

The Relationship between Advertising Knowledge Management and Internal Social Media in Egypt: The Case of Leap

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Abstract

The importance of knowledge management has recently been well recognized in organizations. This study examines the need to develop knowledge management in advertising agencies. Knowledge needs to be shared among employees in advertising agencies. To this end, internal social media can contribute to the development of advertising knowledge management. The purpose of this paper is to analyze how internal social media can be used to improve advertising knowledge management in advertising agencies in Egypt. The paper uses a combination of academic resources and a qualitative case study of the Egyptian below the line advertising agency “Leap”. Leap is worth studying because of its fast growing feature in the Egyptian market. The paper assesses the agency’s need for internal social media usage for developing advertising knowledge management by generating a one month trial of using “Yammer” as internal social media. Data is retrieved from interviews and academic journals. The research findings indicate that internal social media can be used for improving advertising knowledge management in advertising agencies. The lessons gleaned from the case study suggest that generic advertising knowledge bank for creative ideas can be created using internal social media “Yammer”. The scope of the paper is limited by the window of the data collection period. This paper represents one of the earliest works that analyzes the use of internal social media for advertising knowledge management in advertising agencies in Egypt. The paper is considered a valuable contribution to the advertising industry in Egypt by recommending the use of internal social media to improve advertising knowledge management mainly creativity. The use of Yammer as internal social media is expected to be a useful tool for knowledge sharing in advertising agencies.

Keywords: advertising knowledge management , internal social media, enterprise social network, below the line, above the line.

INTRODUCTION

Organizations view ‘Knowledge Management’ as an important business strategy (Alton and Snehassish, 2013). Most of the jobs depend on knowledge rather than manual skills (Geraud, 2005); therefore, developing knowledge management is an important aspect in organizations. The advertising industry is based on knowledge; passing commercial experience and wisdom; sharing the knowledge and developing creativity (Michael and Douglas, 2000). Knowledge management requires the creation of a knowledge environment that provides easy access and relevant information within an organization (Geraud, 2005).

Social media have become important tools in the working environment, which allows employees to share knowledge and ideas. Currently most of the large corporations use enterprise social networks for internal communication in foreign countries (Jeffrey, 2012). Advertising knowledge objects can be shared and stored in an advertising agency using internal social media or enterprise social network services as an internal communication medium, a practice which

facilitates knowledge sharing and communication and develops creativity.

The main objective of the paper is to find the suitable tools to develop advertising knowledge management and idea sharing in advertising agencies in Egypt. This study focuses on the internal social media using “Yammer” and aims to answer how it can be used to improve the knowledge management process among employees in advertising agencies.

The paper is structured as follows; the next section presents the literature review which revolves around two themes; advertising knowledge management and internal social media. A theoretical framework that integrates advertising knowledge management and internal social media is also proposed. Section 3 elaborates the data collection and analysis procedures. The case study on Egyptian local below the line advertising agency “Leap” is presented and explained in section 4. Following that, section 5 discusses the findings culled from the paper.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Advertising Knowledge Management

Organizations have come to view knowledge as the most valuable strategic resource. Consequently, to remain competitive organizations need to manage their resources and capabilities (Michael and Douglas, 2000). The performance of an organization depends on how effectively its people can create and share new knowledge within the organization, and use that knowledge to best effect (Geraud, 2005). Basically, knowledge management is about applying the collective knowledge of the entire workforce to achieve specific organizational goals. It is about making sure that people have the knowledge they need, where they need it and when they need it – the right knowledge, in the right place, at the right time (Geraud, 2005).

Knowledge management is the concern of every company and it is usually based on smart people and the flow of ideas, which is relevant to the advertising business. For generations, family business owners have been passing their commercial experience and wisdom to their children (Michael and Douglas, 2000). Advertising services are seen as knowledge intensive firms which are composed of communities with specialized knowledge domains and through the interaction within these communities, knowledge is created (Oded and Matthew, 2003).

Most of the jobs involve “knowledge work”; therefore all employees are “knowledge workers”, who depend more on their knowledge rather than their manual skills (Geraud, 2005). For example, in the advertising industry, creativity is knowledge which comes from brainstorming and discussion. The creative process is not solitary or based on just few creative personnel, but it is the result of idea generation systematization (Oded and Matthew, 2003). Creative processes involve people with very different knowledge bases and require the integration of different types of knowledge (Oded and Matthew, 2003). The associative theory views creativity as ‘the ability or tendency to bring mutually remote ideas into contiguity to facilitate a creative solution’. The ability of a copywriter to use inputs and come up with a creative idea is essential for effective advertisements (Michael and Douglas, 2000). In the advertising industry, creativity and the application of knowledge are seen to be at the industry’s core (Oded and Matthew, 2003). As a result creating and sharing knowledge are the most important activities in the advertising field.

There are multiple forms of knowledge such as tacit and explicit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is objective and can be easily put into a tangible form to be used by others; it can be codified and it retains its value even when it is separated from its context. While tacit knowledge is subjective; it cannot be

easily communicated, it is hard to be codified and it is difficult to separate it from its context. Therefore, it is difficult to share tacit knowledge as it is “sticky” (Deepa, 2014).

There are two models of paradigms for knowledge management; the first approach is ‘codification strategy’ and the second is ‘personalization strategy’. The codification strategy is based on explicit knowledge which is transferable knowledge that can be classified and stored in the database and can be accessed by everyone in the company (Michael and Douglas, 2000). While personalization strategy is based on tacit knowledge which requires learning by doing and trial and error, and this leads to the building of skills. The most valuable knowledge is tacit knowledge which exists in people’s heads and can be shared through interpersonal or social interaction (Michael and Douglas, 2000). The focus in this case is on dialogues rather than knowledge objects. It is proven that tacit knowledge has a crucial influence on the success of innovation processes in companies and that it plays an important role as a company resource and success factor (Ragna and Evi, 2008). This study focuses on tacit knowledge management using personalization strategy which best suits the creativity process in the advertising industry.

The advertising industry has two distinct sides; the business side and the creative side that result in two types of job opportunities: the account management and the creative department. On one hand, account managers serve as liaisons between the agency and the client. This requires organizational and interpersonal skills in order to manage the relationships and the people involved in the advertising development process. On the other hand, the role of the creative department is to create ideas by using both words and images for the advertising campaign. This requires the ability to create a vision out of nothing and at the same time address the needs of the clients (PittBusiness). This study will focus on the creative side.

Internal Social Media

This internal social media is the enterprise social network which is defined as ‘any Facebook-like platform that allows employees to create a user profile and communicate online with co-workers’. The information shared typically includes status updates, links, documents, photos, and videos (Jeffrey, 2012). “Internal Social Media” and “Enterprise Social Network” are used as synonyms in this study.

The true value of social networks in workplace is the types of behavior that are promoted among employees rather than the technology itself. Enterprise social networks help businesses improve

knowledge sharing and collaboration between employees, reinforce their brand, generate new ideas, and build a sense of community (Jeffrey, 2012). There is a growing number of large organizations that use established social media platforms or enterprise social networks for internal communication to enhance knowledge sharing and develop strong employee relationships (Suzanne and Shannon, 2013).

Today's teenagers think e-mail is slow and old-fashioned; therefore they use social media and texting to communicate with their friends. Thus using internal social media will attract new talents and bring the following benefits: encourage communication in an engaging way; create two way communication between employees and management, open new feedback channels as employees can share ideas about the company, create an easier way of sharing knowledge, generate innovation and collaboration and encourage employees to use internal social media platforms as they are less formal and more fun than traditional internal communication (Suzanne and Shannon, 2013).

Although some organizations use custom developed internal social media, there are other readily available enterprise social networks services. The most popular service is Yammer, which is one of the first commercially available enterprise social networking platforms (Jeffrey, 2012). Other enterprise social network services include SharePoint, Chatter, Lync and Socialcast. Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, that can be used for internal communication by creating a group that employees have access to.

This study focuses on Yammer as an internal social media that improves team collaboration, spurs creativity and facilitates decision-making (Yammer). According to Nucleaus research, Yammer is defined as "a freemium social platform typically brought in by a small team of employees requiring a lightweight collaborative tool which steadily pervades the company through viral growth" (Nucleaus Research, 2012).

Advertising Knowledge Management using Internal Social Media

The organization's most valuable resource is the knowledge of its people. It is common to say a "knowledgeable individual" which means someone educated and intelligent; someone with reliable information about a subject. But it is not common to say a "knowledgeable" or even a "knowledge-full" memo, handbook, or database, even though these might be produced by knowledgeable individuals or groups (Thomas and Lawrence, 2000). Market competition and technology enable firms to codify

and share knowledge more quickly and cheaply (Michael and Douglas, 2000).

Knowledge management is categorized into three components; people, processes and technology. It is easy to put technology and process in place, but people are considered the biggest challenge in knowledge management, as it is difficult to ensure the participation of employees in knowledge sharing and collaboration (Bhojaraju, 2005). It requires making small changes to the way people work in the organization. Knowledge environment requires changing organizational values and culture as well as people's behaviors and work patterns (Geraud, 2005). It also requires creating a trustworthy environment so that employees share their knowledge among team members (Bhojaraju, 2005) and providing people with easy access to each other and to relevant information resources (Geraud, 2005). Web-based and intranet technologies now provide the connectivity between knowledge bases to form the necessary bridges and facilitate the sharing of knowledge (Michael and Douglas, 2000). Successful knowledge management is based on providing employees with visibility, recognition and accreditation as "experts" in their field of specialization (Bhojaraju, 2005). The idea of employees' interaction using social networks shall not be by force; instead, it will be optional. Therefore, it will be fun to use which in turn will make employees willing to share tips and information with co-workers (Jeffrey, 2012).

As most of the work nowadays is knowledge work, depending more on knowledge rather than manual skills (Geraud, 2005), the advertising industry including the creative process is also based on knowledge. Social interaction has an important role in the creative process as it enables exploitation of different types of tacit knowledge (Oded and Matthew, 2003). Using computers and social media helps people get "up to speed" topics and communicate rather than store knowledge (Michael and Douglas, 2000). Therefore, the creativity process which is based on tacit knowledge can be enhanced by using internal social media. It is clear that knowledge-based systems will play an ever-increasing role in communications in all forms of above and below-the-line media (Michael and Douglas, 2000).

Advertising is the one business process which could be accused of not fully harnessing the potential of technology in support of decision-making, planning and campaign evaluation. Therefore it's time for agencies to harness the power of technology in order to convert information into knowledge, and knowledge into competitive advantage (Michael and Douglas, 2000).

Wiktör Leo Burnett (WLB), a multinational advertising agency in Slovakia, decided to implement Yammer at the end of 2012, because communication via social networks such as Facebook, to exchange inspired ideas, was not sophisticated enough because of privacy settings, client confidentiality, and the problem of not being able to efficiently archive proposals and inspiration of ideas. This type of information got lost during the execution of tasks and employees could not later use it. Employees sought a solution that would allow them to share information inside the company and at the same time make use of the benefits of social networks for efficient communication and collaboration; mainly for creative employees, therefore they started using "Yammer". After several months of use at WLB, the agency appreciated the benefits of the Yammer service that enabled its employees, mainly its creative team, to communicate throughout the agency without worrying about privacy settings (Microsoft).

Many critics attack the idea of having rules to develop creativity, but creating a generic advertising knowledge bank is believed to work. Once the agency's employees, who represent its most important asset, have been addressed, the agency should invest in the necessary technology to support the knowledge-sharing and organizational learning culture (Michael and Douglas, 2000).

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to find how social media can be used to improve knowledge management in the field of advertising in Egypt. Qualitative method is chosen for the study by using academic sources. The theoretical part includes two variables: advertising knowledge management and internal social media. The practical part is a case study of the Egyptian below the line advertising agency "Leap" in order to assess its need to internal social media usage and to generate a trial of using Yammer as enterprise social network for internal communication to improve advertising knowledge management using the criteria of "creativity". Interviews are conducted with the general manager and department managers of the agency. In the conclusion, different parts of the study are combined, to evaluate what contributions internal social media tools can make to advertising knowledge management.

The study is an explanatory causal research, using case study on "Leap". This study analyzes the effect of internal social media on advertising knowledge management. There are two variables:

- **Dependent Variable:** Advertising Knowledge Management
- **Independent Variable:** Internal Social Media (Enterprise Social Network)

THE CASE OF LEAP

Background

Leap is an Egyptian local fast growing advertising agency, founded in 2008, with around 40 employees. It is a 'Below The Line' (BTL) advertising agency specialized in branding, giveaways, signs, stands, kiosks, booths, display units, events, exhibitions, uniforms, etc... There are three departments in the agency; account management, design and production. Leap works with most of the multinationals and big organizations including P&G, Nestle, Pepsico, Vodafone, Mars, Savola, etc... More clients mean more experience and a larger base for knowledge creation. Therefore size is considered an important aspect in advertising knowledge management (Michael and Douglas, 2000).

The BTL market started in Egypt when multinational organizations realized, in the last ten years, that they couldn't only depend on 'Above The Line' (ATL) advertising because the number of channels and programs increased. By the 1980s, the media market was unfragmented and most of the target groups could be reached with a small budget by placing advertisements on TV major channels; everyone would see them as there were only two channels. Nowadays the market is very fragmented and a huge budget is required to reach the target audience and even then it is difficult to reach the whole target. In 2000's, with the introduction of malls and hyper markets, BTL advertising appeared, as there was a high concentration of people from certain target markets. It was cheaper to do direct marketing to reach target audience as it was more concentrated. According to Mr. Amr Nada, managing partner of Leap, "when the media market was fragmented, direct market got consolidated, therefore it was worth the investment".

The main strength of "Leap" is professionalism and the passion for winning. This is the reason of the agency's fast growth. In addition to that, the market has contributed to this growth as there weren't any multinational agencies in the BTL market, and all multinational clients wanted BTL advertising.

All the work done in Leap is based on knowledge; the business side of account managers is based on knowledge and experience, and the creative side is based on knowledge sharing and brainstorming. The brief comes from the client; the account manager briefs the designers of the client's needs, and then brainstorming and idea sharing take place between the account manager and designers to generate creative ideas. After the brainstorming, each designer researches and works on his / her own without sharing the idea, therefore ideas are not developed and shared on a regular basis. This process results in different pools of ideas, but only the best ideas and executions are sent to the client. As a result, a lot of

time is wasted by working on ideas that will not be implemented because the creative process is not done in a systematic way. The main challenge of the agency is to consistently provide creativity at a good price and with superior quality. Mr. Amr Nada said, “‘Creative’ is not only in designs, it is the way we do the work”, and it is all about ‘Work smart, not hard’”.

The environment in Leap encourages participation and knowledge sharing. Each department has the characteristic of strong teamwork, for example in the designers’ department everyone participates in the creativity process even if the employee will not work on that brief. What develops creativity is the good understanding of the brief, the good research of the product and the brand and the research of the brand in foreign countries, as most of the clients are multinational organizations. Research is done via Google and Behance, but employees do not use the social media as a creativity tool to get ideas.

Leap is chosen as a case study because of its fast growing feature which makes it worth studying in order to assess the extent to its need to internal social media usage and develop its knowledge management by generating trial of using “Yammer” as internal social media for one month.

Use of Yammer

Yammer is an internal social media that improves team collaboration, spurs creativity and facilitates decision-making. It was founded in 2008 and is now part of the Microsoft Office Division. It is used by more than 200,000 organizations worldwide (Yammer). Yammer has the following tools; chatting, posting announcements and updates, sharing files, photos and videos, creating events and polls, tagging people, liking and commenting on posts, following people and conversations. It is a Facebook-like platform with the additional function of privacy; as only employees can access the page. Each department can even create a private group for internal communication within employees; therefore there is no privacy concern.

Yammer was implemented at “Leap” to generate a trial of its usage for one month, all employees were invited to Yammer as a fun tool for knowledge sharing; employees started greeting each other on Yammer’s home page and created groups for each department. The main group that was created was named “Creative” which aimed at developing creativity. Account managers and designers departments joined the group as they are the ones responsible for generating creative ideas. Designers started sharing creative extraordinary ideas that can be used for clients’ briefs lately. Some briefs were posted on Yammer by an account manager and designers participated in online brainstorming. The

most participation in online brainstorming was from the employee working from home.

Creativity comes from the ability to use inputs and come up with ideas. The Associative Theory views creativity as ‘the ability or tendency to bring mutually remote ideas into contiguity to facilitate a creative solution’ (Michael and Douglas, 2000). Creativity brainstorming needs to be unconventional which means ‘to think out of the box’ and create a fun environment to come up with ideas, which can be done by using Yammer.

As a result of a one month trial in the agency, some employees believed Yammer can be a helpful tool for knowledge sharing, online brainstorming and developing creativity, especially that it has the same functions of Facebook which is a fun and easy to use. Some employees even used Yammer in chatting for communicating with each other. Others believed that it was a waste of time because of the work load inside the agency.

Basically the idea of employee interaction on Yammer shall not be by force; instead keeping it optional will make it fun (Jeffrey, 2012). Because of the work load inside the agency, Yammer can be used as a helpful and fun tool when needed, to generate ideas and save time and effort, and to make the research and thinking more organized by sharing the creative thinking direction and ideas online. Yammer can be a useful tool for work by employees working from home in knowledge sharing and participation. Yammer can also be used as a research tool when needed as Behance and Google, therefore Yammer can create a generic advertising knowledge bank for creative ideas inside the agency.

DISCUSSION

The major finding that can be culled from the study is that internal social media contributes to the improvement of advertising knowledge management. In the advertising industry, creativity and the application of knowledge are seen to be at the industry’s core. Creativity is based on knowledge sharing and social interactions. Internal social media help employees communicate and share knowledge, which results in developing creativity. The lessons gleaned from the case study suggest that generic advertising knowledge bank for creative ideas can be created using internal social media “Yammer”. This answers the research question which is how internal social media can be used to improve the advertising knowledge management process within employees in advertising agencies.

CONCLUSION

The advertising industry is based on knowledge in which creativity and the application of knowledge are seen to be at the industry’s core. Creativity is the

ability to use inputs and come up with creative ideas. Internal social media such as Yammer provide the connectivity between knowledge bases to facilitate the sharing of knowledge. As creativity is based on tacit knowledge sharing, Yammer can have an important role in the creative process as it enables the exploitation of tacit knowledge and development of different creative ideas. As a result internal social media can be used for knowledge sharing and developing creativity in advertising agencies.

Advertising is the one business process which could be accused of currently not fully making use of the technology, therefore advertising agencies need to use internal social media to convert knowledge into competitive advantage.

“Leap”, a local below the line advertising agency in Egypt, started using Yammer in an attempt to create a generic advertising knowledge bank in order to develop creativity. Yammer, an internal social media, contributes to the efficient archiving of proposals and inspiration for ideas, especially for the creative team, to encourage communication within the agency.

Creativity brainstorming needs to be done in a fun filled and trustworthy environment using untraditional tools such as Yammer to come up with ideas. The idea of employee interaction on Yammer shall not be by force; instead it will be optional to make it fun to use. Because of the work load, Yammer can be used as a helpful and fun tool when needed; it can be considered a powerful tool for work by home employees to participate in online brainstorming and knowledge sharing. Yammer can also be used as a research tool; therefore Yammer can create a generic advertising knowledge bank for creative ideas.

A limitation inherent in this study must be acknowledged. The scope of paper is limited to the data collection period. Thus the results of using Yammer in “Leap” are not measured as the study mainly assesses the extent to which advertising agencies in Egypt need internal social media and how advertising knowledge management can be improved using internal social media.

For managers, this paper uses “Leap” as an exemplar that internal social media can be used to improve advertising knowledge management. The lessons gleaned from the case study suggest that internal social media such as Yammer can be used to create a generic advertising knowledge bank. The implications suggest that advertising agencies should use internal social media to improve advertising knowledge management and mainly develop creativity.

For scholars interested in investigating the role of internal social media in improving advertising knowledge management, this paper provides more ideas for further inquiries. For example, measurement of the results of using internal social media on the creativity process, this can help obtain richer qualitative data and offer insights into the way internal social media contributes to creativity. A second research direction may involve the business side of advertising knowledge management and how internal social media can develop it. These recommendations for future research can build upon the theoretical foundation to generate more advertising knowledge management ideas using internal social media.

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