

Social Rewarding in Wiki Systems – Motivating the Community

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Participation is the key factor for a successful online community. Wikipedia would be nothing without heavy involvements of its members. But how could users be motivated to participate actively in an online community?

As information provided over the Internet is treated like a public good, problems like free riding or social loafing arise. As a user has costs (e.g., information acquisition, internet connection) by contributing an article to Wikipedia she/he wants something in return. Extending the benefit for a user so that it exceeds her/his costs is a good starting point to increase contributions.

We present social rewarding mechanisms that generate benefits for the users in order to achieve a higher contribution rate in a wiki community. In our case, social reward refers to something that causes a behaviour to increase in intensity. In an online community, social rewarding is in the majority of cases based on accentuation of the most active members. As money cannot be used as a motivating factor there have to be others like status, power, acceptance and glory. We explain different social rewarding mechanisms which aim to meet these needs of users. The techniques used are focussing on automatic investigations of quantitative and qualitative characteristics of published articles. Authors are then rated for their work and points are assigned using predefined criteria and automatically generated scales on the basis of all members of the whole community. Among other things the quality of references used in an article is assessed and the opinion of the community is considered by asking for a vote. These scores are then weighted according to the timeliness and the extent of a contribution. As a result, rankings of authors can be generated where the most active one will see her-/himself on the first place.

Furthermore, we implemented a number of social rewarding methods within the MediaWiki system and we are going to explain the implementation process.