

Wednesday, November 11, 2009

Seeking the motivation behind information sharing in virtual communities

By Claudette Zolkowski

SBA researcher receives grant to study knowledge sharing behavior

Online social, business and other networks continue to increase in popularity – gathering people with common interests into virtual communities (VCs) that flourish through the regular exchange of information. Without a vibrant community that engages in exchange of information, these communities will not survive. But what motivates those with the knowledge to share it with others?

That's the question Balaji Rajagopalan, associate professor, MIS, faculty director of SBA's graduate programs and research director for the SBA's Center for Integrated Business Research and Education, is investigating to address the biggest challenge VCs face: maintaining the supply of knowledge.



Balaji Rajagopalan, Ph. D.

Rajagopalan has been studying different aspects of VCs with research partners around the world. One of his first research grants to study virtual communities came from the prestigious National Science Foundation. He recently received a grant from the Taiwan Government and National Sun Yat-Sen University (NSYSU), Kaoshing, Taiwan, to continue a collaborative research project titled "Effects of Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation on Individuals, Knowledge-Sharing Behavior in Virtual Communities – A Study of Taiwan-Based Virtual Communities." The study supports a visit to NSYSU where he will also explore opportunities for synergies between the SBA's MBA program and the NSYSU international MBA program.

This particular study will develop a model that classifies motivation factors into two dimensions –intrinsic and extrinsic – to investigate how these factors can explain an individual's knowledge-sharing behavior in virtual communities. And more importantly the contextual factors that shape the influence of these two types of motivations.

"Through this research, we hope to uncover insights into the relationship between individuals' motivations and knowledge-sharing behavior," says Rajagopalan. "Without dynamic exchange of knowledge, VCs are of limited value. Therefore VC owners must understand the drivers of knowledge sharing to encourage high levels of participation. Since VCs often face difficulties in maintaining a high level of engagement of their members to share knowledge, the results of this research study should be very beneficial."

This study is a continuation of his work in VCs with partners T.P. Liang, MIS chair and professor, NSYSU, and NSYSU doctoral student Birdy Liu. Another study, which Rajagopalan is working on with Professor Ye Qiang of the Harbin Institute of Technology in China, looks at how the lifestyles of individuals in virtual worlds can inform marketing strategies.

SUMMARY

SBA researcher receives grant to study knowledge sharing behavior

Online social, business and other networks continue to increase in popularity – gathering people with common interests into virtual communities (VC) that flourish through the regular exchange of information. Without a vibrant community that engages in exchange of information, these communities will not survive. But what motivates those with the knowledge to share it with others?

That's the question Balaji Rajagopalan, associate professor, MIS, and faculty director of SBA graduate programs and research for the SBA's Center for Integrated Business Research and Education, is investigating to address the biggest challenge VCs face: maintaining the supply of knowledge.

Created by Linda Bowers (bowers2@oakland.edu) on Wednesday, October 14, 2009
Modified by Linda Bowers (bowers2@oakland.edu) on Monday, November 2, 2009
Article Start Date: Wednesday, October 14, 2009