Walking away from the Desktop Computer: Distributed Collaboration and Mobility in a Product Design Team (1996)

Victoria Bellotti & Sara Bly

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Introduction

• Distributed work report in design consulting firm

• The aim is to support collaboration by current technology with possible innovations

• Local mobility & Long distance mobility
  – mobility was significant part to keep people updated with company’s activities
  – while local mobility enhances local collaboration, it penalize long distance collaboration severely
Mobility and distributed collaboration

• Some theories involve in distributed collaboration

• Strauss’ Action / Interaction theory
  – bridging social and technical
  – Social interaction is critical to accomplish tasks

• Orr’s working without “sophisticated technology”

• Kraut’s reducing mobility in to desktop task
  – AV solutions, voice and phone conferencing

• Harper declares “receptionists to locate office workers”
  – “moral order” related with this study case
Study case

• How mobility is valuable for collaborations?
  ➢ research methods to investigate:
    ➢ How workers use technology as support for CSCW
    ➢ How collaborative work influences working environment
    ➢ What are the benefits for collaborators
    ➢ Troubles occurred during research

• Distributed company over distances
  ➢ San Jose (other parts in local site) is 20 miles away from Santa Cruz
  ➢ QED (investigated firm) and Greenfiedls are 2000 miles away
  ➢ preferred pen and pencil communication
How mobility involved collaboration? - Findings

• **Use of shared recourses**
  - accessories for working such as printers

• **Desire for communication**
  - walking from desktop and talking to each other

• **Mobility for using shared resources**
  - PC, Fax, Plotter 😄, Scanner – involve mobility to travel for setting up
  - Walking towards colleagues and discuss progress in their work

• **Mobility for communication**
  - good for local bad for long distance collaboration

• **Benefits of mobility**
  - key benefit of local mobility is maintaining mutual awareness of ongoing activities
How mobility involved collaboration?

Troubles

• Locating colleagues
  - annoying to use phones, so much time to locate someone
  - difficult for distributed workers, better to explain by face-to-face
  - Hard to find remote colleagues and talk with them

• Lack of awareness
  - Common knowledge, student work situation

• Coordination
  - phone conferencing scheduling, ill informed engineers, awkward situations
Design implications

Results of research:

• Get more involve remote colleagues in mutual awareness and collaboration between each working group

• Reduce penalties for distributed colleagues of trying to communicate and collaborate with the others

• Implementation of prototypes based on virtual web application platform, Connectix
Design implications

• Implementation and innovation current technologies
  ➢ twitter, video conferencing solutions, Skype, MSM, wifi smart phones ...
Conclusion

• Overlook of wide variety of collaborative activities over distance

• Study proved that local mobility is very beneficial for local mutual awareness and collaboration

• CSCW designers must take this phenomena into account to focus on support remote collaborators and with respect to their mobility as well
Conclusion

Questions ????