2009

Tweet This: The Biz Of Social Networking

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Abstract

In Spring 2009, UNM Anderson Management School launched a new course entitled "The Business of Social Networking" to attract new students to the MIS program. Thirty students, ranging from freshmen to graduate, enrolled in the 8-week compressed format course. They learned to blog and tweet and to assess the roles of social media in 21st century businesses, as they learned fundamental business principles that apply in Web 2.0 businesses.

Keywords: Social networking, Web 2.0, new course development, social media

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, UNM Anderson School of Management has undertaken a number of initiatives to strengthen our appeal to students, particularly in MIS. Toward that end, the author developed a new elective course that draws upon students' natural interests in online social networking (SN). While students regularly use Facebook and MySpace to connect with their personal social circles, the author envisioned a course that would link social networking and business. The linkage takes two forms: (1) the impact of SN tools on industries, companies and individuals in those work places, and (2) the business models underlying Web 2.0 enterprises. Both linkages could be rich new areas for students to explore, and as students learned about other Web 2.0 applications, the course could also stimulate greater interest in both business and MIS.

At UNM, MIS faculty members share a department with colleagues in Marketing and Operations Management, where we offer a number of cross-disciplinary courses. New course discussions began in early 2009 involving faculty from all three disciplines. While we intended to launch the course in Fall 2009, the author found an opportunity to offer it during the second-half of Spring 2009. The department chose to fast-track course development and to launch the course in this half-term format.

This paper describes the development, marketing and first offering of The Business of Social Networking. Then we describe the results of specific course design features and assignments, along with a summary of student and instructor feedback. Finally, we present lessons learned and suggestions for future course work and research in this emerging area of study.

II. COURSE DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING

Course Development Decisions

We needed very little discussion before agreeing that a course related to social networking would have strong appeal with students. One of the primary goals of the course was to attract students into management and specifically into MIS. These circumstances challenged the author to develop a course quickly that students would choose as a free elective, but that also contained the substantial academic content to warrant three credits.

Course Content

Offered by the business school, a focus on the *business* of social networking seemed to be a promising context within which to study the intersections between business activities and online SN. Ultimately, we broadened the focus to general management and Web 2.0 rather than pure SN. We continue to believe that many students are so immersed in their personal SN activities,

they may be unaware of the larger social context and the cultural paradigm shifts underway. This course would help bring those ideas into focus. Two concepts would permeate the course (1) impact of SN in businesses, and (2) business models in Web 2.0 enterprises.

We created a course where students would not only learn about Twitter and Flickr, but they would also be encouraged to think about the business value for a company to participate in these milieu. Moreover, they would begin to distinguish the company and customer characteristics that would inform such a decision. They would learn to apply the social technographics [Li, et al., 2007] profile to do so.

For each application, students would analyze whether and how it could be used in both traditional or Web 2.0 enterprises. They would consider the characteristics of the firm and intended/ potential customer base in those analyses. They would then analyze the underlying business model for the application. For each of the 10-15 applications, the pattern of analyses would be the same so students could master the analytic technique.

To understand the business model, students would come to understand fundamental business economics and how entrepreneurs apply these principles in completely new ways in Web 2.0 businesses. These firms provide significant information and products and services for free in order to build a following. They then charge – often nominal amounts – for advanced or professional-level functionality of interest to just a small minority of their customer base. They also sell advertising and/or access to their large no-fee user base. The profitability analyses for these firms must account for very high upfront costs, some stepwise scaling costs and negligible or zero unit variable costs.

Finally, we would devote considerable hands-on time using dozens of different Web 2.0 applications and technologies. While we assumed that most would have experienced Facebook or MySpace, we were not so certain that they would be experienced with the range of applications we would cover.

Sometimes formally in their blogs or exams questions, and sometimes informally in class discussions, students would experience and evaluate each technology for its usefulness and fit with their needs – a mirror of what happens in industry. Organizations routinely conduct technology assessments, as employees and managers examine new technologies to determine if and how the technology could improve business processes, customer experience, or market penetration. Such assessments occur formally in technology development organizations, and informally as technophiles learn about and "play" with newly available resources. Students completing this course would have early exposure to the process.

This combination of fundamental business content, exposure to Web 2.0 principles, and experience with many Web 2.0 technologies seemed to be a reasonable basis for a new course. The Business of Social Networking became a lower-division course so that enrollment was open to all university students as a free elective.

Pedagogy & Course Format

Another design decision was whether to offer the course online, in a classroom, or in some combination. The instructor chose a classroom format in order to bring new students to the Anderson community where they could experience the community. The classroom format would thus enable new students to get a good sense of Anderson facilities, faculty, staff, and students. Anderson would market itself to a new set of prospective students.

We chose our multi-media computer lab classroom for the course. This facility, adjacent to our Student Technology Service Center seemed to have the best potential to meet student and faculty for technology and for technical support during the course. This facility has 42 workstations, arranged in groups of eight around seven large round tables. In addition to these workstations, the room has wireless access so that students can use their own laptops or tablet computers instead. The instructor station is in the middle of the room, connected to two very

large screens and an audio system. With a central control station, it is easy for the instructor to move around the room to work with individual or groups of students, and room layout provides each student with an unobstructed view of at least one screen. While the room seats 42 students comfortably, our course cap of 30 students filled the room without crowding.

Marketing Decisions

Normally students learn about courses through word of mouth, their advisors, and the university online schedule and catalog. Launching a new course that begins midway through a current semester requires more explicit and targeted marketing. We used a combination of push and pull marketing that targeted students, faculty and advisors.

For primary marketing piece, the author developed a course flyer using a logo mashup as the main graphic (see http://bit.ly/09BizSN). We used this content both for flyers and also for a website linked from the management school main website. We reasoned that the students are accustomed to seeing mashups and that this fresh type of course announcement would also signal a fresh and timely course.

As one would expect, we placed course announcements on the Anderson website with links to the course flyer, registration and instructor contact information. We also announced it in several editions of the Anderson weekly newsletter – distributed through email, classrooms, and available on the Anderson website. The department purchased a few small classified ads in the student newspaper and asked faculty members to announce the new course in their classes.

We distributed the main flyer to the University's entire advising staff, and we announced the course through their advisor listserv. The registrar's office distributed an announcement through the student listserv, which reaches all 30,000+ students at UNM.

While email may still be quite effective in reaching university staff, it is far less effective for reaching prospective students. Thus, we marketed the course using non-traditional methods, including the author's Facebook page, the University's Facebook page, and Twitter. We purchased a targeted ad on Facebook to reach adults in the region between the ages of 18-44 who were connected to the University. Since we were able to track click-through traffic on that ad, we saw that it generated reasonable interest and some of the interested students contacted the instructor directly.

Marketing Results

Nearly 30 students had enrolled by the time the course started, and course enrollment stabilized at about that number. Twenty-eight students were undergraduates, while 2 were in a graduate program. Of the undergraduates, about 30% were already in the management school and the other 70% were freshmen or sophomores still deciding their academic paths. Thus, we succeeded in attracting about 20 new students to Anderson in the short term.

III. COURSE DESIGN

In this section, we describe the overall learning objectives for the course, the course deliverables, and the resources selected to help us achieve the objectives. This site contains a copy of the syllabus http://bit.ly/09BizSN.

Learning Objectives

Broadly, we defined five objectives for the course. We wanted students to (1) gain factual knowledge such as terminology, classifications and trends in the areas of business and Web 2.0 applications; (2) recognize and explain the foundation principles in these subject areas; (3) apply course material to new examples presented during the term; (4) develop skills in expressing their analyses in writing; and (5) acquire greater interest in the topics by delving beyond the assigned materials to explore on their own. These are the same objectives against which students evaluated the course.

Specifically, we wanted students to recognize and explain fundamental business and social networking concepts, and to be able to explain how the concepts relate to one another. We wanted them to learn to use of a variety of new social networking tools, and become satisfactory bloggers. Organizationally, our goal was to raise awareness and interest in the field of MIS, as students began to experience the prevalence and relevance of information technologies in their daily lives.

Student Deliverables

To meet the learning objectives, students completed four major deliverables: individual weekly blogs about technologies, a team-project focused on a single technology or application, a midterm, and a final. A few guest speakers provided additional content about which students could choose to blog, as well. This section describes the four main deliverables and gives a summary of the guest speaker material.

Blogs

Blogs are increasingly prevalent and while several students had read famous blogs, none had created their own. The instructor selected WordPress.com as the blogging software because it is free and also easy to use, and has good user support. Students could also assess WordPress.net for more advanced features. Students developed a wide range of skills by blogging: they not only learned about the technology subject for each of their blogs, but they also learned to move beyond Web 2.0 spectators to become critics and creators in these applications [Li and Bernhoff, 2008].

Further, they learned a professional style of writing, and honed their basic language and grammar skills. As they became comfortable with the blogging software, they began to add pictures, links and other multimedia to their site. The site http://bit.ly/09BizSN stores the assignment guidelines. The instructor also blogged here http://bit.ly/ProfBlog , so students would have a model to follow.

In thanks for access to their pre-publication materials, students' blogs provided feedback to the author and publisher of the *Hot Technologies* material (described below in the Technology Selection section). Students invited the publishing team to read their blogs in WordPress.com, and the instructor requested that the team provide a few comments the blogs. Such feedback is common in blogs and students were able to experience it. Note, however, that we maintained all evaluation and grade-related comments confidentially on grading rubrics within WebCT. These public comments, however, helped students understand their words were "out there" for the public to read and respond to.

Thus, public blogging allowed the students to both give and receive feedback from the *Hot Technologies* team. In this context, the publication team was the students' customer, while at the same time the students were their customers. The blurred distinction between customer and supplier is a fundamental concept in Web 2.0 business dynamics. When we discussed this topic in the context of other companies, students' blogging experiences served as a concrete reference point and added to their grasp of the concept.

The instructor or graduate assistant evaluated the students' work using the custom grading rubrics stored here http://bit.ly/09BizSN.

Project

Students formed teams to delve more deeply into a particular technology for their project assignment. They learned about the technology, its founders, and the business evolution to date. They had to understand the technology well enough to determine how (or if) the technology would be useful in today's business environment. Further, they assessed the technology (or company) position in the marketplace by applying Porter's [1979] competitive forces model. Finally, they developed a hands-on demonstration and tutorial for their classmates. With this assignment, students again integrated new technologies with business principles and concepts.

Students formed teams around an application they wanted to explore. They could choose from Adobe, Delicious, eBay, Evite, Facebook, Flickr, Google, LinkedIn, MySpace, Ning, Nintendo Wii, Second Life, Skype, StumbleUpon, TED, ThinkFree, Twitter, and Wikipedia, or they could propose something not yet on the list. The instructor encouraged students to choose something they knew little about, and to apply their creativity to this assignment. Students could submit their final work using any combination of PowerPoint presentation, YouTube video, Second Life characters and "note cards," or a Word document.

In our short time frame, their forming, storming and norming [Tuckman, 1965] processes didn't uniformly result in high performing teams. Some teams struggled to organize themselves, to communicate well, and to get into the work quickly. Through our *Guided Tour of Hot Technologies*, students were also learning about several technologies (pbwiki, Office Live, YouSendIt) that turned out to be helpful for motivated teams to keep their work current and organized.

Their project work mirrored work place project tasks, and students experienced the power of free Web 2.0 information technologies for team organization, communication, version management, and document sharing. Members of each project team evaluated one another, their classmates evaluated the presentations, and the instructor completed the formal evaluation and grading. Readers may access the materials here http://bit.ly/09BizSN.

Exams

The midterm and the final were designed with several short answer (1-2 sentences) and a few long answer (2-3 paragraph) questions. The exams were open notes, closed book, a format that reinforced the students' need to prepare but not to memorize. Each student could choose to complete the exam using a paper exam book or using a word processor and uploading the file to WebCT.

The final included one new hands-on web activity – unfamiliar to them all, but similar to other applications students had explored during the course. For this activity, they were required to join a new University social network, to post something on the instructor's site there, and then answer a few analytic questions comparing that site to Facebook or MySpace. The University launched social networking site a few weeks prior and so these students were among the first to join. Thus, they experienced the difference between a nascent and a mature social network site and could perhaps understand better the uphill climb for an application to develop a large and active participant base. They also learned "on the fly" how to navigate a site they had never seen before in order to critique the user-interface design.

The Added Dimension: Guest Speakers

Guest speakers can enhance most courses by bringing their fresh perspectives and topics into an class. This course was no different, and we invited three types of guests: support staff from the management school to discuss career services and graduate opportunities, an MIS colleague to discuss a research topic related to the class content, and a successful Web 2.0 entrepreneur from the community.

Because many of the students were not management students, we invited our Career Services Manager and our Graduate Program Director to discuss the services they provide to students. They linked their topics to the social networking trends we were discussing in class. While most students seemed particularly interested in the career services material, others were drawn to the graduate program material. They were all weighing alternatives for what to do during the current economic downturn and challenging job market.

The faculty colleague engaged the class in discussion of deviant behaviors in online social forums. This topic was linked to our discussions of online risks, and brought the students much further in their understanding of the risks and dangers in cyberspace. They became more aware

of social engineering scenarios and came away better informed on safe surfing practices for themselves and their families at home, school, and work.

The clear highlight of the course, however, was the guest presentation by Andrew Stone, developer of Twittelator and other applications for the iPhone platforms. An alumnus of our university and a member of our community, Mr. Stone electrified the room with his stories of his work life in the early days of Apple, his independent life now, and his view of the future. His Twittelator application is one powerful example of Web 2.0 freemiums leading to tremendous profits.

Books and Materials

The author could find no books that effectively covered the breadth of management topics with the desired orientation toward social networking. Therefore, the instructor selected a combination books and support materials that, in combination covered business, social networking, and Web 2.0 concepts and technologies.

Business Text

The course was aimed at a wide audience, and no prior business knowledge could be presumed, so the instructor needed text material to inform class discussion of basic business principles. However, the vast array of beginning business texts and magazine-style texts are designed and priced for a full course on the topic. Since business topics were a subset of the course content, the instructor sought a substantive, but lean, text. It seemed that Web 2.0 type of e-book could provide the coverage and flexibility needed. The instructor chose an online text, *Exploring Business* [Collins, 2009] from FlatworldKnowledge.com (FWK).

Students can access *Exploring Business* at no cost, because this text is part of the Creative Commons [2009] initiative. Access includes bookmarking and note-taking resources available from any computer with Internet access. Students can also download individual chapter or section PDF files, audio files, and other supplemental materials, and they may purchase bound copies of the materials.

The *Exploring Business* author takes full advantage of the online media and includes many timely cases and updates. Because the text is online, material can be updated on a more ad hoc basis than a traditionally published text. For example, in the segment about ethics and social responsibility, students read in their e-text about the Madoff case that was also unfolding in the daily press. This free online academic text exemplifies Web 2.0 business principle of giving away substantial content for free, and charging nominal fees for optional, more costly services and products. Student access to the book was also analogous to the emerging syndication and Software as a Service (SaaS) paradigms that students would learn about in the course.

While mainstream textbook publishers have online versions of their material available for students, their pricing model was traditional, and, in this case, prohibitive, given the other materials we needed students to acquire.

Web 2.0 and Social Networking Books

Scores of books are available covering many aspects of social networking and broader Web 2.0 concepts. The instructor sought books with a user- rather than a technology-focus and with a tone suitable for use in an academic course. For this purpose, the instructor chose Li and Bernoff's [2008] *Groundswell: Winning a World Transformed by Social Technologies*, which served as our primer on social media in industry. In the book, the authors share results and analyses of many Forrester, Inc. studies. Apropos of their topic, they maintain a blog, an active website and they've produced several YouTube videos to supplement the material. Li and Bernoff maintain all the footnotes and references online rather than in the book itself, thereby driving readers to their website.

To complement the *Groundswell* book, the instructor chose Shuen's (2008) *Web 2.0: A Strategy Guide.* Shuen provides many examples of how organizations made (and lost) market share as they created (and squandered) opportunities in the Web 2.0 world. The mini-case studies of well-known companies provide a set of rich materials for discussion and application of the concepts. The publisher maintains a website for the book with a discussion forum, errata, reviews, and videos.

In sum, these books together with their supporting material also typify and actively engage students in some of the Web 2.0 principles about which they were learning. Their use of the web illustrates one way to connect traditional business model (selling books) with Web 2.0 business model (fostering interaction).

Smorgabord of New Applications

The instructor intended to introduce students to a wide variety of emerging web applications, yet sought to do so in a structured manner. In searching to identify a suitable resource, the instructor found Hoisington [2009] *Guided Tour of Hot Technologies.* In each of the 30+ separate three-minute videos in this tour, Hoisington describes and demonstrates a different technology using language and a style that is understandable and inviting for novice audiences. Using a package of videos would provide the students with a fairly uniform experience in learning about new technologies.

In Spring 2009 when the course was offered, however, the video series had not yet been published. The instructor arranged with the author and publisher for our students to beta test the videos and to provide feedback on them. Because of this unique pre-release (and no-cost) arrangement, the videos would only be available to the students during class time. This condition served to motivate students to arrive on time to class. As noted in the Blog section above, students provided feedback on the videos and the technologies in their weekly blogs.

Structure of the Course

For seven weeks, the class met twice a week, and students took their final exam in the eighth week. Each session ran from 12:30 – 3:00pm and the facility was available afterwards for students to meet, work independent, or confer with the instructor. The combination of long class periods and short calendar time can be challenging for students and instructors alike. The instructor divided each session into distinct segments, with at least one short break.

Once or twice a week, the first segment began with 10 minutes for viewing, testing, and discussing one or more technologies from the *Hot Technologies* set. One daily segment augmented the management material they studied in the *Exploring Business* text, and one segment focused on material related to *Groundswell* and/or *Web 2.0 Strategy Guide.* A combination of lecture, video, demo, small group work, and discussion was used to impart, explore, and reinforce this material. Readers may access the syllabus here http://bit.ly/09BizSN. The author will also make class notes and exam available upon request by faculty members.

IV. 360° OF FEEDBACK

Students

Formative Feedback

In addition to formal end-of-semester feedback, the instructor invites anonymous feedback at the end of each exam (in this case a midterm and a final). For over 15 years, the instructor has used this method, because such feedback provides formative feedback that is actionable before the semester is over rather than only benefitting future students.

For example, on the midterm evaluation, some students in the Business of Social Networking class requested that the instructor allocate some class time for their project work. After some

discussion about the parameters and expectations, and adjusting other in-class work to include the new segment, the instructor was able to implement the suggestion.

The exam feedback form (available from http://bit.ly/09BizSN) also has proven helpful for maintaining an open and positive classroom environment. It is arguable that students are maximally stressed during an exam. Collecting feedback at that time gives voice to whatever emotion they hold and allows negative feelings to dissipate rather than smolder. By addressing the feedback soon afterwards, the instructor also provides a positive example for students to follow in their own situations.

The feedback forms include a quick self-assessment on student exam preparation and performance. In this class, students' average self assessment (75 – 85%) was consistent with actual performance. The overall course mean was 78% and the median, 81%.

Summative Feedback

For formal course and instructor evaluations, the University recently adopted IDEA [2009]. Overall, the 24 students who completed the course seemed pleased, and they reported mastering most of the learning objectives to a reasonable extent. We provide a representative sample of student comments from the IDEA evaluations.

> *"I enjoyed this class very much… I learned A LOT and enjoyed [it] very much… Just one thing, next semester, points should be given for participation and attendance."*

> *"This is a great class. I would've rather had taken it as a full term class. It's quite a bit of work to cram into 7 weeks, and a 3 hour session is a little too much."*

> *"…new technologies were fresh and interesting … an environment in which a student feels comfortable expressing opinions."*

> *"Be a little more stern because [some] students were … playing around on computers rather than participating in class discussions. In the future, make part of the grade based on attendance & participation, and a little less reading. I really enjoyed learning all the new technologies. I have incorporated many of them into my personal life and … that's what I benefitted most from class..."*

Moreover, IDEA results also indicate the extent to which students believe they mastered the specific course objectives. As noted in the Course Design section, this instructor chose five objectives for the course. For each of the five objectives, about 80% of the students reported that they made "substantial" or "exceptional" progress toward those objectives. They reported the most progress in their abilities to express their analyses in writing, and the least in their interest in learning more.

Peer

As part of the department's formative peer review of teaching process, a colleague from the Operations Management group came to observe a single class session. The peer review process enables us to provide formative feedback to one another. We also share new ideas and strive to improve our teaching methods and results. My colleague visited on a day when we discussed trends in information integration and dis-integration, with ERP, Web syndication, and software as a service (SaaS) as examples. He observed, *"Interesting topics. I'd like to take the class. … I hadn't thought about the information systems perspectives in ERP, nor the potential impact of Web services on ERP systems … Good use of mini-case studies… computer screens open all of the time, the temptation to check emails, chat and other things is high"*

Department Chair

The department chair strongly encouraged the instructor to develop, market and deliver the new course. He will use the student feedback and peer feedback along with the instructor's self-assessments and teaching materials during the formal review process in Spring 2010. The instructor provides a self-assessment in the Lessons Learned section below.

Lessons Learned

The topics: balance was about right

The business of social networking will only become more important in the years to come. This course was the cutting edge in content and in the mix of resources used. Students learned to blog and several launched their own blogs to discuss other topics. The students also created a small class wiki using pbwiki. In the future, the instructor will integrate a class wiki more fully into the course, because the interaction and real-time building process was exciting and seemed worthwhile for them. They had all used Wikipedia and, through the class, they understood more fully how to create and maintain a wiki; they also saw quickly that quality and veracity of wiki content is highly variable.

Students created an online presence using Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Delicious, LinkedIn, Pandora, OfficeLive, pbwiki, Skype and other application. They experienced the extent to which these sites interact with one another and build a following because of their linkages with other popular sites. As a culminating and organizing activity, they created an individual mashup on Netvibes so they could manage all their social networking from one location.

Not only did students get to "play" with new technologies, they also integrated these resources into our discussions of management and Web 2.0 principles. By working with the technologies at the same time we were studying the businesses that use them, the ideas seemed easier for them to learn. Memorization was not a part of this course, and the combination of lab plus cases and lectures and small group work seemed to enhance their learning. Keeping abreast of new and emerging applications is one challenge for this course.

Compressed format: good; 2nd-half of term: not

While our semesters are 16 weeks long, half term courses have only seven weeks of instruction followed by an exam week. The compressed format results in a highly accelerated pace, and students must absorb more quickly and prepare more intensively than in a full-semester course. The fast pace seem well-suited to the material in course, however.

The compressed calendar time is balanced with increased class time each week. The longer class sessions allowed (and demanded) quite a bit of variety in our activities each day. There seemed ample time to thoroughly discuss important topics and to provide students the chance to work with the material. However, it is quite challenging to prepare new material at the pace needed for a compressed course. A class size of 30 kept the work manageable, as did a graduate assistant with excellent communication skills, grasp of the concepts, and familiarity with my expectations.

Offering a new course in the second half of a semester created some distinct advantages and disadvantages. Because the course was not in the original semester schedule, nor was it described in the course catalog, we needed highly visible marketing to fill the seats. It was an advantage to market to individuals who were already on campus for the term than to market a new course during holidays and vacations. There also seem to be quite few students who wanted to pick up an additional course part way through the term.

As a disadvantage, however, many students had already developed their rhythm of work, play and sleep. By starting a new 3-credit course midway through the term, students add new workload of 6-credits hours just when many other courses are ramping up with final projects and exams. Attrition seemed higher in this class and it appears that student overload contributed to it. In the future, I would schedule the course during the first half of a semester because this disadvantage was so pronounced.

Course materials: reasonable balance

As noted in Section III Course Design, the students used a wide array of materials, which all illustrated elements of Web 2.0 business. The mix of academic text with general interest material

and dynamic web based applications brought multiple perspectives into the class. The low cost was an added benefit that the students seemed to value highly.

For our management material, most students only used the online *Exploring Business* material without downloading or purchasing any paper or audio copies of the material. We also discussed how long a publisher could survive if all customers only used the free products, and conjectured as to the revenue-generating activities and survival potential. They uniformly "hoped" that Flatworld Knowledge will thrive, but had no need to purchase their premium products.

In the future, the instructor will again seek out the most current resources for students in the class.

Group work: provide more guidance, require practice presentation

The group projects were challenging for students and they would have benefitted from additional early guidance. While they formed their teams around the technologies, they had little opportunity to evaluate their options. Further, they had no opportunity vet potential team mates' commitment to the project or their work styles.

In response to student request on the midterm feedback form, the instructor provided class time for teams to work and to receive guidance on their drafts and demos two weeks prior to their due date. Unfortunately, some teams did not plan effectively to use that time and it was wasted for them.

Additional technical support would benefit teams who chose Second Life and Skype, both of which create compatibility and security issues in our lab environment. With the experiences of this term, instructor is now more able to anticipate and help student teams with these types of issues.

Within each team, students evaluated each other's contribution using a mock resource distribution form http://bit.ly/09BizSN . As each team presented, their classmates also evaluated the content and delivery. The within-group evaluations were useful, although students often expressed stronger opinions in conversation than they did on the forms. The presentation evaluations served to keep the audience somewhat engaged even during weaker presentations.

In future offerings, the instructor will incorporate peer feedback more formally into the grading formula so that students are more motivated to perform at their best in team assignments. I would also require that each student team perform a practice presentation, using another team as their audience. The deadline of the practice presentation and the opportunity to gain "safe" feedback can be expected to improve the overall quality of their final work.

Teaching class in a computer lab: mostly positive

The technical resources in the multimedia lab are excellent and, for the most part, the environment enhanced student learning. However, students sometimes faced strong temptation to surf the web or do unrelated computer work while sitting in front of their machines. Some attention loss may be natural in a long class period; however, in future semesters, the instructor will seek out or develop classroom methods that maximize student involvement with the material.

While the room is laid out to ensure everyone can see the projection screens, the computers block the instructor's line of sight with one or two students at most of the tables. In addition, in Spring 2009 there were no white boards on which the instructor or students could hand write material for all to see. This resource has since been added to the room and creates opportunities for greater student participation, as well.

Weighting of course deliverable: good balance

Quite accidentally, the instructor failed to put the weighting for each component (blogs, project, midterm, final) on the original syllabus. To address the gap, the instructor tasked the students with developing some alternatives. While the instructor rejected some extreme suggestions (no

exams, or "A's for everyone!"), students discussed and analyzed the viable alternatives and then voted. By a rather wide margin, they chose blogs 40%, team-project 40%, and the midterm and final 10% each.

In hindsight, the balance was quite good, because students focused their time and attention on their weekly work (blogs) and on their integrative project. The low stakes on the midterm and final minimized their stress levels on exam days.

One disadvantage is that a few students opted out of the final because they had already earned their target grade. The instructor would prefer that all students are motivated to fully engage all the course material, and would prefer that team-based work account for a smaller percent of the course grade. In future offerings of the course, the instructor will adjust the weightings.

Web technologies: Change the sequence

Several of the *Hot Technologies* should be presented to students early in the course and with an explicit tie to their potential usefulness in their project work. For example, Office Live is an alternative to purchasing MS Office and allows students to safely store and share their work. YouSendIt allows students to exchange large files that choke many email servers. Team members can use PBWiki to collectively develop their outline and fill in sections of written reports. While a few teams were able to incorporate these applications into their work, in future semesters, the instructor will more carefully schedule the technologies that can be most helpful in their projects.

Participation: Show them it matters

In future semesters, as suggested by several students, attendance and participation will count for something – to further align their incentives to engage fully in the class. A possible approach would be to assign no points for normal class participation, and either bonus or penalty points for participation that goes beyond normal in either direction.

V. CONCLUSION

The Business of Social Networking was a challenging and fun class, which largely met the academic and organizational objectives. While there was a dearth of academic materials aimed directly at this course, the resulting mix of materials worked well, while the financial burden to students was modest. Students used dozens of Web 2.0 and social networking technologies and, by the applying social technographics profile and competitive forces analyses, they explored several dimensions of the fit between social media and businesses. We provide lessons learned and access to course materials.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author appreciates the IAIM 2009 anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on this work and for their suggestions on the presentation and future work in this area.

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