

# Social Media Networker: A New Profile for a New Market

Aniko Petakne Balogh<sup>1</sup>, Kerstin V. Siakas<sup>2</sup>, Sonja Koinig<sup>3</sup>, Damjan Ekert<sup>3</sup>,  
Darragh Coakley<sup>4</sup>, Ricardo Colomo-Palacios<sup>5</sup>, and Vassilis Kostoglou<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Denis Gabor College, Hungary

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki, Greece

<sup>3</sup> ISCN, Austria

<sup>4</sup> Cork Institute of Technology, Ireland

<sup>5</sup> Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, Spain

**Abstract.** The emergence of Internet-based social media has enabled social networks for online collaboration, interaction, communication and knowledge sharing between users who have common interests, needs or goals. The social media phenomenon has changed the way people communicate with each other and the way organizations and governments interact with different stakeholders. Consumers are increasingly utilizing Web 2.0 platforms, such as content sharing sites, blogs, social networks, and wikis in order to create, modify, share, and discuss online content. Communities are built from the bottom-up by people who capitalize on the behavior and knowledge of others. Barriers of distance and time are overcome by transparency created by the wisdom of the users. The use of social media has had a significant impact on public relations and the reputation of organizations, not to mention marketing, sales and sustainability. Yet, many organizations eschew or ignore this type of media, mainly because they do not understand the advantages of its use, the various forms it can take, and how to engage in it. In order to address this lack of skills and to support organizations in building competences in the field of social media a lifelong learning course is currently under development within the frame of the European Certification and Qualification Association (ECQA). The ECQA Social Media Networker (SIMS) is a two year long project which started in October 2011 with funding from the EU Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP). The project aims to develop a new skill set and a job role qualification study program, where competencies in social media are customized for the European industry into an online study program complemented with an online training, examination and certification schema for the Social Media Networker job role. A pilot training scheme will take place in the participating organizations/member states (Austria, Greece, Hungary, Ireland and Spain) and the study programme will be refined and improved based on systematic feedback. This chapter describes the joint effort of five organizations in five countries to define and develop the professional role of a Social Media Networker. After developing and testing the modular training material, the profession will be launched to the market. Future work will concentrate on the sustainability of the profession by the creation of a job role committee that will be responsible for updating the training material, as well as for the dissemination and exploitation of the results.

**Keywords:** Social media, ECQA, profession, networker, Social Web, Web 2.0.

## 1 Introduction

The Internet has changed the way people communicate, but also the way organizations interact with customers, employees and partners. In other words, Internet has profoundly changed the human experience [7]. The emergence of Internet-based social media has made it possible for one person or organization to communicate with hundreds or even thousands of other people about products and the companies that provide them [19]. The current trend toward Social Media can therefore be seen as a realization of the Internet's roots, since it re-transforms the World Wide Web to what it was initially created for: a platform to facilitate information exchange between users [17]. Social media encompasses a wide range of online tools including blogs, company-sponsored discussion boards and chat rooms, consumer-to-consumer e-mail, consumer product or service ratings websites and forums, Internet discussion boards and forums, moblogs (sites containing digital audio, images, movies, or photographs), and social networking websites, but to name a few [19]. As a consequence of its usefulness Social Media has been pointed out as useful for human fields, including public relations [8][12], crisis management [1][32][34], eGovernment [3][4][6][9][10], marketing [2][30][31], Education [11][14][15][25], Tourism [21][26][28][33], Sports [22] and medicine [13][16] citing the most relevant and recent research works.

However, this social media strategy requires the participation of forward-thinking individuals, who must be socially and technically knowledgeable and informed in order to exploit these new ways of social networking. All stakeholders in an organization can benefit from understanding social media networking principles and their implementation. However, this is not an easy task. To correctly facilitate these tools, one must learn how to leverage them in order to improve marketing, research, communications, customer support, brand reputation, competitive intelligence, product development, collaboration and knowledge capture. Although there are recent and relevant works designed to illustrate some of the skills and activities of social media professionals [27][29], to the best of authors' knowledge, there is currently no initiative to characterize the competencies of this new type of professional. This chapter is a joint effort of organizations from five different European countries to define this professional role.

The project history is as follows: in 2011 five organizations decided to submit the project proposal titled "ECQA Certified Social Media Networker Skills". The project partners are the following institutions: Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (Spain) I.S.C.N. GesmbH (Austria), Dennis Gabor College, DGC (Hungary), Alexander Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki, ATEI (Greece), and the Cork Institute of Technology, DEIS Department of Education Development (Ireland). All partners had considerable previous experience within their field and their cooperation added value and represented a synergy of expertise in different areas. This chapter describes the outcomes of the project in terms of learning content and objectives.

The remainder of the chapter is structured as follows: The next section is devoted to an explanation depict the European Certification and Qualification Association (ECQA) along with its custom online teaching platform. The subsequent section illustrates the Social Media Networker Project, a project funded by Leonardo Da Vinci European Program to design this new professional role. Following this, the initiative is discussed and, finally, section 5 concludes the chapter and outlines future research plans.

## **2 The European Certification and Qualification Association**

The European Certification and Qualification Association (ECQA) is a non-profit association connecting different organizations (companies, university, institutions etc.) and thousands of professionals world-wide via training and certification for a wide range of job roles - currently the ECQA offers training and certification for 30 job roles. New job roles are also constantly being developed. The ECQA provides its services in more than 24 countries through more than 60 members (consisting of training organizations, trainers, exam organizations etc.).

### **2.1 Background**

The ECQA is the result of a series of different projects co-funded by the European Commission under the Life Long Learning programme:

The EQN (European Quality Network, 2005 - 2007) established a network of different members (previous Life Long Learning Leonardo projects, European networks, chambers of commerce, trainings organizations and institutes), who have developed qualification programmes and training courses. These different groups jointly analysed key quality indicators and success factors to achieve high quality services and a continuous innovation process. The result was a set of quality rules for job role based qualifications related to skills architecture, course syllabus, test questions and certification rules. These quality criteria set the framework for the foundation of the European Certification and Qualification Association.

The EU Cert Campus project (2008-2009) established an online training campus with online services, which were implemented in the ECQA infrastructure:

- Skill set browsing
- Central registration service
- Multilanguage support
- Online trainings through a learning management system.
- Self maintenance of the skill sets and self test / examination pool

With the support of the ECQA services and the EU Cert Campus more than 200 participants attended online trainings from their work place and/or home.

The dEUCert Project (Dissemination of EU Certificates) aimed to disseminate the ECQA framework Europe-wide by building ECQA regional contact centers represented by ECQA ambassadors. ECQA Ambassadors are persons with an outstanding success

record on an international level, which are selected because of their substantial contribution to the ECQA and to their support to create a European vision of collaboration based on a joint educational and certification strategy on the market.

## 2.2 Quality Criteria

The ECQA ensures that the same core knowledge is presented to all training participants by defining so called “skill sets” (representing the content, subject matter, learning objectives, etc.). All exam participants are tested according to the same requirements (quality criteria) contained in the skill sets. These quality criteria apply to the following types of service providers:

- Trainers – performing the ECQA certified trainings
- Training organizations – organizing and offering trainings
- Exam organizations – organizing and supervising exams
- Certification organizations – national certification bodies and organization issuing certificates in the name of the ECQA

The content of the job roles/trainings is defined by experts from industry and research by combining profound knowledge with research results and best practices. These experts collaborate in ECQA groups referred to as Job Role Committees. The main responsibilities of the Job Role Committees are:

- To maintain and regularly review the actuality of the skill set;
- To prepare and maintain the examination question pool (selected members of the Job Role Committee operate as Exam Committee);
- To review and approve new training material, trainers and training organizations.

The aim is to ensure the same quality level of training and certification in all participating countries.

## 2.3 Skill Set Definition

The skill set (syllabus) for the Social Media Networker provides the basis for the development of training and examination. The skill set is based on the skills definition proposed by the DTI (Department of Trade and Industry) in the UK for the NVQ (National Vocational Qualification).

The defined skill set follows the ECQA compliant skills definition standards and describes the target profile’s competences in terms of skill units, which are defined by skill elements. Each skill element consists of a number of performance criteria (learning outcomes) describing the minimum level of performance, which a training participant has to demonstrate in order to be certified as an “ECQA certified Social Media Networker”.

Each skill set consists of the following items:

- **Domain:** An occupational category (e.g. Domain “Social Media Management”)
- **Job Role:** A job description that covers part of the domain knowledge (e.g. someone in the job role of a “Social Media Networker”)

- **Unit:** A list of certain activities that have to be carried out in the workplace. It is the top-level skill in the qualification standard hierarchy. Each unit consists of a number of elements.
- **Learning Element:** A description of one distinct aspect of the work performed by a worker, either a specific task that the worker has to do or a specific way of working. Each element consists of a number of performance criteria.
- **Performance criteria:** Description of the minimum level of performance, which a training participant has to demonstrate in order to be assessed as someone qualified for the respective job role – e.g.: “ECQ certified Social Media Networker”.
- **Optional Level of cognition:** For each performance criteria there is an intended level of cognition. At the same time this describes the complexity level of the exam questions for each performance criteria (according to Bloom’s Taxonomy).

## 2.4 ECQA Online Services

Through the support of the EU Cert Campus project, the partnership developed a skill assessment and online learning portfolio portal supporting procedures for account management, browsing of skill set and self assessment. In addition, the participant can prove required skills by:

- uploading reference materials, which are evaluated by external assessors in a formal assessment and/or by:
- attending an online examination.

The ECQA learning and examination procedure consists of the following steps:

1. The participant visits the ECQA webpage ([www.ecqa.org](http://www.ecqa.org)) and browses through the different skill sets.
2. The participant registers at the ECQA learning portal, performs a self assessment examination and receives a skill gap analysis identifying which skills they are proficient in and which skills are not proficient in.
3. Based on this analysis the participant attends an online or on-site training.
4. After the training the participant attends an online multiple-choice examination and after successfully passing this, a certificate is issued by the ECQA. The exam questions are randomly selected from a larger pool of questions resulting in a personalized exam for every participant.

As a consequence of the importance of the ECQA initiatives, there are many research papers in which many of the professions that are already included in the ECQA portfolio have been depicted e.g. [5][18][20][23][24].

## 3 The Social Media Networker Project

The innovation transfer project ECQA Certified Social Media Networker Skills (SIMS) deals with the professional qualification and certification of the job role of Social Media Networker. The aim of this project is the transfer of the Social Media

Networker Skill to industry. This will provide a technological and methodological strategy for online learning assessment, recognition, facilitation and qualification for this new job role. The project includes:

- Development of an online accredited programme of study for the job role of a social media networker.
- Piloting of the programme in all participating member states of the project and refinement of the programme based on systematic feedback.
- Dissemination of the project results via a range of channels including a major conference and special issues in journals.
- Ensuring the sustainability of the project and its outputs through the European Certificates Association and other bodies.

To this aim, this project will establish a skill set and certification criteria based on the European-wide accepted scheme of the ECQA. It will involve industrialists on an international level, and will implement the results in the respective partner institutions.

The project partners arranged the project kick off meeting in Madrid in December 2011. Here they decided on the initial skill set titles of the Social Media Networker course and distributed the task of writing 2-3 skill card elements each and the corresponding training material based on the skill card based on literature review and self-initiated research. For quality management purposes two other partners reviewed the skill cards independently.

The structure of the skill cards (and consequently the training material and the course) complies with the ECQA modularity rules for professions. The content of a profession should be divided into the:

- Domain: The domain is the name of the profession (e.g. ECQA Social Media Networker Manager)
- Unit: The content of the training is grouped into logical subject matter topics (units). The number of units should be 3 to 7 per domain
- Elements: In order to provide a better structuring of the units, the units are divided into elements. The suggested number of elements is 3 to 7 per unit.
- Performance criteria (PC): They are the criteria set for the minimum level of knowledge and performance required for a participant to effectively function within the given job role. Performance criteria are defined for each element and the suggested number of PCs is 3 to 6 per element.

The content of a Skills card is used within the ECQA for several purposes:

- for the description of the profession in dissemination materials and on the ECQA web page,
- for the structuring the ECQA exam portal,
- for the design of certificates for participants, etc.

For each profession a short identifier consisting of three characters should be selected. The identifier is used in the exam portal, on certificates, etc. (e.g. SRM for Social

Responsibility Manager, MAN for EU Project Manager, etc.). Availability of the profession code is checked by the ECQA.

For the job role of a social media networker, the topics of the skill cards are the following:

### **Unit 1:**

- E1: Introduction to Social Media
- E2: Social Media Technologies

### **Unit 2:**

- E1: Social and Business Networks (Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn, XING, as-smallWorld, MySpace...)E2: Blogging, Microblogging (Twitter, Blogger, Wordpress, Jaiku, Foursquare)
- E3: Content Sharing, Recommendation and Collaboration (Youtube, Flickr, Picasa, Podcast, Goodle Docs, Wiki, Dropbox, Slideshare , LastFM, Genius, Pandora, Digg, Amazon, Snooth ...) + Education

### **Unit 3:**

- E1: Planning, Implementing and Monitoring Communication (Trends, Analytics, Integration to the whole communication plan .... )
- E2: Enterprise 2.0 (Knowledge Management , HRM, Co-creation and user generated content, Training)
- E3: Marketing and CRM (Social Media Marketing ,CRM and Supply/Chain and Social Media)

### **Unit 4:**

- E1: Culture of sharing and Online Reputation Handling (Management), Use of Language, Branding, Netiquette
- E2: Legal and Financial aspects of social media (copyright content and Culture of sharing )
- E3: Information overload (Semantic Web, Data Mining, Natural Language Processing)

## **4 Discussion**

There is no doubt that research and industry have access to, via social media tools, a new environment of communication and collaboration. Thus, there is a need to facilitate the relevant stakeholders (owners, shareholders, suppliers, employees, researchers, customers, and the broader community) in their successful adaptation to this environment. Social networking is currently the spearhead for a significant extension in this

field, connecting researchers, developers, customers, supply chains, or creating Enterprise 2.0 Knowledge Management (KM) policies based on social networking as a strategy will be a decisive factor for future success for many businesses.

The Social Media Networker profession arose from the essential need of the organizations to get involved both actively and efficiently in social networking. The main aim of this profession is to exploit these new ways of social networking and their technologies and principles for communication and collaboration, as well as detailing how organizations can profit from their implementation. Production of reliable and up to date educational material, provision of structured and uniform training in the countries of the consortium members, and setting up online exams will be the initial steps. Afterwards, as the importance and use of social media is anticipated to increase dramatically, training for this job role will need to be disseminated and exploited, so that it becomes a useful mainstream tool in the lifelong learning processes. Furthermore, as the development of relevant technologies is so rapid (Web 3.0., semantic web concentrating on data meaning, personalization, intelligent search, and not only) training material will need to be updated frequently. This issue will be of vital importance for the desirable successful continuation of this profession and the increase in the number of relevant experts.

## 5 Conclusions and Future Work

This chapter focused on a new promising profession - the Social Media Networker. After the presentation of a relevant literature review, the concept and activities of the European Certification and Qualification Association were described. The next sections were devoted to the illustration of the Social Media Networker Project covering all its main issues: establishment, concept and initiatives, terminology, as well as training material contents.

The project consortium members believe the future trained professionals will enjoy high employability and promising careers within the EU member-states, and beyond. Relevant future work will initially concentrate on the sustainability of the Social Media Networker profession. After launching the profession on the market a job role committee will be created by the current consortium members. The job role committee will be responsible for updating the training material with new technological and social trends. Additionally, as it is obvious that the use of social networking will be increased exponentially in the forthcoming years, the creation of even more relevant new professions suggests promising dynamics in this field. These new professions should focus on social media technology and marketing issues. The consortium of the present project plans to focus on such research activities in coming years.

**Acknowledgements.** This work is supported by the European Commission (Programme LifeLong Learning - action Leonardo da Vinci-Transfer of Innovation); 2011-1-ES1\_LEO05-35930.



## References

1. Alfonso, G.-H., Suzanne, S.: Crisis Communications Management on the Web: How Internet-Based Technologies are Changing the Way Public Relations Professionals Handle Business Crises. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management* 16(3), 143–153 (2008), doi:10.1111/j.1468-5973.2008.00543.x
2. Berthon, P.R., Pitt, L.F., Plangger, K., Shapiro, D.: Marketing meets Web 2.0, social media, and creative consumers: Implications for international marketing strategy. *Business Horizons* 55(3), 261–271 (2012), doi:10.1016/j.bushor.2012.01.007
3. Bertot, J.C., Jaeger, P.T., Grimes, J.M.: Using ICTs to create a culture of transparency: E-government and social media as openness and anti-corruption tools for societies. *Government Information Quarterly* 27(3), 264–271 (2010), doi:10.1016/j.giq.2010.03.001
4. Bertot, J.C., Jaeger, P.T., Munson, S., Glaisyer, T.: Social Media Technology and Government Transparency. *Computer* 43(11), 53–59 (2010), doi:10.1109/MC.2010.325
5. Biró, M., Messnarz, R.: SPI experiences and innovation for Global Software Development. *Software Process: Improvement and Practice* 14(5), 243–245 (2009), doi:10.1002/spip.432
6. Bonsón, E., Torres, L., Royo, S., Flores, F.: Local e-government 2.0: Social media and corporate transparency in municipalities. *Government Information Quarterly* 29(2), 123–132 (2012), doi:10.1016/j.giq.2011.10.001
7. Correa, T., Hinsley, A.W., de Zúñiga, H.G.: Who interacts on the Web?: The intersection of users' personality and social media use. *Computers in Human Behavior* 26(2), 247–253 (2010), doi:10.1016/j.chb.2009.09.003
8. Curtis, L., Edwards, C., Fraser, K.L., Gudelsky, S., Holmquist, J., Thornton, K., Sweetser, K.D.: Adoption of social media for public relations by nonprofit organizations. *Public Relations Review* 36(1), 90–92 (2010), doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2009.10.003
9. Chen, H.: AI, E-government, and Politics 2.0. *IEEE Intelligent Systems* 24(5), 64–86 (2009), doi:10.1109/MIS.2009.91
10. Chun, S.A., Shulman, S., Sandoval, R., Hovy, E.: Government 2.0: Making connections between citizens, data and government. *Information Polity* 15(1), 1–9 (2010), doi:10.3233/IP-2010-0205
11. Ebner, M., Lienhardt, C., Rohs, M., Meyer, I.: Microblogs in Higher Education – A chance to facilitate informal and process-oriented learning? *Computers & Education* 55(1), 92–100 (2010), doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2009.12.006
12. Eyrich, N., Padman, M.L., Sweetser, K.D.: PR practitioners' use of social media tools and communication technology. *Public Relations Review* 34(4), 412–414 (2008), doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2008.09.010
13. Greysen, S., Kind, T., Chretien, K.: Online Professionalism and the Mirror of Social Media. *Journal of General Internal Medicine* 25(11), 1227–1229 (2010), doi:10.1007/s11606-010-1447-1
14. Grosseck, G.: To use or not to use web 2.0 in higher education? *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 1(1), 478–482 (2009), doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2009.01.087
15. Hemmi, A., Bayne, S., Land, R.: The appropriation and repurposing of social technologies in higher education. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning* 25(1), 19–30 (2009), doi:10.1111/j.1365-2729.2008.00306.x
16. Jorgensen, G.: Social media basics for orthodontists. *American Journal of Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics* 141(4), 510–515 (2012), doi:10.1016/j.ajodo.2012.01.002
17. Kaplan, A.M., Haenlein, M.: Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons* 53(1), 59–68 (2010), doi:10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003

18. Korsaa, M., Biro, M., Messnarz, R., Johansen, J., Vohwinkel, D., Nevalainen, R., Schweigert, T.: The SPI manifesto and the ECQA SPI manager certification scheme. *Journal of Software Maintenance and Evolution: Research and Practice*, n/a–n/a (2010), doi:10.1002/smr.502
19. Mangold, W.G., Faulds, D.J.: Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix. *Business Horizons* 52(4), 357–365 (2009), doi:10.1016/j.bushor.2009.03.002
20. Nevalainen, R., Schweigert, T.: A European scheme for software process improvement manager training and certification. *Journal of Software Maintenance and Evolution: Research and Practice* 22(4), 269–277 (2010), doi:10.1002/spip.438
21. Parra-López, E., Bulchand-Gidumal, J., Gutiérrez-Taño, D., Díaz-Armas, R.: Intentions to use social media in organizing and taking vacation trips. *Computers in Human Behavior* 27(2), 640–654 (2011), doi:10.1016/j.chb.2010.05.022
22. Pfahl, M.E., Kreutzer, A., Maleski, M., Lillibridge, J., Ryznar, J.: If you build it, will they come?: A case study of digital spaces and brand in the National Basketball Association. *Sport Management Review*, doi:10.1016/j.smr.2012.03.004
23. Riel, A., Tichkiewitch, S., Messnarz, R.: Qualification and certification for the competitive edge in Integrated Design. *CIRP Journal of Manufacturing Science and Technology* 2(4), 279–289 (2010), doi:10.1016/j.cirpj.2010.04.005
24. Riel, A., Tichkiewitch, S., Messnarz, R.: Integrated engineering skills for improving the system competence level. *Software Process: Improvement and Practice* 14(6), 325–335 (2009), doi:10.1002/spip.424
25. Roblyer, M.D., McDaniel, M., Webb, M., Herman, J., Witty, J.V.: Findings on Facebook in higher education: A comparison of college faculty and student uses and perceptions of social networking sites. *The Internet and Higher Education* 13(3), 134–140 (2010), doi:10.1016/j.iheduc.2010.03.002
26. Schmallegger, D., Carson, D.: Blogs in Tourism: Changing Approaches to Information Exchange. *Journal of Vacation Marketing* 14(2), 99–110 (2008), doi:10.1177/1356766707087519
27. Siculiano, V.: The Direction of the Media Profession. *International Journal on Media Management* 13(3), 205–209 (2011), doi:10.1080/14241277.2011.576966
28. Thevenot, G.: Blogging as a Social Media. *Tourism and Hospitality Research* 7(3-4), 287–289 (2007), doi:10.1057/palgrave.thr.6050062
29. Vuori, M.: Exploring uses of social media in a global corporation. *Journal of Systems and Information Technology* 14(2), 155–170 (2012), doi:10.1108/13287261211232171
30. Wang, X., Yu, C., Wei, Y.: Social Media Peer Communication and Impacts on Purchase Intentions: A Consumer Socialization Framework. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, doi:10.1016/j.intmar.2011.11.004
31. Weinberg, B.D., Pehlivan, E.: Social spending: Managing the social media mix. *Business Horizons* 54(3), 275–282 (2011), doi:10.1016/j.bushor.2011.01.008
32. White, C., Plotnick, L., Kushma, J., Hiltz, S.R., Turoff, M.: An online social network for emergency management. *International Journal of Emergency Management* 6(3), 369–382 (2009), doi:10.1504/IJEM.2009.031572
33. Xiang, Z., Gretzel, U.: Role of social media in online travel information search. *Tourism Management* 31(2), 179–188 (2010), doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2009.02.016
34. Yates, D., Paquette, S.: Emergency knowledge management and social media technologies: A case study of the 2010 Haitian earthquake. *International Journal of Information Management* 31(1), 6–13 (2011), doi:10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2010.10.001