University of Regina

FACULTY OF ENGINEERING & APPLIED SCIENCE

ENSE 405

Activity #2: Community characteristics & orientation

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Community (UN SD goal):	Sub-goals of Goal 12 - Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
Date:	February 1, 2021
Project:	Community and learning-oriented meal planning application

Instructions

Research the community you are most interested in exploring using links from the UN Sustainable Goals website (https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/) and others. In your exhaustive research, answer the following.

Community characteristics

Community life-cycle (current state)

Where is your community in its life-cycle?	What you need to focus on:	Special needs
☐ **Just forming** Need basic tools to connect, but not sure from there	Research and/or discuss the potential of some basic tools with members, explore what ideas it might give them, and see what they might bring in with them.	
✓ **Self-designing** Information stage, but with a strong sense of what it wants to accomplish	Contribute ideas to the design. Analyze systematically the implications of their community design for technology, infrastructure, and technology skills.	The community is sorely lacking in combining educational material with popular tool use: there is a great distinction between the popularity of highly personal, convenience-tool-based platforms and the educational, tool-lacking platforms - sustainability being less popular.
☐ **Growing & restless** Ready to add new functionality to its tool configuration	Try to make this a community reflection and self-design event. Does their restlessness suggest a major change, such as a transition to a new platform?	
☐ **Stable and adapting** Just needing some new tools	How much disruption will the community tolerate? How will the new tools be integrated into or affect existing practices?	

Constitution

Diversity: How diverse is the community?

Topic	Your notes
What are the different types of members and what are their levels of participation?	There are 3 types of members as discerned from the Technology Configuration Inventory document: 1. Meal plan producers (about 30-40% of participants) 2. Meal plan consumers (almost all participants in some manner) 3. Nutritionists who support both upon request (likely less than 10% of participants) Most participation is in consuming meal planning tools and practices. Those meal plan producers are split between those with a scientific background, who generate nutritionally sound meal plans, and those without, who generate plans they enjoyed and so are more popular. Members may be more than one of the types, but interaction between types is limited by the lack of ability for discussion. Some other members may include: 4. Meal plan discussers (like bloggers, social media influencers) Social media influencers certainly drive popularity and discussion, but the discussion occurs over social media and does not appear to impact the popularity of sustainable practices across the community; social media discussion benefits the few as it is isolated from practice.
How spread apart is it in terms of location and time zones? What language(s) do members speak?	In my research of applications, persons from all manners of life and speaking language participate in meal planning. It is likely more popular in the western part of the world due to the centralization of social media.
What other cultural or other diversity aspects may affect your technology choices?	The sustainable practices we would wish to see may not be available in very remote locations (one store) or in countries experiencing famine, etc., and may not be available in countries with limited support for environmental practices or technology. A free software application providing education and convenience tools is still not universally available due to poverty, lack of infrastructure...

Openness: How connected to the outside world is your community?

Topic		Your notes
How much do you want to control the boundaries of your community? Does your community need	☐ To be private/secure ☐ Open boundaries ✓ Both private & public spaces	The entire population should be able to participate and discuss sustainable meal planning so that one discussion can impact more than the current community (world change). However, a private council would likely be required to change the suggestions of meal planning sustainable practices according to agreed-upon best practices for the location (so as to prevent every and anyone from changing the "final word" at any time).
How does your community need to interact with other communities? Do you need common tools for sharing and learning with them?		The meal planning community should be influenced by scientifically proven sustainable practices in order to have an effect on the environment (so as to ignore suggestions that are counterproductive). Therefore, involvement from environmentally-conscious communities (like perhaps local delivery services) and nutritionists would be most

	ideal.
	Locally-based communities involved in the meal planning service should share tools to streamline the process.

Technology aspirations

Technology savvy, tolerance, & constraints: What are your community's technology interests and skills and patience thereof? What are the constraints imposed by technology factors?

Topic	Your notes
How interested is your community in technology?	Very interested. All convenience tools are the result of software technology and other digital technologies. Manual tools for planning are seeing a decline in use where the software alternative is abundant.
What is their capacity for learning new tools?	The capacity for new tools is limited only by the usability, discoverability, and understandability of the tool for the purpose it serves. Manual tools are still being used where software tools are difficult to use (for example, the aging population or those with disabilities for which the software tools are unusable).
What is the range of skills? If their interests and/or skills are diverse, could it cause conflict or distraction?	The community of meal planners is diverse, there's no doubt of the existence of software-savvy persons developing planning tools. However, the community is not highly composed of technology-savvy people: those persons developing tools for the community are far more profit-led then education-led, and so the use of skills is currently separate from developing sustainable practices.
How tolerant are members of the adoption of a wide variety of tools?	The adoption of a wide variety of tools could be confusing to those new to the community. Those persons current within the community become aware of what they need for meal planning quickly, especially when using the instructions of more experienced members (nutritionists, for example).
	From the variety of meal planning methods I have seen available on the market, the community is not lacking in tools nor wishing to reduce the number of tools.
How many technological boundaries are they willing to cross, e.g. sign in to more than one web-based tool, learn to use new tools, or give up old favorites? This helps you understand what level of integration you need.	Many of the more popular platforms boast of the ability to synchronize across devices, such a feature must have come from a survey for what the developers thought people wanted. There is already a strive for the "one tool to rule them all" which encompasses all meal planning activities in one cohesive application. New solutions/tools/integrations should piggyback on the more popular tools with person-oriented design practices already in place.
	Most popular applications are behind a paywall and not open-source.
What are your members' technology constraints (e.g., bandwidth, operating systems, etc.)?	Those persons using software for their meal planning activities are very likely to have modern smartphones available to them: almost all meal planning platforms use the iOS or android systems or web browser to deliver service. It is notable that those wishing to use meal planning software may be unable to due to limitations of their location, social status, income, etc.
How much time are members able to be online and from where (office, home, field)? Some people have limited online time, or are able to be	The absolute goal of transforming the manual labour of meal planning to software convenience is to reduce the time one is forced to spend making the perfect meal plan. It is very time consuming to choose recipes, pick dates, gather ingredients, prepare ingredients, clean, and so on.

Community orientation

Relevance to community: Use the range from 0 (no relevance) to 5 (high relevance) to determine what matters most to the community. Look at these from the perspectives of the different types of members (under "constitution"). Also discuss the "value-added" to each member group

0	1	2	3	4	5	Orientations	Variants	Key activities/your notes
☐	☐	✓	☐	☐	☐	**Meetings** Many communities place a great emphasis on regular meetings where members engage in shared activities for a specific time. Meetings, and the visible participation of members, assert the community's existence	✓ Face-to-face/blended ✓ Online synchronous ✓ Online asynchronous	All three variants are applicable to producers and consumers. There exist (not popular) classes a consumer can take from another producer/consumer to learn how to meal plan for themselves. Additionally, communication with nutritionists and the like occur via instant-messaging, email, or appointments.
☐	✓	☐	☐	☐	☐	**Open-ended conversation** Some communities maintain ongoing conversations as their primary vehicles for learning. Open-ended conversations are common when a community is co-located and people keep the conversation going as they "bump" into each other.	✓ Single-stream discussions ✓ Multi-topic conversations ✓ Distributed conversations	There likely exists platforms for discussion, but they are mostly private and unpopular. Those participants in the discussions are the only ones who benefit from the discussions.
✓	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	**Projects** In some communities' members want to focus on particular topics, go deep, and collaborate on projects to solve problems or produce useful artifacts. Learning is not just a matter of sharing knowledge or discussing issues. Members need to do things together in order to develop their practice. Projects usually involve a subgroup within the community	☐ Practice groups ☐ Project teams ☐ Instruction	I did not see such practices in my investigation.
☐	☐	☐	✓	☐	☐	**Content** Some communities are primarily interested in creating, sharing, and providing access to documents, tools, and other content. Valuable and	☐ Library ✓ Structured self-publish ✓ Open self-publish	Recipe databases are very popular and highly available. Most platforms integrate recipes, tutorials, additional beneficial information (like

						well-organized content is a useful resource for members	✓ Content integration	calorie tracking), and even food purchases together. Any person may post their own content (recipe) for others to find. However, there is a lot of content and few efforts to organize it all. In some platforms consumers may not add content.
☐	☐	✓	☐	☐	☐	**Access to expertise** Some communities create value by providing focused and timely access to expertise in the community's domain, whether internally or externally. Communities with this orientation focus on answering questions, fulfilling requests for advice, or engaging in collaborative, just-in-time problem solving	✓ Questions & requests ✓ Access to experts ☐ Shared problem solving ✓ Knowledge validation ☐ Apprenticeship & mentoring	Some platforms employ nutritionists and other professionally knowledgeable persons who are available to the platforms users - for a price. Those persons willing to pay for the expertise certainly get it, with most companies promising little down time and quick, proven responses to questions.
☐	✓	☐	☐	☐	☐	**Relationships** Some communities focus on relationship building among members as the basis for both ongoing learning and being available to each other. This orientation emphasizes the interpersonal aspect of learning together. Communities with this orientation place a high value on knowing each other personally, emphasizing networking, trust building, and mutual discovery	☐ Connecting ✓ Knowing about people ☐ Interacting informally	Social media influencers pushing the meal planning envelope are likely to value relationships with other people who are also sponsored. Most meal planning platforms do not contain tools or features that allow members to connect with one another at all.
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	✓	**Individual participation** Learning together happens in the context of a group, but it is realized in the experience of individuals. People bring different backgrounds, communication styles, and aspirations to their participation in a community. People have different levels of commitment, they take on different roles, and they use tools differently	✓ Levels of participation ✓ Personalization ✓ Individual development ✓ Multi-membership	Consider the different members of the community identified in the "Constitution" section. Meal planning is usually done to achieve the goal of personal improvement. Involved consumers become producers, and sometimes producers go further to become experts, and the cycle sometimes repeats with the next member.

☐	✓	☐	☐	☐	☐	**Community cultivation** Some communities are happy with loose self-organization and unplanned evolution, while others thrive on attention to community cultivation. They have a need to reflect on the effectiveness and health of the community to make things better, joined with a willingness to work on it	☐ Democratic governance ☐ Strong core group ☐ Internal coordination ☐ External facilitation	I am seeing the beginning of such practices in my investigation.
☐	✓	☐	☐	☐	☐	**Service context** In some cases, serving a specific context becomes central to the community's identity and the ways it operates. They may live inside an organization, whose charter their practice needs to serve. They may have a mission to provide learning resources to the world or to recruit members widely. Or they may seek interactions with other communities whose domain complements their own	☐ Organization as context ☐ Cross-organizational ☐ Other related communities ☐ Public mission	I am seeing the beginnings of such practices.

Scratchpad (other interesting insights, questions/answers, etc.)

A goal of my project will likely be to create tool(s) that support community cultivation and service context orientations. The integration of convenience tools with tools that support discussion and personal involvement should influence community members to think outside of the current limitations and adopt sustainable practices and critical thinking.