THECR
NETWORK

The One-Year Club: Defining Requirements that Scale

SNAPSHOT

SPEAKERS
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COMPETENCIES
Tools, Strategy

MATURITY PHASES
CMM1

TOP THREE TAKEAWAYS

This was an excellent initial discussion on the topic of defining requirements that scale. The highlights of the discussion are noted below:

1. **Human interaction is not easily captured in software.** When sourcing social software purchases, organizations should be cognizant that there is an incredible complexity associated with human social interaction and it is not easily captured in software.

2. **Focus on simplicity.** Be aware that the requirements of the tools move from the simple to the complex very quickly (usually within four to six months). Adding further complication is that the needs of the business also change. Keeping this in mind, Thomas advised that when defining requirements that scale, the focus should always be on simplicity.

3. **Map the software to the organization's culture.** Do not fall into the trap of buying software without first mapping it to the culture of the organization. This is a crucial step missed by many organizations.

OVERVIEW

1. **Thomas' background:** Thomas shared his background and experience on this topic with participants:

   a. Thomas is a published information architect who has coined the term: "Folkonomy".

   b. Thomas explained that the term: "The One-Year Club" came into being through various discussions between himself and Stewart Mader. In these discussions, they noticed that many of their clients who were six months to a year into the implementation of their internal software and social tools were stagnating and/or unable to scale. This type of customer became known as a member of "The One-Year Club"

   c. Organizations that have rather quick adoptions in engagement quite often start with one simple tool that does one thing and then move out from there. Organizations that start with the social software tools that have many things all built into one often have an adoption rate that is slower because it is far more complicated to grasp all at once

   d. Thomas shared his view of the various roles within the community and how he has labeled them. There are pointers and gatherers, subject matter experts, curators and doubters.

   e. Outside influences greatly impact an organization's social tools. However, being able to look at services and systems that can walk you through and handle the different depths of use, as well as being able to have many different role types that can be customized based on the service, the organization and the people who are interacting with the service will be very useful.

   f. Each organization and each community type is different. It is invaluable to be able to keep an eye on things to help understand what is going on, to examine the use changes over time for the whole service, as well as within individuals groups. This involves scaling and functionality.

   g. Thomas explained the different stages of scaling and functionality as it pertains to the number of people participating with the community on the vertical axis and number of objects in the system on the horizontal axis. The various stages are personal use (most of the services start out for personal use only), the serendipity stage, the mature social tool stage and finally, the complex social system.

OVERVIEW, CONT.

h. As these communities begin to mature, the organization will notice that there are many more contributors. Thomas explained that he runs across organizations who are in "The One-Year Club" who feel that when they hit the 1:9:90 rule (1% of the people in the service are contributing information, 9% are editing and managing the information and 90% are consuming), that is a good sign. It is actually a telltale sign that something is drastically broken. For example, sometimes in an open social platform the model does not lend itself to being a comfortable environment for people to interact and share information. As a result, many organizations will move from an open model to a closed model.

Conversely, starting in a closed model often results in the formation of silos. There is incredible sharing going on within all these different closed groups, but nobody can find it, it is not searchable, it cannot be aggregated and not much can be done with the information. These closed groups often then move to an open model.

i. Thomas explained how he views the elements of social software. The first step is to establish presence within the system. You need to have identity in the service, which then gives you access. The next thing you want is the ability to take an action (i.e. to blog, to bookmark, to put it in an activity stream, etc.) The next step is the sharing piece. It is imperative that you understand the sharing and the action stages. If you flip them and have the sharing step first and the action step second, the engagement and the use of the tool is drastically lessened vs. if it is done the other way around.

j. With traditional Groupware, the relationship is already set. For example, if a manager assigned 10 or 12 people to work together on a project, bonding exercises would be used to get to know each group member better before using the service. By walking through the action and sharing steps, much of that is already set within the traditional Groupware.

Things are now more open and people are finding, adopting and interacting with groups. Those underlying elements are really needed in order for people to interact within groups, share information, connect with others and enable the conversation and collaboration.

BEST PRACTICES

1. **Focus on Simplicity:** Thomas advised that when defining requirements that scale, the focus should always be on simplicity. Keep in mind, however, that you will run through the simplicity stage rather quickly. Needless to say, people who are new to a service need the simplicity to understand what is available to them.

2. **Enterprise Tool Components for Success:** In Thomas' research he came up with four components that when overlaid (as in a Venn diagram) will contribute to the success of an enterprise tool. They are the tools themselves, sociality, interface/ease of use and encouraging use. One of the huge sticking points with social software is that it does not yet come close to replicating how humans interact socially.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Rachel asked Thomas how he believes that the behavior of networks changes over the course of the first six months to a year. Thomas explained that part of it is people getting comfortable interacting with others, particularly within social tools that are online. Many of the queues that we depend on in the face-to-face world are missing in social software.

- Rachel asked Thomas to further explain what he meant by sociality. Thomas shared that the social dynamics of the one-to-one and the one-to-two from the one-to-a-few to the one-to-many or many-to-many are all drastically different. Quite often with larger groups, the pain points and frustration that tip somebody to start engaging are much higher than is desirable to foster that engagement. Therefore, in the last couple of years Thomas has basically stopped using the word: "trust". He still uses the concept because it is incredibly valuable, but what he noticed was that when he went into organizations to help them design, develop and understand their gaps, everyone he talked to had a different definition for the word: "trust". Therefore, he banned the word and encouraged them to use other terms in its place. The term that came up repeatedly was the word: "comfort". Therefore, Thomas began focusing on "social comfort". Social comfort has three components: comfort with people, comfort with the software and comfort with the content.

ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

1. Rachel asked participants: "What do you know now that you wish you knew a year ago or when you implemented your software?"

   One participant shared that in her organization, they had envisioned the ability to silo their community a little more than what actually occurred. When it was initially designed, they thought that there would be a focus on a particular expertise. However, what they learned was that the community members want what they want, not what the organization wants to give them. As a result, they are now reassessing the initial requirements.