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Knowledge Sharing Through Enterprise Social Network:
The Key Roles of Servant Leader Virtues and Eudaimonic Well-Being

Abstract:
To elucidate the favorable conditions for knowledge sharing through Enterprise Social Network (ESN), a qualitative study was conducted to identify benefits of ESN converts. Results highlight that the virtues of the servant leader seem to play a major role in overcoming barriers to sharing knowledge as well as several dimensions of eudaimonic well-being.

Enterprise social networks (ESNs) promote the dissemination of knowledge (Leonardi and Meyer 2015), improve meta-knowledge and increase the social capital of committed individuals (Riemer, Finke and Hovorka, 2015). However, empirical studies in this area of research remain rare (El Ouirdi et al, 2015). Knowledge sharing is "designed to transform individual into organizational knowledge" (Foss, Husted and Michailova, 2010). Sharing organizational knowledge is the process of contributing and receiving information, advice or feedback (Ellison, Gibbs and Weber, 2015). The enjoyment of sharing knowledge with others who need it greatly influences the willingness to share (Wang and Hou, 2015).

Based on the results of a literature review and a qualitative study, the research objective of this article is to elucidate the favorable conditions for knowledge sharing through ESN. Some servant leadership virtues appear crucial and the eudaimonic benefits of conversion are identified (freedom, connection, self-efficacy of knowledge). These benefits can be associated with the intrinsic motivations of Deci and Ryan's (2002) motivational framework.

Study Design

Our study was conducted in collaboration with a leading multinational company in the IT sector. An interview guide was used to structure the semi-directive interviews conducted. The themes of this guide, drawn from the literature on ESN and data collected during a preparatory phase, focus first on the organizational structure of the company, the respondent's role in relation to ESN and their memories of the start-up phase. The perceived benefits, obstacles and motivations to engage in the ESN were then discussed. Saturation was reached in eight semi-directive interviews (five project team leaders and three ESN managers). Using the Nvivo 11 software, open coding was performed on the raw transcription data.

Key Findings

The ESN conversion benefits are considered as a state of happiness felt with the use of the network. For Franck, who describes himself as one of those *"happy few"*, the ultimate level of well-being is associated with the absence of emails: *"Hum… I didn't spend any time on my emails today…"; "so we were a group of happy few who had access the platform, but… you can measure the benefit quite quickly but… the benefit is much bigger when you get a big crowd of people." (Franck)*. For Salas-Vallina, Allegre and Guerrero (2018), the umbrella concept of "happiness at work" is composed of eudaimonic and hedonic facets that include such diverse factors as emotional organizational engagement, engagement and job satisfaction. Rooted in philosophy and positive psychology, *hedonic happiness* is classically distinguished from eudaimonic happiness (Huta and Waterman, 2014). These are the presence of a pleasure/positive effect, the absence of pain/negative effect and the evaluation of life as satisfactory. *Eudemonia* extends happiness beyond pleasure and is concerned with living a good life or realizing one's human potential. According to the theory of self-determination, people become happier when they feel a sense of competence, autonomy and kinship (Deci and Ryan, 2002). It leads to greater motivation and happiness, which increases work performance (Wright, 2014). The verbatim presented above reflect the eudaimonic facets of the ESN conversion.

Eudaimonic well-being dimensions: conversion benefits

The satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs of the Theory of Self-Determination (Gagne and Deci, 2005): autonomy, kinship and competence, are salient benefits of the ESN

perceived by the converts. These internal factors are often more effective than extrinsic motivations (Wang and Hou, 2015) and studies have shown that knowledge sharing meets these basic needs (Caprara and Steca, 2005).

Examples of the many supporting verbatim are provided below.

Self-efficacy to share easily. One motivation seems to be *self-confidence* and employees who perceive the personal benefits gained through the network contribution will succeed: *"So it's much more related to be self-confident and embracing the change in general"* (Isabelle). When they master the ESN tool, work seems easier for converts. This is a sense of self-efficacy, the cognitive assessment of an employee's ability to perform a given task (Bandura, 1977).

Easier and Connected. "Uh so basically it makes my life easier" (Amanda). The joy is associated with a sense of connection and wonder: *« the fact that you've got access to the network in your daily job is just amazing, is just facilitating your life, in one go you can have the phone number, email address, you know, what the people have done, their expertise… and you can reach them"* (Franck).

Freedom. The ESN "converts" find the inspiration and all the resources they need, allowing them to focus on their goals without interruption and freeing up time to think. These benefits are liberating. *"Freedom as well"* (Franck). Autonomy as used in self-determination theory means acting with the experience of choice. Servant leadership helps others become "healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous," (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 66).

The role of the servant leader in ESN conversion

Conversion is strongly associated with the characteristics and behaviours of servant leaders. Servant leaders (Greenleaf, 1977) serve others, help others to become "healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous" and, consequently, "become servants themselves" (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 66). Previous research has focused on the characteristics or dimensions of the servant-leader (Coetzer, Bussin and Geldenhuys, 2017). The following virtues emerged from the interviews of converted employees: love as a way of vanquishing fear, forgiveness and courage, humility and altruism.

The fear - love continuum. The continuum from fear to love (Daft, 2002) appears in the interviews. Fear reduces everything a leader tries to encourage, and love encourages ''acts of helping, cooperation, sharing, and understanding'' (Daft, 2002). As Fry (2003) points out, love comes by taking care of others and valuing them. Experts and managers *"want really to support the other (company) employees… so the spirit is very good finally"*. A companion love is described by *"You feel more buddies like than colleagues sometimes"* (Elizabeth). It seems to be a love of intimacy combined with commitment (Sternberg, 1986). The resistance could be explained by the fear of others' judgment *"people feel like they should be judged on their posts…"*, associated with the fear of information overload and the need to follow two or even three communication systems.

Forgiveness and courage. Forgiveness is a clear and distinct virtue of servant leadership (Van Dierendonck and Nuijten, 2011). In the subjects' discourses, forgiveness is implicitly linked to courage in the face of criticism. Everything must be endured, supported and viewed with compassion and empathy. With the self-esteem acquired in the service of others, accepting

negative criticism in public, even if one is a leader or expert, is a way to overcome fear and allow the smallest to contribute freely without fear of being judged. Courage is defined as being open to taking calculated risks, defending what is morally right, despite a negative opponent (Russel and Stone, 2002; Coetzer, Bussin and Geldenhuys, 2017). Managers must be courageous: *"They show courage and they even take um the negative feedback as well and that that really made a difference in a lot of uh a lot of countries."* (Amanda).

Humility and altruism. Beyond transparency, managers are expected to be contributors themselves and to be humble *"changing the communications style from "this is it" to "this is how I see it; if you have an opinion feel free to to ask"* (Denis); *"also explaining them that we are learning at the same time"* (Franck). Humility is defined as being stable and modest and open to new learning opportunities, and humble leaders enjoy helping others succeed (Van Dierendonck, 2011). It is a virtuous trait that uses positional power to advance others. Altruism refers to the enjoyment of helping others (Lin, 2007). It brings converted contributors to happiness oriented towards others: *« you can take every post you want to and um to see if OK OK you can fix something or somebody"* (Amanda).

Discussion

Convergent with the effects on organizational citizenship behaviors (Walumbwa, Hartnell and Oke, 2010), the results show the influences of servant leadership on knowledge sharing behaviour in the ESN setting. They also provide further confirmation of the central role of well-being (Chumg et al, 2016) in this arena of knowledge sharing. Guided by the results of this qualitative study, three dimensions of eudaimonic well-being and several servant leader virtues are identified as the main drivers of knowledge sharing through the ESN.

Consistent with research that has shown that knowledge sharing meets basic needs (Caprara and Steca, 2005), three dimensions of eudaimonic well-being promote employee knowledge sharing through the ESN: freedom, connection to others and self-efficacy of knowledge.

The compassionate love combined with humility, courage, forgiveness and altruism also reinforces knowledge sharing. Van Dierendonck and Patterson (2015) indicate that working with compassionate love is not automatic in organizations, but that it depends on the leader for love to be a part of the organizational culture. For Chumg et al. (2016), employees have a greater sense of well-being because of their ability to demonstrate loving care for others. The happier individuals feel, the more willing they are to help their colleagues and clients (George, 1991). For the implementation and growth of ESN, organizations must hire, promote or train managers to become more servant (Song, Park and Kang, 2015), particularly knowledge-based organizations (de Sousa and van Dierendonck, 2010).

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