

E-Coaching through Knowledge Platform

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Abstract: This study explores the research area of my Searching Lab. In Information and Knowledge technology there are numerous new opportunities; more than really we could imagine. New professions have been appearing, such as the e-coach, and the Cloud computing became a much hyped up term. Whether the business decision makers will work better in this world, we do not know. I believe that they may but only if they understand these changes. This study presents how the e-coach can provide quick decision through a Cloud computing platform.

Keywords: cloud computing, decision making, reciprocity, social networking

1 Background Knowledge

The content of our thoughts is altered by internet. I will face new challenges in the 21st century which are shown by the most powerful thinkers. I am trying to understand them so the main point of this chapter is to choose three challenges which affect the business environment. My article is an attempt to response them.

“What can we do with the unlimited information accessed at our fingertips?” Bill Gates [1] asked this question in 2006 on Microsoft site. On the one hand we have too much information, namely information overload. On the other hand – as Gates defined – information underload. Business decision maker increasingly overwhelmed by information, but we have not tools to validate them effectively. Solving information underload is the first challenge.

Who minds today, if someone's finger in a corner on amateur YouTube video? No matter what quality, you can upload your own video on YouTube, and nobody will surprise if it gains more viewers than an Oscar Winning movie. “On that market, everything is measured by the reputation,” says Anderson [2] in his book entitled “Free” which word means something very different today than it did in the 20th century. Present-day free means that new media and technology have allowed costs of goods and services to drop to virtually zero. According to Anderson on

that market everything is measured by the reputation. A culture of idea spreading is the second challenge.

Is there anybody who surprise that IT spending rarely correlates with superior financial results? I think there isn't. Nicholas Carr [3] in his article, published the May 2003, pronounced that information technology strategically irrelevant to businesses. According to Carr IT driven initiatives rarely produce expected returns; they are complicated and expensive, take a long time to implement, and are fraught with risk. Rather than create value, more often than not they destroy it. The third challenge is accepting that IT really doesn't matter, it isn't a panacea.

2 My research problems

In spite of Nicholas Carr mentioned article I think IT will influence the business processes but it will just matter in different ways. IT must continue to support the business – not just through the logical application of technologies but also through the logical application of common sense. Decision maker can access to unlimited data, but as James March [4] described they often use them only after decisions. They need to access to guru's new knowledge too. I must mention they need to access them very quickly without wasting time for searching knowledge resources and tools.

IT's negligence towards business decision-makers may come to an end with cloud computing. This could also mean IT's database reign will end. Guess is this is the time to think about developing new platforms which will enable us to seek, produce and share knowledge in the field of business decision-making?

Referring to Davenport and Prusak [5] decision makers would need a knowledge broker (an acting gatekeeper) who makes connections between various knowledge resources and needed knowledge. For example if we would be curious who the gurus of strategic thinking are, it would be nice if we could get some advices. In business life this person can be a much practiced coach who works as a knowledge entrepreneur. Guess who will be the gatekeeper when we are browsing?

Reciprocity is a key to success in social networking. Howard Rheingold [6] in Ted2005 talked about the coming world of collaboration, participatory media and collective action. In his book "The new power of collaboration" [7] he warns that the notions of reputation and diffuse reciprocity are increasingly important online. Guess may the social network reciprocity be achieved by sharing the needed knowledge?

3 My propositions

3.1 E-coaching

Who is the coach? To use an example from sport, the coach is the guy running up and down at the sides of a baseball field trying everything to make his team win without ever hitting the ball. The coaches make sense of the gurus' concepts; they put the concepts into the context of the business decision maker thus creating new conceptions. They work as a gatekeeper who let the new ideas into the field. According to Handy [8] a coach has nothing but her/his reputation; so if the coaching process has been successful, the reputation increases, if unsuccessful, it decreases. That is how it is and how it should be. The coaches whisper their conceptions into the ear of business decision maker who occasionally does what the coach says, most of the time (s)he does not. But the decision will certainly be different than if the coach did not whisper in her/his ear. The coach helps the business decision maker creating the picture about the conflict situation. E-coaching process is available 24/7 so the coach and the coachee can work just as long as it is necessary. Coachee (executive) always begins with e-learning which enables him to get familiar with the available concepts. After that, he is introduced to new concepts regarding strategic business decisions. While learning the new concepts, coachee can ask strategic partners (CEO, CKO, CHRO, CIO) to share new knowledge with and to compare them to the available experience.

E-coach collects the needed knowledge means point out sources of knowledge waste. The e-coach should be able to quickly find the relevant information that can help the leader being coached. According to Goldsmith [9] the process of e-coaching will involve helping the decision makers to diagnose their developmental needs, giving and assessing the resources, providing ongoing support to ensure results.

With the formation of social networks the question is how can provide an E-coach facilitating the diffusion of knowledge among decision makers.

First proposition: The e-coach may solve information underload by pitching meaningful information to decision makers.

3.2. Knowledge Platform

Knowledge Platform is flexible, easy to use and may provide almost any kind of content or functionality. If I should define knowledge platform, I would say that it is an opportunity to find, share and create quickly the needed knowledge for the decision makers.

To design a knowledge platform is something that can provide a quick decision making. There isn't really the best method to do this, but by observing some successful platform, we can find the main characteristics of a useful design. First of all on a platform for the customer should be easy to access each application, just as easily as we can use a Swiss Army Knife. Products like Swiss Army Knife are based on a simple platform: any extra part does not disturb functioning of the previous ones. I could say: it lives on a same platform (or not). For example Google and Smart Phones are built on this concept. These platforms have numerous applications and provide transparency and user friendly interface.

Second proposition: On Knowledge platform a culture of idea-spreading may be developed.

3.3 Cloud computing Services

IT is trying to bring software closer to decision-makers, but it was never clear whether that software wanted to replace decision-makers or help them think during the process. Last forty years showed us that decision-making support never was IT's "core business". They were something like byproducts of some database application. Each IT application contains an exact amount of mathematics that equals its developer's knowledge of the subject. In the beginning, they used linear algebra for testing target functions of certain outputs. Later, when IT moved toward other fields of business, SQL prevailed.

Something needed to be done with a huge amount of data, so simple statistical methods were used. Some smaller workshops - often in faculties' departments - started with artificial intelligence approach. Content-map tools which enable knowledge visualization are of great importance for business decision-making. A lot like artificial intelligence, these tools are also developed far from big IT organizations and were never as popular as statistical data processing. This is the time to think about developing new platforms which will enable us to seek, produce and share knowledge in the field of business decision-making.

Third proposition: The cloud computing services might be able to accept that IT really doesn't matter.

4 Action Plan

Exciting part of an applied research is hunching the trend and collecting the applications for a platform which will be liked by users. The main goal of our research group is to design and develop Knowledge Platform based on e-coaching.

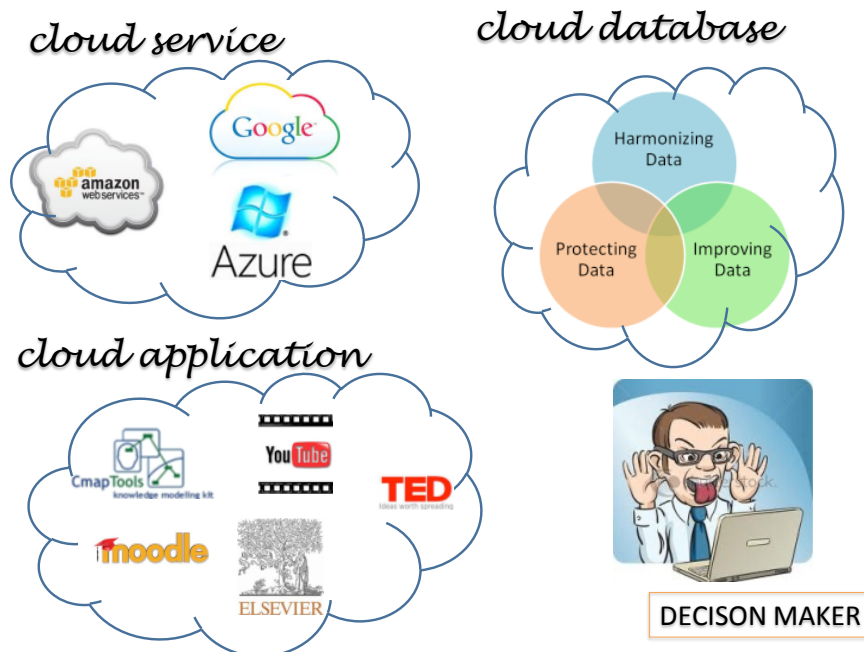


Figure 1
Cloud Platform Architecture

I am outlining the action plan, meaning a sequence of steps that must be taken and activities that must be performed well in order to successfully implement the above conception.

Select a cloud service provider based on a relevant set of criteria, such as, architecture fit, price, flexibility and extensibility. Without attempting to be exhaustive let us examine three Cloud Service Providers: Windows Azure (Cloud Platform of Microsoft), Amazon Elastic Compute Cloud and Google Cloud Computing Service. With any of them data will move seamlessly between devices and be secure, collaboration will be faster and our work will less expensive than the traditional way of achieving similar results.

Define and analyze functional and non-functional requirements, like, usability, testability, maintainability, extensibility, scalability, network requirements, availability, performance and response time.

Develop a plan for architecture work, meaning structured and unstructured data, information integration and search, internal vs. external sources, user functionality and content requirements.

Develop user interface, personalization, access control, and search strategy. This step involves content management, the collaboration and communication architecture.



Figure 2
Knowledge Platform Beta

Conclusions

The Knowledge Platform is highly interactive learning environments where e-coach is known to possess knowledge, willing to share and able to articulate that knowledge.

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