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<input type="checkbox"/>	Doctor's thesis

Subject	Information Systems Science	Date	2.2.2007
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		Number of pages	119
Title	FOSTERING THE KNOWLEDGE-CREATING CULTURE OF VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES: an action research study		
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Abstract

Knowledge is gaining recognition as one of the success factors of organizations. Academics as well as practitioners are therefore increasingly investigating management of organizational knowledge. Knowledge communities are being recognized as natural environments for the creation and sharing of knowledge. Virtual knowledge communities represent a step further from traditional knowledge communities. Supported by an online environment, members of virtual knowledge communities are able to overcome many drawbacks of traditional knowledge communities, which are constrained by space and time. Questions like how successfully manage virtual knowledge communities arise.

The aim of this thesis was to find an answer to the same question. Three research questions guided the study:

- § What are the key aspects for the cultivation of a successful knowledge-sharing virtual community?
- § What are the main challenges when cultivating a knowledge-sharing virtual community?
- § How does the theoretical framework fit to the development of organizational knowledge sharing?

To answer these questions, the author first examined what aspects and challenges needed to be considered to cultivate a successful virtual knowledge community for knowledge-sharing purposes. The author developed a theoretical framework, which aim is to aid practitioners in managing virtual knowledge communities. It covers major challenges that the practitioners might be faced with. The challenges are structured according to three recognized areas of success: intellectual capital, social capital, and virtual space.

Next, the author examined how the theoretical framework fits to the development of organizational knowledge sharing. Implementing action research, the author developed an action plan for a knowledge-sharing virtual community for a medical research clinic, which covered main aspects and challenges in the cultivation process.

Key words	virtual knowledge community, intellectual capital, social capital, knowledge sharing
Further information	