

Introduction

People share views, experiences and debate over controversial ones in online communities, which have become a new forum for information exchange nowadays. One winning attribute of an online community is the ease with which people can communicate with each other. The emergence of social networking software makes it all possible. This is what we call as online community, and in this report we going to discuss about the advantages of online community. According to the definition given by Dictionary.com a community is "a group of people having common interests; sharing participation and fellowship". Online communities are virtual rooms where you interact with like-minded people or even those who debate over your views. The most important feature of being online is that other members of the community are not able to see you, nor are you able to see them. This helps in many aspects, as the identity of the user is kept confidential.

Me and my team members not only doing this assignment as part of our course work, but by doing the research regarding this topic we get to know more detailed about the advantages and disadvantages of online community. As a result our knowledge about the online community has become wider after this assignment. As they say, knowledge is wider than sea. In this report we going to talk about the advantages of online community. There are many advantages of it. One of it is, its work as platform to us to meet and communicate with friends across all over the global, without any geographical barriers. Online community is divided into two categories, that is free and paid services. Examples of online community is, facebook, friendster, my space and many more.

To make this project to become a successful project, me and my team was helped by our lecturer, **Mr. Mok Ruk Kai**, our tutor **Ms. Yashotha** and our classmates and our friends from the other tutorial group too. Our lecturer and our tutor has helped our very much, without them I'm sure we can't make this assignment as successful assignment.

Technology Review

A virtual community, e-community or online community is a group of people that primarily interact via communication media such as email, internet social network service or instant messages rather than face to face, for social, professional, educational or other purposes. If the mechanism is a computer network, it is called an *online community*. Virtual and online communities have also become a supplemental form of communication between people who know each other primarily in real life. Many means are used in social software separately or in combination, including text-based chatrooms and forums that use voice, video text or avatars.

Earlier, the Internet was primarily used for correspondence and programming. It gradually moved on to networking and making new contacts. This is where the idea of having an online community took birth. Website managers had constraints in adding appeal and gathering new members, due to the scarcity of resources and less advanced technology - yet quite a few communities turned out to be successful. As we slip through the history of online community, e-mail, is the first and still the most frequently used communication tool on the Internet, it was developed by ARPANET in 1971. Ray Tomlinson of Bolt Beranek and Newman, Inc. (BBN) chose the @ sign for use in email addresses in 1972. Early systems were point to point, one person could send a note to just one other person. Listservers, invented in 1975, allow one to many postings. The basic form of this technology has not changed much since that time, although email readers have improved greatly. All through the 1970s, small, technical, and insular communities developed on the Internet to facilitate communication between researchers. The first emoticon was a smiley made by using “:-)” was invented in 1979, by Kevin Mackenzie, in order to soften the impact of the otherwise dry text of e-mail. In the mid to late 1980s, systems with improved graphical user interfaces started to appear

Then a community known as Newsgroup used as social networking software and served as the primary driver for the growth of the net during the years 1993-94. Among the other early communities was **'The Well'** (*The Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link*), started in 1984 in California. It was primarily used for sharing of stories and views. It was the only site during that time to stress using real names.

Chat systems, instant messaging and texting systems are synchronous, which means that correspondents must be co-present online. Typically, conversations are rapid and each individual comment is short. In busy systems messages scroll off the screen as they are replaced by more recent ones. Internet Relay Chat (IRC) was developed in 1988 by Jarkko Okarinen. Instant messaging made famous by ICQ and AOL Instant Messenger, is somewhat similar to chats in that communication is synchronous and very rapid but individuals can control who participates in a particular conversation. ICQ was developed in Israel by Mirabilis in 1996 and purchased by AOL in 1998.

In 1991, one year after ARPANET ceased to exist, the World-Wide Web (WWW), developed by Tim Berners-Lee, was released by CERN (European Organization for Nuclear Research). This event facilitated the widespread use of web sites and the development of

online community groups supported by web pages and various forms of communications software. Online communities appeared in a variety of media, which were gradually integrated into single environments. In the early 1990s, highly sophisticated gaming worlds emerged, e.g., Doom, Quake, and Everquest. In these worlds, participants represented themselves on the screen as graphical characters known as avatars, which can move through the world accompanied by sound, messaging, and streaming video. Graphical, three-dimensional environments such as the Palace (**www.palace.com**), established in 1995, and Activeworlds (**www.activeworlds.com**), established in 1995 as AlphaWorld, started to appear. However, these features come at a cost; they require state of the art computers with fast processors, large memory and high-bandwidth Internet connections. Some developers admirably address the issue of universal access that such environments raise by offering high and low bandwidth versions (e.g., **www.activeworlds.com**) so that those without access to sophisticated equipment may participate too.

Nowadays everyone is familiar with social networking website design and communities like MySpace, Facebook, and Yahoo groups. With the expansion of the Internet there are more options to choose from. Myspace has only been in existence for three years and generates more page views than Google.com. It serves adults, youth and everyone in between. Facebook, another counterpart of MySpace, is popular with the student population as photographs and personal information is exchanged very frequently. Though famous for doubling as dating sites, these communities have been successful in attracting members from all walks of life.

Over the years, there was a subsequent rise in Internet use as a way of doing business, with sites like America Online, Ebay, Earthweb and Xoom having experiencing phenomenal growth. Online communities are now outpacing even these well known companies, which took years, even decades, to build!. A common myth is that online communities are only useful for dating and meeting new friends. However, it is now a well-established fact that companies make use of online communities in order to make new contacts and expand their business relationships.

As the web matures, new sites and communities spring up all the time; however famous ones like MySpace and Facebook have yet to find competitors who offer similar quality. There is an array of choices available on the Internet. People can choose and enroll in any online community according to their preferences and needs. To enhance the site and attract new members, site managers and owners need to have a definitive plan. In this way, owners can be assured that customers will return to their site and continue business. Besides the commercial value, online communities also serve as virtual classrooms, imparting knowledge and encouraging the sharing of ideas through a user-friendly medium. Online communities are no longer just a passing fad. They are here to stay and will continue as long as users spend time on the Internet. Online communities have paved the way for easier business networking, and have simplified interaction between people from every corner of the globe. They can do the same for your Internet business.

Advantages of online community

There are many advantages by using online communities, such as :

ACCESSIBILITY

Availability is one positive aspect of using instant messaging or online community among college groups. It is difficult to contact active college students because of their busy school, work, and club schedules. Through Instant Messengers, communication is quick and easy. Although the user may not always be available online, people can utilize the away messages and leave a comment at any time of the day. Also, through instant messaging, one is able to have many conversations at the same time. In face-to-face situations, people can only focus on one person, but the accessibility of instant messaging allows a user to carry multiple discussions. Because instant messaging permits wide access to an unlimited people, college students that are involved in many activities may choose to use instant messaging as a tool. Students are able to post information of an event through their profile or away message functions for promotion or invitation purposes. Most students prefer this method rather than making multiple phone calls. The world is essentially a click of a screen name away. As a result of such accessibility, instant messaging has become the primary means of interaction among college groups.

SHARE INFORMATION WITH OTHER PEOPLE

An obvious advantage, and one that should not be taken for granted, is that online communities are easily accessible. In addition to being inexpensive, the Internet allows for people to go online and connect, within minutes, with other individuals who share common interests or offer what a person needs. If a person wishes to speak to someone who is of a specific ethnic group, age, occupation, gender, or has certain hobbies, all he/she has to do is search for web sites that meet the person's interest. Then, once in the site, the person is able to form virtual relationships with such individuals. This is a very efficient and accessible way of forming such relationships. Sometimes, a person doesn't want to necessarily form a relationship, but instead needs to find quick information that they can find on these sites offering communities. Perfect example is our virtual investigations. Hypothetically, if you have to do a research paper on a specific country for a class, you could even visit communities online of people from that country. You could learn of their views on politics, social issues, etc. and include their perspectives in your paper. If you were studying the country's culture and wanted further insight, visiting online communities of people from that culture would be an excellent resource. For example Angels in the Night, is an excellent website to show us that how the Internet is useful in that it is easily accessible. Angels in the Night is a site that offers free and confidential support to young victims of sexual abuse (age 19 and younger).

Relationships

The internet is also an outlet for building relationships without direct contact. By involving oneself in an active online community, people may grow in existing relationships and also meet new people. Because instant messaging users are easily accessible, there are often opportunities to meet new people by finding or asking for a screen name. Without any direct contact, online conversations tend to be more casual, personal and less stressful. Additionally, instant messaging can be seen as a tool for not only maintaining friendships, but also enhancing real romance on the internet. College students may feel more comfortable interacting with their peers and getting to know their attractions via instant messaging rather than face-to-face.

EDUCATION

Instant messaging can be an effective medium of communication used in the school place within a group of students. Online communities offer new opportunities for students, especially in team related projects. They can work together, exchange information, comment on each other's work, share resources, meet people from across the world, and also search the Web for more information. In group projects, it may be difficult to find an agreeable and convenient time to meet, but through the common tie of the internet, students can focus school work through instant messaging.

Self Expression

Instant messaging also allows college students to be more expressive, even from the start. New users are required to create a screen name during the registering process. The chosen screen name functions to identify the respective user whether it is their name, interest, or a self-description. When an "College students can further express themselves through customized buddy icons, profiles, and away messages that the newer versions of AIM provide. These features reflect the user's interests and develop an online personality. Individual profiles and away messages reflect the thought or action of the respective user and can describe his/her current mood. Accept or Reject from 'XYZ screen name'?" message appears to an Instant Messenger user, the receiver can already form an idea of who that person may be.

Other AIM users can constantly check profiles and messages of their friends to see what they are doing or thinking – these messages build a sense of "deeper" understanding of the other AIM user. All this can be done without any face-to-face conversation, altogether highlighting the versatility of instant messaging.

Socialize with others

Another advantage of online communities is that a person can socialize with

someone, perhaps of a specific group, despite his/her location. Location is not an issue with online communities. Being an inexpensive way to "reach out and touch someone," there's no end to the number of acquaintances a person can make over the Internet. Being in KL, Malaysia, I can communicate with another person who loves Sade or is of an Iranian/Afghan background in Malaysia or in Singapore. For some people, it could prove to be very useful to be involved in virtual communities because of their location. For example, a gay teenager in a small town in Kansas may be shunned if he/she were to reveal his/her sexuality. In such a case, it may be helpful if the teenager became involved in an online community or virtual support group for gay teens. There, the teenager may be able to meet and relate to other teens that have had to reveal their sexuality. After becoming more comfortable with his/her identity, he/she may find the courage to reveal his/her sexuality. In such a case, location is an important factor and virtual communities become very useful.

Promote activities via Online

For my last investigation, careers, I explored *Women in Multimedia*, which is the official website of a non-profit organization, based in San Francisco, CA, which encourages and promotes the involvement of women in the technology industry. The advantage of online communities is that individuals can come together in support of a certain cause. They become enabled to promote a group, or cause, to a wide audience. For example, communities may work together, through message boards, chat, offering information, and various forms of multimedia, in order to promote awareness and to gain support. In terms of promoting awareness, communities off-line can create (official) websites relating to their cause. In this way, the cause becomes promoted to a large audience, as well as gains more supporters worldwide. Using this as an example, *Women in Multimedia* has meetings that are held monthly in San Francisco. "The purpose of these meetings is to have guest speakers and panel discussions that can inform members and non-members of the technology business and of advancements in technology, but to also network among women and individuals in the high tech industry." The members of the community that attend these meetings are able to also go on-line and to utilize the site as a way to better empower their community. On the site, influential women in technology are recognized, as well. In addition, news and information is distributed in order to promote awareness of women's roles in the technology industry. The women that visit the site become empowered by becoming aware of the accomplishments of and opportunities for women in the hi-tech world. The organization works to promote women's roles in the business, so to have an online community promoting this, as well, is a powerful tool. In addition, men and others who are not a part of the specific community of "women and technology" become enlightened about issues concerning this group by visiting the site and becoming aware of the organization. Going online is a great advantage for people who are involved in non-profit organizations or various causes. This can be either to create their own sites or to visit and become members of other sites with the same kinds of communities.

As previously mentioned, another great benefit of becoming involved in virtual communities is that people who have low self-esteem or little confidence are enabled to socialize with others with little fear. They can engage in discussions with people of either gender, a certain age range, with similar interests, or any other community they feel they

would like to join. It allows them to be honest of their identity (sexuality, race, etc) and to discuss areas of interest with others who share the same interests. An individual could make good friends online, which could be great for those who lack friends in their daily lives. As a person becomes more confident, he/she could become more secure with who they are, which will have benefits in their daily interactions with other people.

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CONCLUSION

Online communitiy is the open and a larger network where start from kids until adults are using it for bussiness and socialize service.Nowdays internet are more likely favor for online community and it have been proven by manys.Sharing is caring is popular english proverbs which is related with online community.Other than that,online community,also help us to to be more open minded and open hearted.There are some persons,who will afraid to talk with new persons face to face,to them online community is a best way to prevent the shyness that are faced by the user.