



# UTILIZING FIRM-HOSTED ONLINE COMMUNITIES: Research Challenges and Needs

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# NEW TECHNOLOGIES CREATING NEW POSSIBILITIES

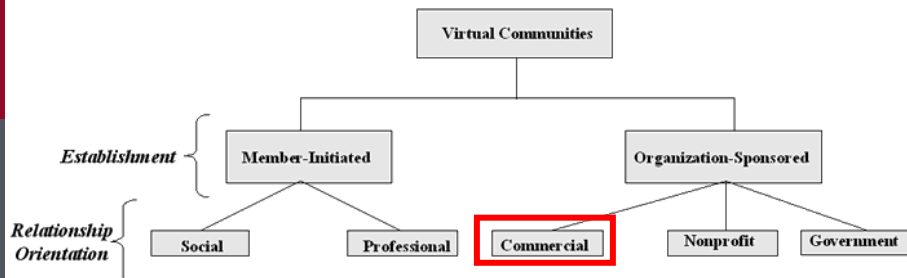
Aggregators Folksonomy Wikis User Centered Joy of Use  
Blogs Participation Six Degrees Usability Widgets  
Pagerank XFN Recommendation Social Software FOAF Browser  
Videocasting Podcasting Sharing Collaboration Perpetual Beta Simplicity AJAX  
Audio IM Video **Web 2.0** Design  
Convergence CSS Pay Per Click  
UMTS Mobility Atom XHTML SVG Ruby on Rails VC Trust Affiliation  
OpenAPIs RSS Semantic Web Standards SEO Economy  
OpenID Remixability REST Standardization The Long Tail  
DataDriven Accessibility Microformats Syndication XML  
Modularity SCAP

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## THE SCOPE OF PROFCOM PROJECT



Typology of virtual communities adopted from:

Porter, C. E. (2004). A typology of virtual communities: A multi-disciplinary foundation for future research. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, 10 (1). Retrieved July 10, 2005 from <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol10/issue1/porter.html>

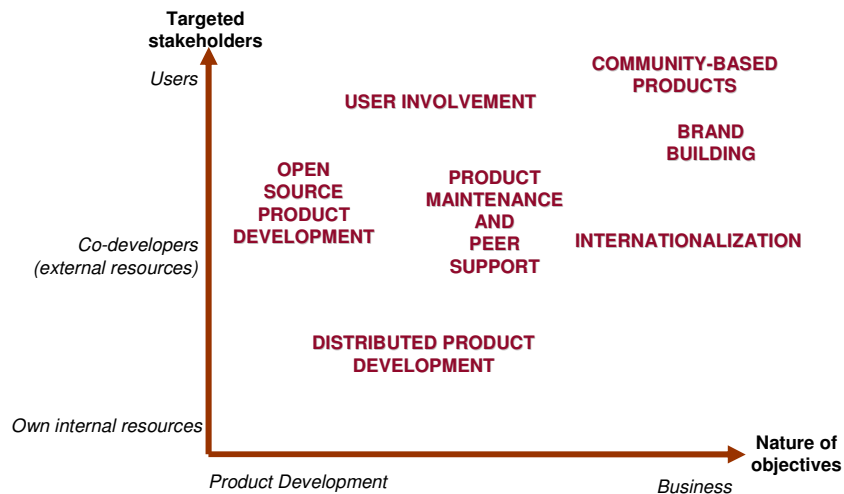


## THE PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER

1. To introduce new research project focusing on the challenges and opportunities with Firm-Hosted Online Communities (FOC)
2. To present early results of company interviews illustrating research challenges and needs



## EXISTING PURPOSES OF USE FOR WEB 2.0



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## REAL-LIFE CHALLENGES FOR COMPANIES

**How can I take advantage of Firm-Hosted Online Communities (FOC) in order to succeed in international:**

- product business?
- collaborative product development?

**How should I establish a Firm-Hosted Online Community so that it:**


- achieves its objectives?
- adds value and is attractive to the members
- avoids unintended consequences?



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## THE PROFCOM PROJECT


(Product Internationalization with Firm-Hosted Online Communities)

### Research Questions:

1. How to create an attractive and value-adding online community?
2. How FOCs can be utilized in Firm's real-life activities?
  - a) In terms of product business
  - b) In terms of product development

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## VIEWPOINTS


### PROFCOM RESEARCH PROJECT

VP 1: SOCIAL INTERACTION IN ONLINE COMMUNITIES

VP 2: METHODS FOR FIRM-HOSTED ONLINE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

VP 3: UTILIZING ONLINE COMMUNITIES IN SOFTWARE PRODUCT BUSINESS

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## VP 1: SOCIAL INTERACTION IN USER ONLINE COMMUNITIES

### Motivation:

- To understand user needs and personal motivations for participating and contributing in online communities.

### Goals:

- To provide information on how to create and maintain an attractive, value-adding and successful online community to end-users.

### Research Questions:

- How do online communities evolve and become attractive?
- What motivates user participation and contribution?
- How to support sociability, participation and sense of community with the design of User Interface?
- How the success of online communities can be increased by improving users' self-expression and identity-building in computer-mediated environment?



## VP 2: METHODS FOR FIRM-HOSTED ONLINE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### Motivation:

- Preece has given valuable guidelines and techniques for the development of online communities (often referred as Community-Centered Development, CCD). However, the work with CCD is still on-going and the challenge of defining an efficient and effective methodology for the development of online communities still remains to some extent.

### Goals:

- To continuously develop, experience and refine methodology for the development of online communities in the context of product related activities.

### Research Questions:

- How can firms' efforts of developing online communities be supported in terms of practical guidelines, heuristics and methodologies?



### VP 3: UTILIZING FIRM-HOSTED ONLINE COMMUNITIES IN SOFTWARE PRODUCT BUSINESS

#### Motivation:

- To investigate how online communities can be utilized in product-related activities

#### Goals:

- To understand what are the opportunities with online communities and how the potential benefits could be achieved in product-related activities.

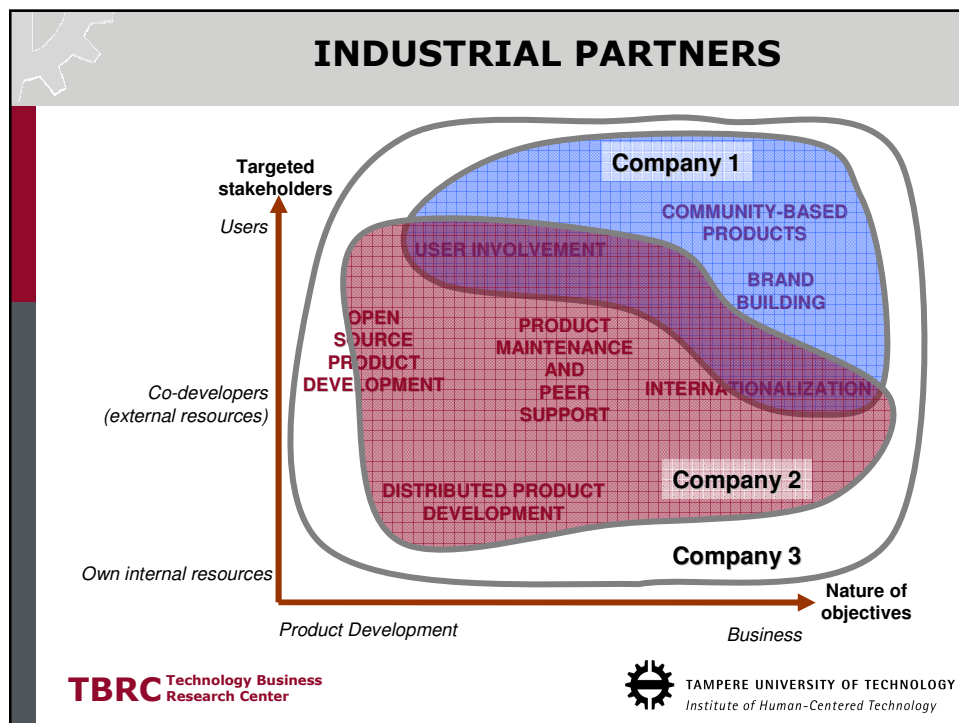
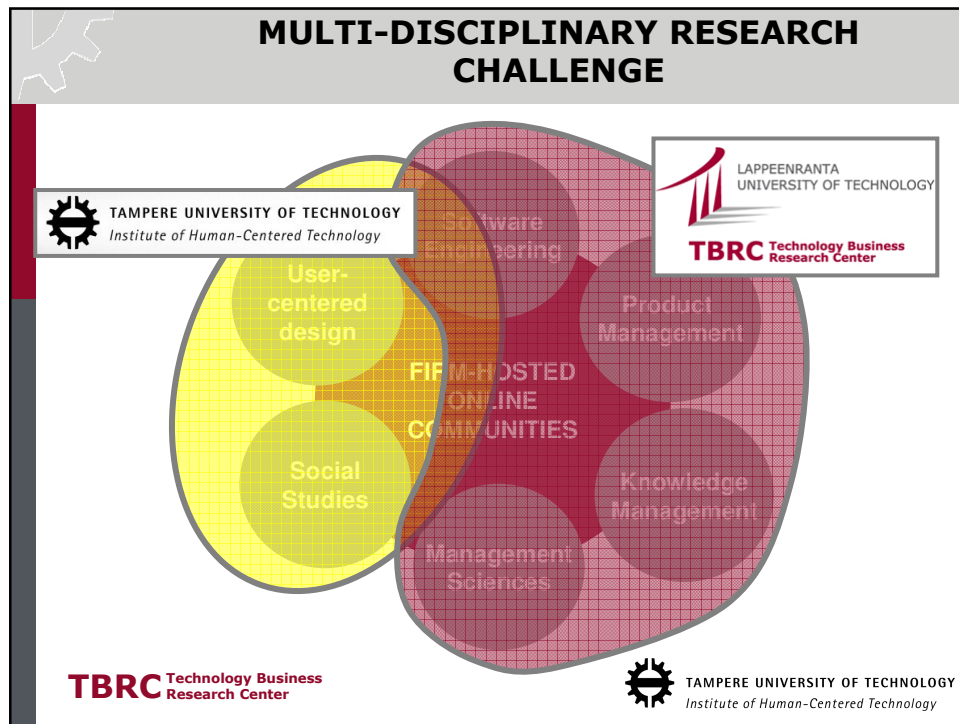
#### Research Questions:

- How FOCs can be utilized in Firm's real-life activities in terms of product business or product development?



### MULTI-DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH CHALLENGE





# PROFCOM LITERATURE REVIEW

<http://www.citeulike.org/group/4664/>

The screenshot shows the CiteULike website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links like 'Info', 'Library', 'Messages', 'Forum', 'Blog', and 'Members'. The main content area is titled 'Group: PROFCOM - library [36 articles]' and lists several articles with their titles, authors, and dates. On the left side, there's a sidebar with links for 'CiteULike', 'Post Article', 'My CiteULike', and 'Groups'. On the right side, there's a 'Group Tags' section with a list of tags related to the group.

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<http://tbrc-community.lut.fi/ocr/>

The screenshot shows the 'Online Community Research' website. The header features a search bar and a navigation menu with links like 'Home', 'Guidebook', 'Blogs', 'Log In', 'About us', and 'Contact'. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'Popular content' with a list of articles, 'Recent comments' with a list of comments, 'Top contributors' with a list of users and their points, and 'Real-life cases of firm-hosted online communities' with a detailed article. The 'About' section on the right explains the purpose of the website and the research it supports.

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## THE PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER

1. To introduce new research project focusing on research challenges and opportunities with the hosted communities (FOC)

**SOME RESULTS:  
Research challenges and needs**

2. To present early results of company interviews illustrating research challenges and needs



## RESEARCH METHODS

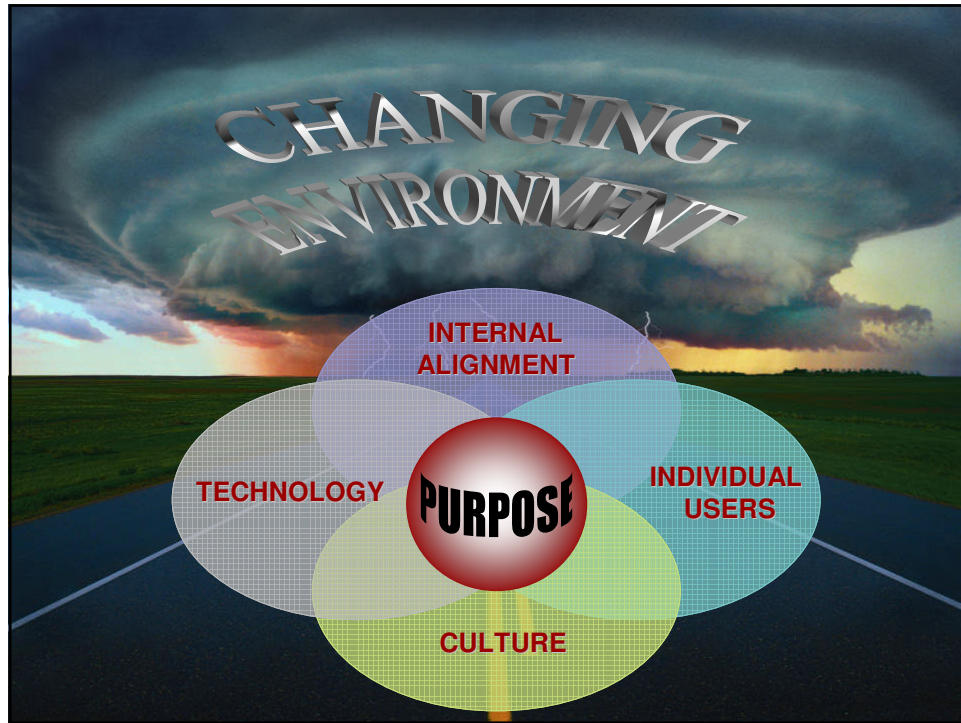
### DATA GATHERING:

- Kick-off meetings with each of the 3 industrial partners in order to probe companies' research challenges and needs with respect to FOCs
  - Each meeting lasted for approximately 2 hours
  - In total 6 researchers and 8 company representatives attended the meetings
  - Written notes were taken and reviewed by everyone participating in the meeting

### ANALYSIS:

- Identification of research challenges and needs from the written notes
- Categorization of identified challenges and needs by 2 research team independently
- Final categorization through a dialogue between the two research teams





**INTERNAL ALIGNMENT**

- **How to prepare own resources for online participation?**
  - Should they be trained and motivated?
- **How to assign community-related responsibilities within a company?**
  - What are the company's responsibilities?
  - How to organize the work internally?
  - How to draw a line between internal and public discussions?
- **How company's real-life activities can be supported with online communities?**
  - How communities can be utilized in own product development?
  - How communities can be utilized in supporting partner's activities?

### CULTURE

- **How to create and maintain a collaborative culture?**
  - How to support collaborative activities?
  - How to promote peer support?
  - How to promote the creation of sub-groups?
- **How roles and responsibilities affect community's culture?**
  - How to organize activities and responsibilities within the community?
  - How to find balance between the end users and the company?
  - To what extent moderators are needed?

### TECHNOLOGY

- **Technology and user experience**
  - How can User Interface support users' motivation?
  - How to support sociability and communication?
  - Which are the most applicable tools (blogs, wikis etc.) in each case community and how to utilize them?
- **Technology, features and platforms**
  - What is the need of mobile services in community development?
  - How to bring together best practices of different types of online communities (social networking, learning environments, games...)?



