

Announcement of topic for Master thesis:

Measuring the “healthiness” of online innovation communities
(Preliminary title)

Theoretical background and relevance

Increasingly often, corporate innovation is opened up to integrate the contributions of communities of external contributors, e.g. users or technical experts. Against the backdrop of the resource-based view of the firm, communities can be understood as firm-accessible external resources. Their value generating potential is not fixed; rather it can be expanded or depleted over time. We call the value generating potential of a community its “health” and we want to develop a concept for measuring this health. This objective is analogous to the need companies face to assess the value of their internal resources.

Objectives of the thesis

To make a contribution to our understanding of communities as firm-accessible resources of fluctuating value, the thesis will undertake the following steps:

1. Understanding the theoretical background and situating this project in it
2. Explaining the methodology used
3. Developing a hierarchy of indicators capturing different aspects of community health
4. Empirically evaluating the usefulness of these indicators in measuring community health and in discriminating between “good” and “bad” health.
5. Winnowing the initial set of indicators to come up with a subset that is really useful in practice. Set boundary values for these indicators that capture good or bad or intermediate health. (Importantly, these values must be time-dependent: 100 contributors one week after the beginning of a contest may be great, while 100 at the end is not.)
6. Formulating insights and contributions to research and practice

Material provided

The student will have access to extensive data from contests run on the innosabi platform “unserAller”. Gradations in the success of the different contests will help establish what numbers are healthy for each indicator.

Requirements

The student should be interested and knowledgeable in open innovation. Further, he/she should possess or be willing to acquire skills in handling larger quantities of data. MS Excel will not be sufficient; MS Access or the like will be required. In addition, knowledge in PHP and MySQL could be helpful to understand and handle the data.

Opportunities in the light of making a research contribution

Open innovation is a “hot topic” in research. Questions of community management are not yet well understood. There is a lot of room for making a contribution.

Opportunities in the light of practice

The thesis presents the chance to gain in-depth knowledge in community management, an area of expertise that is sought-after on the job market. It also offers the opportunity to build confidence and literacy in handling large amounts of data, learning skills, procedures for analyses and quality control. Finally, it presents an opportunity to work closely with innosabi, a fast-growing company in Munich and a leader of open innovation solutions for large corporate clients in Germany.

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