate about social capital linked with intellectual capital. Some consider trust as an outcome of social capital; others view it as a component of the shared values which constitute social capital, whereas some consider it to be both. Relating social capital to thick and thin trust, thick is seen as a property of intimate social networks and thin as generalised trust in other community members as intellectual capital producer. That means we need thin trust in social networks to produce intellectual capital. Thin trust emerge from weak ties system what was described by Granovetter already in the early 70s (Granovetter 1995). He states that people whom you know rather cursorily that means that they are not part of your socio-cultural system, can better support you in getting a new job than people with whom you share familiarity trust that means the same living context. The same process applies in the knowledge management context: You hardly get new insights from people who work in the same company, with the same people and share the same working experience. Consequently, you gain new insights from colleagues who work in the same field, but in another context making different experiences. So you can learn different approaches and solutions what allows an efficient knowledge transfer what is the basis of social capital creation as well as intellectual capital. Weak ties are therefore one of the key success factor of a community. Facilitating leadership, location independency and commitment are more characteristics which support the trust building process in a CoP.

Together with self-organisation, innovation and creativity as well as a management with clear rules and constructive feedback culture are part of new form of enterprise which is called Enterprise 2.0. That means “a new sort of enterprise which supports a culture eliminating hindering structures and less hierarchical structures stays, so that enough liberty space is at disposal for a directed knowledge transfer.” (Stamer 2008) Other characteristics for an appropriated corporate culture are intention, autonomy, job rotation and internal variety. (Lehner 2009) In the Krauthammer report the success factors for an Enterprise 2.0 and a knowledge management system are described as trust building, incentive system, continuous education courses and a clear. (Krauthammer 2012)

3. Trust building in a virtual environment

Blogs and social platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter have shown their potential in the last years. Currently there are especially used for communication, marketing and customer service issues, own in the knowledge management field you also find a huge potential. Researchers have analysed community building processes on these platforms what also have brought new insights for the concept. Trust building stays an important issue in this concept. In this chapter challenges and opportunities of the trust building in a virtual environment are presented.

As stated in the last chapter an individual first trusts in other human beings based on personal experiences and secondly feeling of trust establishes towards an organisation. Than in third step, the individual trust in the system which was put on place by the organisation.

This mixture of trust levels leads us to the finding that trust building – what anyway is a very sensitive process - in a virtual environment on an organisational level becomes even more complicated and therefore meets different challenges:

First, virtuality means that through new media a higher number of information is generated, so that the user must dispose of a certain media competence and be adaptive to new collaborative culture (Seppänen 2007). A huge amount of information is shared across the new media channels what generates an information overflow in the cloud. There are theories who say that 90% of the generated content don't have an added value, therefore the challenge is to identify the good information. Here the community can act as a gatekeeper which forward the important content and knowledge for the core business.

Secondly, as stated in the first chapter before, trust can reduce the complexity of reality, so that the individual feel more secure and can act, react and interact in his daily life. In a virtual environment face-to-face (f2f) contacts are rarely be held and so trust must develop without physical exchange and only through online contacts. In a first moment this virtual environment can generate a lot of fear what is a clear obstacle for the trust building process, because the community member must trust in his environment and the other members in order to generate outputs that mean to ensure participation in a first and knowledge transfer and innovation in second step. A community will only work if a certain level of trust exists among its members (Becke 2012).

In a virtual team – beside the human factors of trust – the dimension of trust in the technical system with its functions (linked to the data security) comes along: This dimension is hardly linked to the organisational and personal trust-dimension, because the user takes the obvious risk if he decides to participate in a system whom technic is provided by an organisation and where human beings are members and could possibly abuse the data. This technical trust dimension has often being discussed in public due to a lot of privacy scandals. That have negatively affected humans trust influenced the trust building in the last years which.

Beside these challenges, a virtual environment also provides different opportunities. Web 2.0 supports the creation of "User Generated Content". Content consumer become prosumer, that means that they connect, collaborate create and share with other users and start to produce knowledge on different platforms and make it accessible for everybody. So the user get used of an interactive valuation of new generated contents and know-how. (Callahan at al, 2001) So the virtuality make knowhow accessible for everybody. Anyway, the so called digital divide still exists: The Nielson rule says that only 1 percent generates content in the web, 9 percent comment on it and 90 percent only read it. That means that the trust radius is build around this 1-percent-people.

Regarding the handling of the huge amount of information we get through the internet, the community plays a key role. It helps through its mechanism of auto-selection: good contributions will be recommended and false information will be corrected (cf. Wikipedia). As every user knows that wrong statements will be corrected by other users, the system begins to align itself.

Having reviewed especially the information and technique side, we know look at personal characteristics for trust building:

Brogan und Smith elaborated a formula which should help to calculate trust in a virtual environment: (C (credibility) x R (reliability) x I (Intimacy) / S (Self orientation) (Brogan, Smith 2010). The formula says that the more credible and reliable a person appears, and the lesser I am in doubt about his altruism, the more I will trust him or her. In a business context, a person appears credible if we know that he has a certain expertise and also is conscious about his strengths and weaknesses. Keeping deathlines, quality assurance raise the rating of reliability. Intimacy evolves over time and common projects. If I have worked successfully with a person over some years, I like to continue her work. It helps when I feel that the person is not only searching his personal gain, but engages for common purposes (self orientation). The first three criteria are linked to the competence which a person shows and the experiences. Beside competence two other factors influence the trust: goodwill and integrity.

In specialized communities such as communities of Practice we often discover that this trust building factors are very well established and so a certain high trust level and social capital have build up.
All the mentioned factors especially refer to the personal and relationship level of trust building, but we also have to consider the virtual one:

For a deep analysis of the case of a virtual CoP of researchers, we need to link the three different trust levels (personal, technical and organisational) in order the three dimensions of intellectual capital which are crucial for knowledge production in a virtual CoP. This linkage shows a new approach to the three dimensions of intellectual capital:
Linking intellectual capital on a personal trust level, the author describes human capital with personal characteristics and competencies of every single community member (cf. trust formula from Brogan and Smith). Secondly, the level of structural capital focuses on technical aspect of the community such as the chosen platform with its functionalities as well as privacy and security issues. The hard- and software and its usability are basic that community members use a platform. Last but not least, the relationship level studies the organisational culture which supports trust building in an organisation. In the following chapters this three levels and methods are presented in order to show in the last chapter which methods for trust building worked out and which failed in the building process of the community of Research at FFHS (Davenport 2004). In this last chapter will also been stated how the three levels of intellectual work together in the trust building process.

4. Trustbuilding methods in a Community of Researchers

In the year 2008, the RMU of the FFHS got the assignment to build CoP in order to link those crossing departmental boarders. First, of all some workshops were held in order to create a strategical framework for the community. This is a very important step, as former experiences have showed that knowledge experiences fail if the staff is not integrated in the implementation process and don't support the experience. The community of Practice method put the focus on the human being. Therefore, it is recommended that the stimulus for the community launch comes from community members that means that it follows a bottom-up-approach. Generally, communities need a new approach of role assignment where power structures don't interact in a hierarchical manner (Granovetter 1995).

For this, a requirement analysis was made in order to define a common goal, negotiate the meaning of CoPs key concepts and define the basis of the activities as a common practice (Wenger 1998). This elements are important to put the fundament for motivating people to trust each other in a community.

Community of Researcher: The main objective of the community was to improve the research output at the FFHS, in particular discuss and improve the promotion of research. The common practice was research methods, project acquisition process, partner development etc. The common activities should be common projects and tasks as well as exchange meetings during the year.
The raised question during this initial period during the community building was if this practice is enough for building the community.

4.1 Human capital

Human capital bases on personal trust relations which are fundamental for the development of new knowledge and the dimensions of intellectual capital. Individuals possess the know-how in their heads and the aim of community is to explicit in a typical knowledge-management process of gaining and sharing. Community members are therefore seen as self-organised individuals who have a personal interest in expanding their knowledge and finding new insights (cf. chapter 1). Only if the community members trust each other, they will ask for support in case of a challenge and the CoP will act as intellectual capital producer. Only if the individuals can gain new knowledge through their engagement in a CoP or can share their own knowledge with other members, they will participate. Beside this principle of reciprocity, the desire for appreciation and the desire to contribute and to be part of a community animates people to participate in a community. The participation is the first step to trust development; or in Luhman's terms "confidence" which is the basis of organisational trust which is fundamental for the creation of organisational trust.

In order to build a professional knowledge community it is important that its members are conscious about the competencies of each member. So, the installation of knowledge maps (also called "who-is-who"-or competence-maps or yellow pages) is crucial. This is a meta-cognitive knowledge instrument which acts as a navigator through the knowledge repository of community. That can be made with a competency map which is included in the CoP-platform. (Eppler 1998).

Another method which helps to strengthen human capital is the method of storytelling. Throughout the Social Media boom and the knowledge management boom a very this very old method has become more important than ever. People can share their knowledge talking in a history with a message and a dramatic arc. So the content of the story stucks better in the head of the listener. So a specific situation and the linked knowledge get a meaning with a clear beginning and a clear end a certain complexity and new possibilities. Storytelling has therefore become an established knowledge management method which has even become more important in a virtual context. With new media community members got different media channels to express their stories in a more expressive manner and enter into a dialog. (Frenzel, Müller, Sottong 2006).

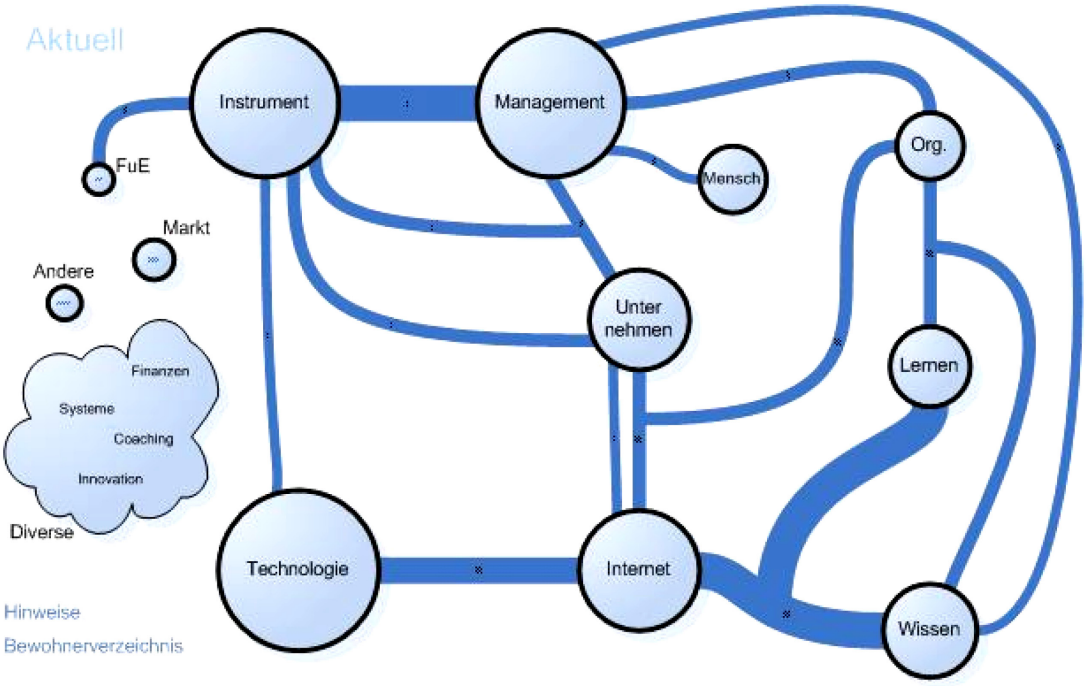

Figure 1: Competency map

Community of Researchers: The community members had to list their competencies (personal, methodical and hard skills). Than all the competencies of the CoP were visualized in the in figure 1 showed map. Every member could press an interactive bottom in order to know who has competencies in that field. The finding process was very easy, but the cultivation and actualisation of this map was considered as difficult. Besides their daily business, researchers hardly found time to actualize their data.

Storytelling was hardly used in the community of researchers. As its members weren't used to this method, they preferred to share their knowledge with traditional methods.

4.2 Structural capital

CoPs have become a favourable knowledge-management-tool for organisations whose staff work geographically dispersed, so that most CoPs interact in a virtual space using new technologies such as elearning platforms, standing-alone solutions, social media platforms etc. Therefore, a lot of authors use the concept of CoPs only for virtual teams and the structural capital dimension cares especially about technology (platforms, functionalities etc.). (Kim 2000) CoP members should trust in

the technical system who protect their data as well as in the other members who will treat their data confidentially.

In order to foster this structural trust, a system should be established according to following criteria:

- Adapt it to the needs of the staff
- Adapt it to the competences of community members
- It should ensure (data) security
- Ensure free access for everybody

Different experiences have shown that a lot of CoPs failed due to technical problems or technical problems were used as an excuse for not participating. The solutions were said to be too complicated or the members didn't have enough media competences for the use of such platforms. Therefore, the basic rule for all communities (and knowledge management initiatives in general) is that needs must drive the technology what means that first the needs must be identified and then an appropriated solution be implemented. The system should be easy, intuitive and with a good usability. To fulfil this requirements experts recommend to use existing systems.

Community of Researchers: The FFHS - Research Management Unit wanted to use a platform which was already known at their university. Therefore, they redesigned the course rooms of their learning management (LMS) system moodle which contains the main interaction functionalities wikis and forums and the possibility to store documents. They called the exchange platform eDolphin what should be a symbol for the weak-ties-system of dolphins. These animals normally swim alone, but help each other during foraging; in this way also communities and researchers should collaborate. The platform was hosted at the FFHS and data were protected in the system.

Concerning the structure of the platform the RMU-team followed Wengers' in chapter one presented CoP dimensions; people (staff) representing the community, research services representing practices and projects representing the domain (cf. big navigation bottoms in the screenshoot):

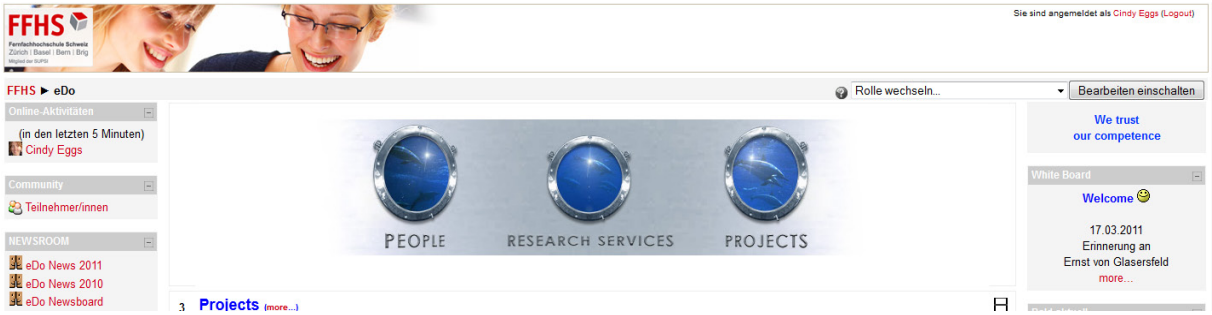

Figure 2: eDolphin platform

Under the section "People", CoP members could find the knowledge map and all information about the f2f-meetings. Under the section "Research Services" the common practice with information about current projects, funder institution, publications etc. could be detected. Common projects and tasks were described in the "Project" section.

Some researchers were wondering if moodle deliver the necessary functionalities for a correct functioning of the community or if there are other, better solutions.

4.3 Relationship capital

As stated in chapter 3 of this article, the relationship capital refers to the organisational trust level which is fundamental for the functionalities of a community. Therefore, a corporate culture which facilitates the formation of weak ties and the cooperation between different members forms the basis for a CoP. Important elements of such a culture are: Common identity, bottom-up-implementation, common understanding and development of community rules without administrative controls and huge number of users.

It is very helpful if the management of an organisation participates in the community (or at least supports it during the kick-off phase). Their role in the trust building process is also quiet crucial: If the

senior management trust in its staff, they will give more space for creativity what motivates them to share their knowledge. Flexible working hours, management by objectives and content autonomy create such liberty (spaces). Also the establishment of appreciation mechanism help to support trust building.

Beside the management, a crucial role is assigned to the community leader (or in communities often called facilitator) who takes a model role and serves as a good example for other members:

- Convey a transparent and open communication culture by
  - stable communication flow
  - short response-time
  - informal workspaces
- Convey a constructive mistake and feedback-culture by
  - generating an atmosphere without fear
  - sensibilizing with the management
  - appraising mutual Appraisal
  - assuring a transparent conflict management
- Convey a success-story attitude by
  - telling positive success stories
  - focusing on common success

Besides these good-practice examples, there are also boundary factors which hinder trust building. Fears of power loss or open confessions concerning gap in one's knowledge can for example constrain an active participation in CoP.

First of all, a core group should be put in place which consists of representatives of every organisational unit and hierarchical level (Pircher 2010). All the core group members should follow some fundamental principles of networked learning and trust building: non-hierarchical, cooperative attitude towards its members etc. (McMillan 1986). The task of these core group members is to show the advantages, the activities and the functionalities of a community to their colleagues in order to animate them for an active participation. In this context authors such as Solis talk „Influencer“ which should find the balance between traditional and new methods (Solis 2011). At the same time the core group act as gate keepers filtering information (Brogan, Smith 2010).

For the description of core group members we can refer to Gladwells theory of the power of the few. This people recognize trends and spread them through their social links and their energetic and enthusiastic charactar. They can be split into three groups of people: First, the intermediator who is very well linked because he occupies different niches, so that he feels familiar with different groups. Secondly, the social motivated knower who wants to help for the best deal and make recommendations without thinking in his personal gain. Thirdly, the charismatic seller who make messages very popular (Gladwell 2012). Accordingly to these categories, a core group member is well linked in their company and generally communicative and competent in their field for giving an added value to the community. If it is possible, some f2f-meetings can be very supportable for the trust building process.

Community of Researchers: The coordinator was part of the RMU and formed together with one key player of every institution the core group. This core group gave impulses for the topics of the community and tried to motivate other researcher to cooperate in the CoP. Especially the Research Management Unit staff animated forum discussions and the use of wikis. They did in a cooperative way in order to establish a new collaborative culture with flat structures, open communication and constructive feedback. As they acted in a traditional hierarchical system which was dominated by different people, it was difficult to establish such a culture.

Moreover, most researchers were very busy with their daily business, so that they hardly found time to become an active member of the community. At once, they didn’t feel the need of community as much as the management who asked for its building: A bottom-up-approach would have been more successful.

5. Trust building in a Community of Researchers: Key findings

The establishment of a community has partly been successful. Researchers know how to use moodle and search research information on the platform. Some of them share their newest findings on the platform. But still the main conversation is made through mails and on a basis of f2f contacts.

General statements: A common goal and a common practice are crucial for the establishment of a CoP: Only if members work together on a common purpose, they will trust each other in the long run. The research management topics weren't enough to link the researchers, because their research field with particular content was considered to be more important. Therefore, real trust relations have been built especially through common projects and common tasks. Only the researchers who have been working together in projects have established deep trust to each other.

Personal capital: Once you have worked with some people and know about their competences you will establish personal trust and personal capital. This can be supported with a competency map in order to identify the members' know-how. This competence map must be supported with a system which can easily be actualised.

Latest initiatives have shown that the cultivation of competency maps is easier if you work with a social business network such as Linkedin or Xing. Here the user enters his competences in the foreseen field, and make them as well as his contacts accessible for other members of his network. Another advantage of the system is that user keeps the information on their profile anyway actualised, so that the information transfer can be assured.

Structural Capital: Some researchers complained that the moodle-platform wasn't the best platform to establish a community, even if the most important functionalities as forum and wikis are put on place. After some simplification, researchers knew how to navigate in the moodle system.
Moodle has the advantage that most collaborants knows it and that the data are protected. There are also people who suggest to use open platforms such as facebook, Linkedin or yammer. Yammer is a good solution for a CoP in an university as only people with the same acronym have access.

Over the last year, it has become obvious that the CoP members start to use public social media platforms to share their knowledge. They use Twitter and its hashtags to link with an international community. At the same time they write a blog in order to publish they working results and get a dialog with the international research community.

Relationship capital: The creation of a new culture is still in progress due to traditional overall structures at the university. It takes a long time and many good examples to establish a new communication and cooperation culture. Not working in the same town, but in the same country, the RMU established four f2f-meetings a year in order to animate the exchange between the different research groups what is very helpful for the relationship capital.

The establishment of a CoP for a group of researchers' environment might be easy due to their clear know-how about personal competencies and their affinity for technical systems and their open know-how towards people. On the other hand a common goal is missing and the linking element is the common interest for research topics. Therefore, the appellation of a group of interest could be even more accurate than the Community of Practice notion.

6. Conclusion: Relation between different trust dimensions

All three dimensions of intellectual capital are important for the trust building process.
The described use case shows that trust building is a very sensitive process, especially in a virtual context. Anyway, it is fundamental for the establishment of a CoP and the knowledge transfer as well as the establishment of intellectual capital. For the analysis of trust, the different dimensions of Intellectual Capital can be very adjuvant.

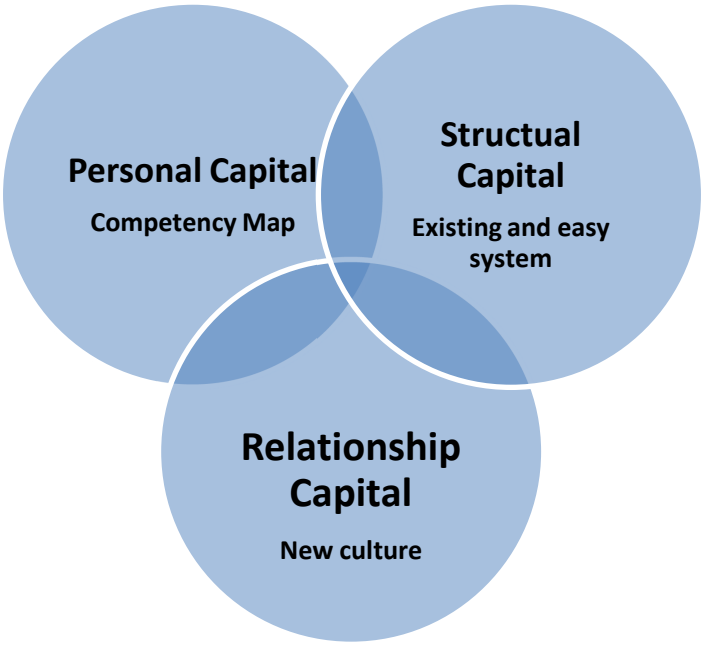

Figure 3: Trust building methods according to three dimensions of Intellectual Capital

Trust first is built between community members (that means confidence and personal trust) which foster personal capital. Once, this is established the second level of structural trust that means a good technical system is addressed. Functionalities of the tool were implemented according to the needs of the community members Different experiences have shown that a lot of CoPs failed due to technical problems. The solutions were too complicated or the members didn't have enough media competences for the use of such platforms. Therefore, the basic rule for all communities (and knowledge management initiatives in general) is that needs must drive the technology what means that first the needs must be identified and then implemented. In our days, a community can use public social media platforms such as Twitter, Linkedin and other if they are aware of the security and privacy issues.

At the same time, this experience proves the widely known fact that technology is given too much importance in knowledge management initiatives (Belliger 2007, Bettoni 2010). If you implement a very good tool, but you fail to train and elaborate a new culture of collaboration and cooperation, your initiative won't bear fruit.

Once these key factors are in place, a new culture must be established what is the biggest challenge. Our case has shown that trust building needs a long period of time, especially in a virtual learning space. If people are not focused in the same matter, it is difficult to establish trust relations.

The relationship and human dimensions are much more important than the structural, because if you can animate and motivate people to be open, share their knowledge all technical issues are secondary. The basis is the human dimension, because a common topic and certain know-how of the individuals are crucial for the knowledge transfer. The third dimension, the relationship level, is even more crucial, because individuals only build trust and work together, if they communicate openly together, if they get constructive feedback and see the results and success of their communities.

Through Social Media new methods who focus on the person gained new insights. Different tools and functionalities open new possibilities for a dialog and the integration of new media. People gain more media competences and start to trust in technical systems and contacts established in a virtual world. At the same time, the breakthrough of Social Media helps to establish a new corporate structure which focuses on liberty, innovation and trust. Companies as intelligent knowledge based organisations will learn that only with such a mentality they will be successful in a long term.

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