

Understanding Wiki Collaboration in Quebec Healthcare Organizations

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Abstract

Quebec healthcare organizations are becoming more and more interested in implementing wikis. This is a radical change for a number of organizations as the horizontality of the wiki challenges the verticality of the organization structure and above all its culture. Our research will take a new approach by using Boltanski and Thévenot's six worlds framework to observe wiki collaboration through a multi-case analysis including a double hermeneutic process using a research wiki. The expected outputs are a better understanding of the *test*, *justification* and *compromise* phases actors go through while collaborating on wikis and ultimately, to build a model to help Quebec healthcare organizations enhance their wiki collaboration.

Author Keywords

Wiki; collaboration; radical change; healthcare organizations; culture; test; justification; compromise; values

ACM Classification Keywords

H.5.2 User Interfaces; H.5.3 Group and Organization Interfaces

General Terms

Experimentation; management

Introduction

This poster proposal is based on the author's PhD thesis proposal, which is a work-in-progress. Using wikis, users move from a collaboration via documents, with documents exchanged via e-mails or share drives, to wiki collaboration where the documents themselves as files with extensions (i.e.: .doc, .docx, .rft, etc.) disappear and are replaced by co-edited wiki webpages. These pages are structured in a network connected together by hyperlinks. Moving from collaboration via document to wiki collaboration is a radical change for organizations, if we consider as Allaire and Firsirotu said, that change is radical if it affects the organization culture [1]. However, radical doesn't mean rapid, as most of radical changes take time [2]. Wiki collaboration is more complex to master than it appears.

There is a growing need to understand how wiki collaboration works inside organizations and in our case Quebec healthcare organizations. Most organizations see the wiki as just another tool to roll out, but there is a major difference; a wiki is not an out-of-the-box solution, it is a toolbox empty of content and structure that users will have to model to their needs. By doing so, they are confronted with two main issues. The first issue is the tool transparency for two reasons. The first reason is that the publishing/editing process is reversed compared to document-based collaboration. When you write a report using a document format, you edit it several times until you are satisfied with your work and then publish it. In a wiki you publish first because the page is visible to other members and then you edit the page, which allow your peers to see your whole writing process including your mistakes. The second reason is that even if you change something or correct a mistake, the history feature will allow people to look at

previous versions and even revert back to one of these versions. This new level of transparency comes often as a shock to organizations even those promoting transparency, as most of us don't feel comfortable showing our weaknesses. The second issue is that organizations are confronted with the network structure of the wiki that tends to flatten the organization hierarchical structure and by doing so challenges its culture. The initial spirit of the wiki as designed by Cunningham is democratic [3]. Concretely, the wiki horizontality challenges the organization's structural and cultural verticality.

Objectives

Our goal is to highlight the dynamics that sustain or constrain wiki collaboration in Quebec healthcare organizations. More precisely we want to show how wiki collaboration raises issues between actors that have disparate interests and powers. In the power game as Crozier and Friedberg call it, actors defend their positions [4] in what Boltanski and Thévenot call a *test (épreuve)* and justify themselves [5]. In order to collaborate, for Boltanski and Thévenot actors find *compromises* that often are not totally satisfactory for both parties. For Ricoeur, compromises are weak because they rest on principles that are weaker than the actors conflicting principles but they may ignite a creative movement to find new principles [6]. The ultimate goal of our research would be to model a way to facilitate the emergence of such new superior principles favorable to wiki collaboration.

Literature review

The literature review is constructed in four main sections. The first section is about the wiki. We will especially look at the culture that emerged from its

use, by understanding its evolution from its roots starting with Cunningham and Leuf who coined the term *Wikiway* [3] to a wider view of the public wiki sphere. We will analyze the wiki using Flichy's socio-technical model and consider the tool with its logic and rules for use and the use that is made of the tool from both a technical and a social perspective [7]. By doing so we will understand the culture around the wiki and how wiki collaboration works in the public sphere. A second section covers the evolution of collaboration from Durkheim's sociological theory of division of labor, through classical management theories such as those by Barnard, Mayo, Likert, Mintzberg or Hayek and end with more recent writings from Benkler, Rifkin or De Rosnay. A third section helps us understand collaboration through three stages : the *test*, the *justification* and the *compromise*. The test is the confrontation of Boltanski and Thévenot's worlds. As those worlds are ideals, they can't exist as such and reality is considered as a mix of worlds thus provoking inevitable confrontations. Each world has a higher common principle upon which situations, people and things are judged, and a state of worthiness incarnated by the person that best represents the values of the world. To understand the test stage we will also review Crozier and Friedberg's power game between actors of a system who may have contradictory interests and powers. The game for Crozier and Friedberg is: "the instrument that men have crafted to regulate their cooperation" [4]. The justification is the stage where people justify their position based on the values of their own world. Finally the compromise is a way actors get around their differences in order to be able to cooperate.

Significance of the study

The information technology (IT) acceptance literature follows various streams of research. First, the individual level stream focuses on intention to use the technology based on Bandura's social cognitive theory [8]; or on Fishbein and Ajzen's theory of reasoned action [9]; or on Roger's diffusion of innovation theory [10]. More recently some authors have attempted to merge or integrate individual models. Second, the organizational level stream focuses on implementation success based on Roger's diffusion of innovation theory and in a few cases on cultural approaches. Third, a more recent multi-level stream focuses on interactions between individual, group and organizational levels. Our research will look at the organizational level stream under a new lens using Boltanski and Thévenot's six worlds framework to understand the challenges of the radical change of wiki collaboration in Quebec healthcare organizations.

Expected Outputs

In this radical change process, we expect to understand the dynamics behind the actors game when collaborating on wikis. We want to highlight what are the conflicting principals in play during *test* periods , what type of arguments actors use in order to justify themselves and what are the compromises they find. Ultimately, we hope to build a model to assist Quebec healthcare organizations enhance their wiki collaboration practices and possibly help them find emergent superior principles as suggested by Ricoeur.

Methodology

This research takes a constructivist approach considering that reality is multiple and socially-constructed and that the observer can't be separated

from the field being observed [11]. We will use a multi-case approach combining wiki experiences in five to seven organizations. In a first stage, the data will be collected in three ways: by observation as the researcher plays an active role in the wiki projects, interviews of wiki users about their experience using the wikis and analysis of organizational documents. Considering the amount of data to process, voice recognition will be used to reduce interview transcription time. In a second stage, the data will be analyzed using keywords based on Boltanski and Thévenot's theory around the test, the justification and the compromise. The results will be organized in a grid

to show how the different worlds are mobilized by wiki collaboration; every cell of the grid will be justified. The grid and the justifications will be recorded on a research wiki (i.e. the researcher wiki). In a third stage, in a double hermeneutic process the analyses recorded on the research wiki will be shared with the interviewees for a period of one month in order to get their feedback. In a last stage the researcher will analyze the interviewees' answers and refine his findings. The whole process will be clearly exposed to participants before they sign in and ethical concerns will be addressed.

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