

1 Tim Reichling & Michael Veith

“Expert Finding” in an organizational context:

A case study within an industry association

**Institute for Information Systems and New Media
University of Siegen**

30.Juni.2005
I-Know'05 Graz

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2 Overview

- **Organizational Setting**
- **Methodology**
- **Empirical Findings and Results**
 - Organizational Transparency and Coherence
 - Work and Social Network
 - Knowledge Transfer
 - Expertise Sharing
 - Knowledge Management (KM)
- **Conclusions**

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3 Organizational Setting (1)

The National Industry Association (NIA)

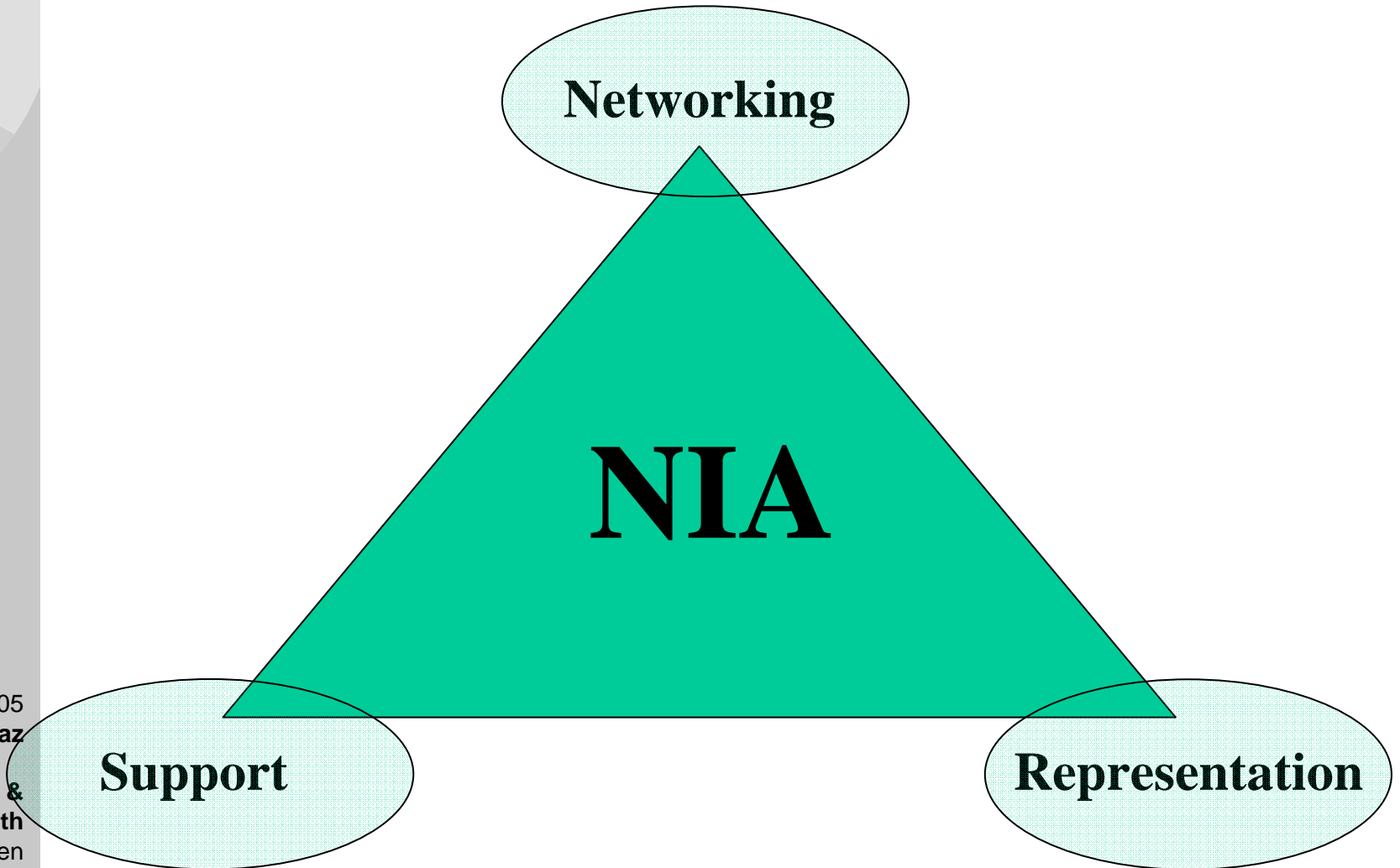
- **NIA is an umbrella association**
- **About 450 employees**
- **Horizontal: 37 sections**
- **Vertical: several “general departments”**
- **3000 member companies (from technical sectors)**

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4 Organizational Setting (2)

Core Competencies



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5 Organizational Setting (3)

Project description

Applying KM strategies to NIA shall be accomplished within a 3-year-lasting KM project in order to...

- **Improve the transparency of the organization and its services**
- **Better define the services offered by NIA that are sometimes unknown to members**
- **Save and increase membership registrations**

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6 Organizational Setting (4)

Visions and goals

Interviews were part of a requirements analysis in order to...

- **Determine work processes**
- **Determine problems and potentials for KM**
- **Determine employees' needs to improve their work**
- **Exploring the organizational culture**

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7 Methodology (1)

16 semi-structured interviews

- **Employees of sectors, and general departments and managers participated**
- **60 – 150 minutes length**
- **In-depth interviews**
- **Conducted within four months in three cycles**

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8 Methodology (2)

- Interviews were recorded and analyzed by the interviewers using a topic oriented categorization scheme
- Emerging topics that were not covered by our guideline were judged to be highly important
- Additionally workshops and workplace observations took place

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9 Empirical Findings and Results

- **Organizational Transparency and Coherence**
- **Work and Social Network**
- **Knowledge Transfer**
- **Expertise Sharing**
- **Knowledge Management (KM)**

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Results (1): Transparency and Coherence

- It is widely unknown **“who knows what”**, so it is difficult to find certain competencies or responsibilities
- Highly self-determined sectors: **“Each sector is a story of its own”** as a result of NIA being a fusion of independent associations
- No major vision given **“from above”**

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Results (2): Work and Social Networking

- **Employees' work consists of recurring and dynamic components, resulting in a strongly varying workload**
- **Social networking is an integral part of the employees' work**
- **Building up ones network takes years, which makes it very painful when employees leave the organization**

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Results (3): Knowledge Transfer

- **Social networks and organizational knowledge of leaving personnel get lost when employees retire**
- **There is no "orientation period" for new employees to find into their work**
- **Knowledge transfer by means of meetings appears to be difficult as they could not find an appropriate level of discussion**

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Results (4): Expertise Sharing

- **Some find it perfectly natural to share their knowledge with others**
- **Some – in contrast – are not willing to in order to keep up their “market value”**
- **(Monetary) incentives for knowledge sharing are seen sceptically**
- **“Subtle incentives” (feedback, reputation) can be highly motivating instead**

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Results (5):

KM: the employees' point of view

- Employees need **“Google for NIA”** to find colleagues with certain interests, abilities, competencies, responsibilities, ...
- Employees need to **efficiently store frequently requested information** in order to decrease the amount of repeating requests
- Cooperation among colleagues could be fostered by having an **“account for internal services”**

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Conclusions

KM strategies coming to life

Creating organizational transparency Identifying competencies and responsibilities	„Google“-like YP system
Fostering cooperation and expertise sharing	“Account for internal services” accompanied by some kind of Feedback system
Decreasing workload of answering frequently requested information	“Answer Garden” like information management system (cf. Ackerman 1998)

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16 Next steps

- **Google-like YP system shall be introduced**
- **Based on prototypic *Expert Finding* technology which is developed at the University of Siegen**
- **The Answer Garden idea will be inserted into the NIA Website**
- **Account for internal services is seen sceptically by some employees and managers and is not likely to be applied (too risky step)**

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Tim Reichling & Michael Veith say...

Thank you!

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18 Conclusions (1)

KM strategies coming to life

“Google for NIA” seems to be a key concept for creating transparency...

- **“Google”** as symbol for **ease-of-use** and **reliability** which are basic requirements
- Should be capable of finding/uncovering **people** (instead of contents) by means of their **interests/abilities/competencies**
- User profiles must represent the **recent** properties of the employees but the effort of **keeping user profiles up-to-date** must be minimized (by automatic profiling)

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Conclusions (2)

KM strategies coming to live

Cooperation should be fostered...

- An **“Account for Internal Services”** could make it easier to legitimate the amount of time spent to help or cooperate
- **User Feedback** could make cooperation more reliable as it can increase / decrease reputation
- Employees should be given opportunities to **present themselves and their abilities** (if they like to)

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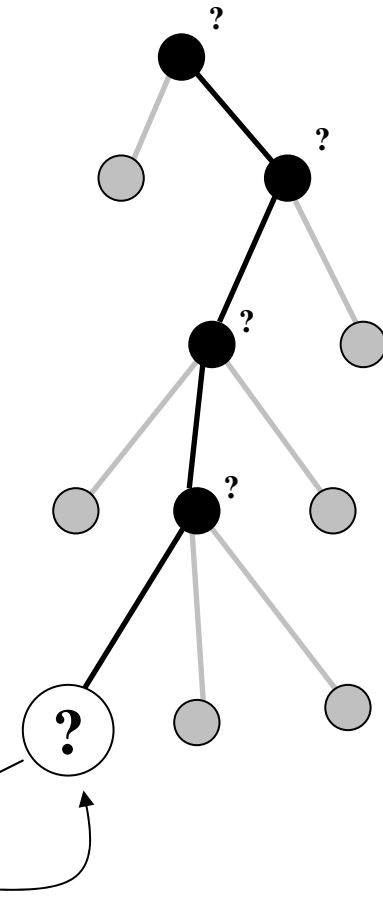
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Conclusions (3)

KM strategies coming to live

Ackerman's **Answer Garden** could be applied...

- Focusing on the narrow context of **answering frequently requested information**, the Answer Garden concept could be successfully applied
- **Inserting new contents** must be very easy to accomplish in a minimum of time (was not given in the past)

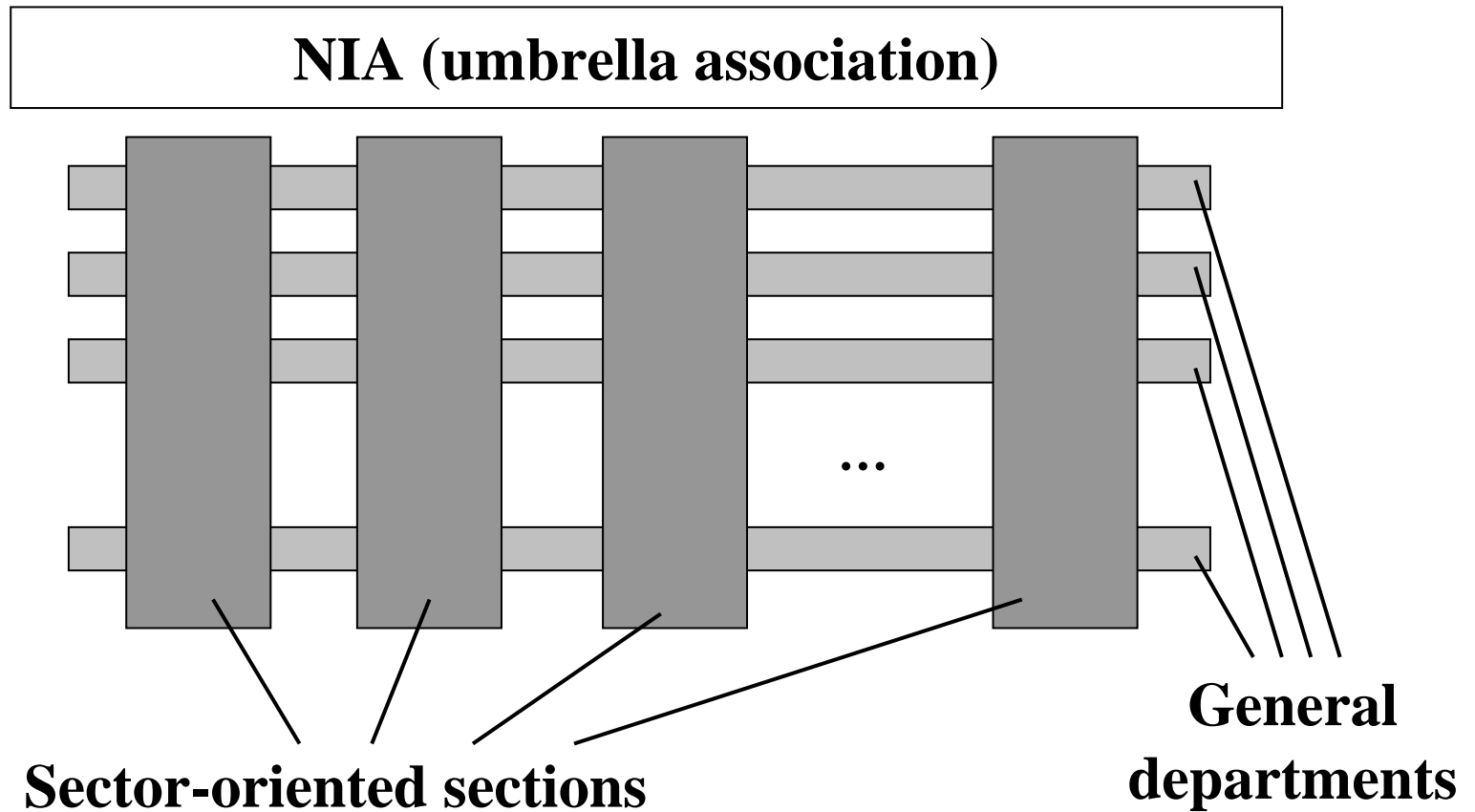


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Organizational Setting Organizational structure



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