

# Chapter 9

## Humanizing Internal Crowdsourcing Best Practices

Alexis J. Bañón-Gomis, Ricardo Martínez-Cañas  
and Pablo Ruiz-Palomino

**Abstract** In its short life, the concept of crowdsourcing has been applied in practice to attain various outcomes, such as business goals, innovation processes, social justice, democratic participation and environmental activism. One of its value-adding applications in the business area involves recruiting organizational members to participate in problem-solving activities. However, because this situation could be perceived as a new job parcel involving complex human relationships governed by a values loophole, the need to improve understanding on how to manage this practice optimally remains. By focusing on how value is created through social aspects and how such practice can be optimally managed, this chapter identifies crowdsourcing as a new type of organizational value created through human relationships inside business organizations. More importantly, this chapter uses the case of IBM to explore how this online relationship can be adequately articulated to avoid counterproductive behaviours by internal crowd participants. A proposal of best-practice principles for corporations interested in addressing this business practice in a more humanizing way concludes the chapter.

### 9.1 Introduction

During the past two decades, the broad generalization of the Internet and the mass adoption of new media technologies have completely redesigned the relationships among employees, suppliers and other stakeholders in corporations (Surowiecki

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A.J. Bañón-Gomis (✉)  
Universitat Politècnica de València, Valencia, Spain  
e-mail: albaogo@upvnet.upv.es

R. Martínez-Cañas · P. Ruiz-Palomino  
Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Cuenca, Spain  
e-mail: Ricardo.Martinez@uclm.es

P. Ruiz-Palomino  
e-mail: Pablo.Ruiz@uclm.es

2004). The Internet has fostered and cultivated the creation of a participatory culture that provides ways for business managers to leverage the collective intelligence of emerging online communities (Lebraty and Lebraty 2013). That is, top managers are interested in identifying, measuring, using and maintaining the energy of this collective community intelligence to improve key business processes intimately linked to the achievement of business goals. For example, employee participation in governance mechanisms could be fostered, products could be (re)designed, and various and complex organizational and operational problems could be solved (Howe 2008).

Therefore, crowdsourcing can be characterized as a deliberate blend of bottom-up, open, creative processes and top-down organizational goals (Brabham 2013). Organizations are using the Internet to outsource work to individuals. That is, they are taking functions once performed by employees and outsourcing them to (un) defined networks of people in the form of open calls (Howe 2006). This process can take the form of peer production (when the job is performed collaboratively for employees in a workgroup), but it can also be undertaken by isolated individuals working under specific guidelines (Villarroel and Reis 2010).

Research on crowdsourcing has appeared in a variety of academic disciplines, each of which has approached the topic from a different angle. According to Brabham (2013), this concept is dominated by four significant research areas:

1. Computing research, which centres on the design and technical aspects of crowdsourcing systems and is supported by big corporate Internet technology research firms, such as IBM and HP laboratories. These companies are interested in solving problems in a distributed, collective and crowdsourced pattern.
2. Business management, in which researchers are interested in crowdsourcing applications in terms of innovation, profitability and business efficiency, as well as the strategic and managerial dimensions of integrating business operations.
3. Social science research, which focuses on the human dimension of crowdsourcing, which mainly involves finding answers about the motivation to participate in crowdsourcing, as well as other issues such as labour exploitation and ethics.
4. Applied professionally oriented disciplines, which focus on specific industries, such as urban planning, medicine, journalism and national security, among others.

However, the confusing and conflicting results generated by these four large research streams are beginning to disappear. This is because some research questions have merged to provide a more holistic perspective of the important matters in crowdsourcing research. The goal of this chapter is to facilitate the merging of these different lines of research. To do so, the chapter uses IBM as a case study to explain how the firm distributes a problem through small tasks to computer scientists in an open-source culture of sharing a code of values or guidelines. This chapter also analyses the value creation process through a strategic lens that promotes innovation and problem-solving by focusing on open innovation and lead-user innovation. Finally, this chapter takes a social science approach to propose best-practice

principles for use in crowdsourcing, so that this practice can be humanized by stimulating ethical behaviours of the crowd.

## 9.2 Crowdsourcing and Social Networks as Generators of Internal Organizational Value

Crowdsourcing is principally a process for partitioning tedious work and obtaining needed services, ideas or valuable content from an online community (Brabham 2013). Despite the great array of definitions of the concept, Estellés-Arolas and González-Ladrón-de-Guevara (2012: 197) developed a new and integrated definition that synthesizes the core facts included in the concept: *“Crowdsourcing is a type of participative online activity in which an individual, an institution, a non-profit organization, or company proposes to a group of individuals of varying knowledge, heterogeneity, and number, via a flexible open call, the voluntary undertaking of a task. The undertaking of the task, of variable complexity and modularity, and in which the crowd should participate bringing their work, money, knowledge and/or experience, always entails mutual benefit. The user will receive the satisfaction of a given type of need, be it economic, social recognition, self-esteem, or the development of individual skills, while the crowdsourcer will obtain and utilize to their advantage that what the user has brought to the venture, whose form will depend on the type of activity undertaken”*.

Thus, the crowd’s use of the Internet to pursue a certain prefixed goal is strongly emphasized in crowdsourcing, as is the idea that this goal is attained by realizing a defined small task in which the crowdsourcer engages. In crowdsourcing, strong attention is also paid to the extrinsic or intrinsic rewards that crowd participants usually receive for their participation in the process. Finally, in fulfilling the widespread norm in the business strategy area that business organizations should create value through various activities (Grant 2010), the crowdsourcing practice is conceptualized to achieve such undertaking. For example, business value is achieved when an organization outsources an activity for less cost than what it would have cost to perform internally (Williamson 1985). Value is also created when the organization focuses on exploiting its core, valuable, rare and difficult-to-imitate resources and outsources other (the rest of) activities (Barney 1991). Thus, organizations can clearly benefit from crowdsourcing practices in these two situations (Howe 2008). However, there is a need to identify more clearly what value specifically is created by crowdsourcing (Huberman et al. 2009), especially considering that, in measuring internal value, a wide range of tangible and intangible outputs can be involved (e.g. competitiveness, financial performance, profitability, efficiency, effectiveness, satisfaction, perceived success) and that value creation depends on what participants judge to be important (Moran and Ghoshal 1997).

A review of the literature shows that crowdsourcing activities are oriented to co-create business value through the specificity of electronic connections based on four

interconnected value dimensions (Amit and Zott 2001): efficiency, complementarity, community lock-in and novelty. Efficiency value is obtained by controlling costs and outsourcing routine, non-strategic activities and complementary value derives from synergies obtained through more creative crowd opinions and collective knowledge. In contrast, community lock-in value is created by the positive externalities network that is created through usual crowdsourcing operations, which is easily manifested by making the crowdsourcing site more attractive in parallel with the number of Internet users who frequent it. Finally, novelty value comes from the great creative potential of the crowd to propose more and better innovations. Thus, value can be created through the electronic relationships at the heart of every crowdsourcing operation inside an organization (Amit and Zott 2001). As such, a major task for organizations is to implement the crucial instruments to capture the value created by a crowd of virtual relationships (Howe 2008).

Lebraty and Lebraty (2013) identify three probable main sources of value creation: cost reduction, development of innovations and authenticity. Indeed, crowdsourcing is always less costly than a traditional outsourcing operation, though there are some limitations and situations in which crowdsourcing is not applicable. It is clear that crowdsourcers are motivated primarily by benefits gained, including the ability to gather large numbers of solutions and information at a relatively inexpensive cost (Lebraty and Lebraty 2013).

Crowdsourcing also allows for the development of innovations that not only help the organization gain a competitive advantage over competitors but also contribute to value creation, either incrementally or radically, depending on the type of innovation. Finally, this practice favours authenticity, which refers to an organization's improved understanding of its particular environment, market and clients through the adaptation of products and services. However, while cost reduction is a constant in crowdsourcing, it is necessary to choose between innovation and authenticity, because these two objectives cannot coexist in a single crowdsourcing operation (Lebraty and Lebraty 2013). Thus, to be able to choose the objective (innovation vs. authenticity) for the launch of crowdsourcing activities, organizations must be cognizant of the factors that motivate the crowd to participate.

Crowdsourcing may generate solutions coming from a variety of participants, whether amateurs and volunteers working in their spare time (Brabham 2013) or part-time/full-time workers. In large companies, sometimes this process combines the efforts of numerous self-identified volunteers or part-time workers, such that each contributor, by his or her own initiative, adds a small portion to the greater result (Howe 2006). This is why users might be motivated to contribute by obtaining either intrinsic inputs, such as social contacts and intellectual stimulation, or extrinsic inputs, such as financial gains (Howe 2008). Indeed, in some cases, contributors are compensated monetarily, with prizes, promotions or recognition, while in other cases, the only reward received is intellectual satisfaction or just passion for a task well done (Howe 2008).

Lebraty and Lebraty (2013) identify three types of crowd communities that determine the two extremes (intrinsic and extrinsic) of motivation and the centre of a continuum (hybrid or intermediate) for value creation through crowdsourcing.

The first type of community is driven by intrinsic motivation that stems from passion and fervent attention to the brand product or service and to the company. Community members' motivation derives from an individual desire for improvement and self-realization because they are typically not paid for their participation. In this case, it is the task itself (not the task as a means to an end) that motivates this community. Members usually have a clearly defined sense of belonging and might be motivated by the attractiveness of the objectives being pursued for the sake of their community (e.g. sustainable development, ecology, ethics, social welfare, elimination of poverty). In all likelihood, motivation to participate is strengthened by the simple consideration or use of their ideas. The strong sentiment of "*shared paternity*" of the product, along with the feeling of belonging to a community or network, is another important reason for their involvement.

The second type of crowd community is mainly based on extrinsic motivation factors because member satisfaction mainly depends on the financial remuneration received. In this case, it is the external environment of the task that motivates people to participate in this type of activity. The community assembles and then unites around the business model proposed by the organization holding the crowdsourcing operation. This community is attracted by the exploitation of intellectual property rights and discoverer monetary remuneration, which are usually provided to creators. Here, companies must reinforce behaviour and participation by designing credible and trustworthy business models based on rewards.

Finally, the third type of community motivated to participate in crowdsourcing activities—that is the hybrid or intermediate model—includes people who have an average skill level and a limited passion for the task. This includes employees who do not participate in crowdsourcing operations just for the passion and employees who are not solely driven by financial remuneration. This type of crowd can be highly volatile and its contributions extremely variable. Crowd members can be linked initially to financial remuneration, but throughout the course of their participation, motivations could evolve from belonging to a community and the opportunities that come with it. This case is characterized by internalized extrinsic motivations. Members participate with the goal of possibly finding better employment in future or simply of flattering the crowd's ego.

Beyond the different motivations found among crowd participants, distinct interests might also arise. Even when crowdsourcing is planned for internal workers, who are under the umbrella of one business culture, their various and distinct interests may conflict with one another and sometimes also with organizational interests. If so, these situations might give rise to bad ethical and dehumanized behaviours by crowd participants. Internal workers might think of performing these new tasks in a "values loophole", which might lead them to behave in ways that exclusively meet their own interests.

Previous research has deemed this negative (self-interested) use of discretion in crowdsourcing activities as a potential danger to this business practice (Franke et al. 2013). Because such use might induce people to commit behaviours against organizational interests, the positive climate might be hampered and the achievement of the intended objectives of the crowdsourcing activity even undermined.

Thus, organizations must realize that it is likely not enough to simply launch a crowdsourcing activity to solve corporate problems or develop innovative projects. Rather, increasingly often, and given the relatively novelty of this practice in business, organizations must establish a set of behavioural guidelines and provide them to crowd participants in an effort to control operational dysfunction and enhance its humanization. Indeed, under the umbrella of a framework of values consciously established for this unique activity, crowd participants could be guided more effectively in their tasks and persuaded to avoid potential dehumanizing behaviours.

### 9.3 Internal Crowdsourcing Best Practices

The internal generation of value through crowdsourcing and social networks can be visualized with a real example. In this section, we highlight the existence of “internal crowdsourcing” oriented to current organizational members—that is internal organizational interactions based not on mass communications but on masses of communicators—and we review their best-practice methodology. With this in mind, we selected the case of IBM and the IBM Social Computing Guidelines (hereinafter ISCG).<sup>1</sup> We chose IBM because it has a systematized code of conduct around crowdsourcing and social networks and also because IBM interprets this as an opportunity to build trust between the different crowd participants and the organization. We begin by analysing IBM’s evolution.

In 1997, when many companies were looking for ways to restrict their employees’ Internet access, IBM was actively recommending that they use the Internet. Later on, in 2003, IBM made a strategic decision to embrace the blogosphere and encouraged IBMers to participate. Instead of treating all these changes as threats, the firm considered them facilitators of the interaction among IBM’s members and, more importantly, as a chance to build trust between them and IBM as an organization.

In the spring of 2005, IBM created guidelines for the use of wikis. At that time, IBMers used wikis to create a set of guidelines for all IBMers who wanted to blog. The firm repeated this call in 2008 and again in 2010 when it asked organizational members to re-examine the guidelines in light of ever-evolving technologies and online social tools.

In other words, IBM aroused an “internal crowdsourcing” conception by encouraging organizational members—its “internal crowds”—to regulate the way all IBMers should blog. By doing so, the same users provided helpful and practical advice to protect both IBM bloggers and IBM. Whether they knew it or not, they created an auto-regulation structure based on an “internal crowdsourcing” conception capable of generating value in two ways. First, IBM’s own organizational

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<sup>1</sup>See <http://www.ibm.com/blogs/zz/en/guidelines.html>.

members could internally contribute to the generation of their own guidelines, contributing to reinforce their sense of belonging. Second, this was a way to ensure that IBM's senior personnel remained current to the needs of lower level employees.

This internal crowdsourcing approach is a new relationship model founded on individual interactions based on masses of communicators and not on mass communications. As with any crowdsourcing approach, it has external and visual consequences but also internal consequences, which are singular.

With regard to the external consequences, this model of interactions allows IBM to share with clients, shareholders and the communities in which it operates its greatest asset—that is the expertise of its employees—thus accomplishing four main objectives: describing, learning, contributing and applying. In terms of describing, the ISCG state the following: “To empower IBMers as global professionals, innovators and citizens through online social computing”. The firm promotes learning because “[s]ocial computing is an important arena for organizational and individual development opening an exchange for learning between IBM and its clients, and among the many constituents of the emerging business and societal ecosystem” (ISCG). IBM also contributes by sharing “with the world the exciting things IBM is learning and doing” (ISCG). Finally, IBM applies forms of online publishing and discussion, such as blogs, wikis, file-sharing, user-generated videos and audio, virtual worlds, social networks and so on.

The innovative part of the “internal crowdsourcing” conception is IBM's capacity to generate internal value through the detached effort of its members, and its conception is based on trust and personal responsibility as the two core values underlying all relationships. Because of these values, IBM can manage freedom among IBMers and support an open dialogue and exchange of ideas in different scenarios: between IBMers and their partner clients, among members of the many communities in which they participate and among the general public.

IBM regulates its internal crowdsourcing relationships, which are voluntary relationships, through its official ISCG, which are based on 12 guidelines (see Annex I). It is important to understand that as voluntary relationships, internal crowdsourcing cannot be imposed. Rather, because these are voluntary relationships, ethics, as the discipline that conceptualizes actions in terms of its goodness or badness for human beings (Hoffman et al. 2014), must be present in the relationships. The ISCG aid us in elucidating a series of ethical values and principles for internal crowdsourcing practice, providing a humanizing framework to prevent and solve conflicts and to inspire an ordered free will.

## 9.4 Humanizing the Crowdsourcing Best Practices

By reviewing and analysing the current official 12 guidelines of the ISCG (see Annex I), we can extract an underlying internal logic. The type of guidance these guidelines aim to provide to relate to a common subject can be easily discerned—

that is, the ISCG are geared towards building a strong battery of principles around the concept of responsibility. But responsibility with regard to what?

Again, a review of the ISCG enables us to extract the core elements of guidance IBM aims to provide. The ISCG are about responsibility with regard to the following: G.1: respect of general rules; G.2: own generated content; G.3: personal brand; G.4: corporate brand; G.5: mandatory elements (copyright and legal and financial aspects); G.6: confidentiality, or loyalty to corporate confidentiality; G.7: confidentiality, or loyalty to client confidentiality; G.8: general audience; G.9: other organizational members; G.10: others and their opinions; G.11: crowdsourcing purposes (value addition); and G.12: corporate image.

These 12 topics around responsibility can be further aggregated into four groups focused on responsibility: responsibility in general—in the generation of added value (G.11); responsibility with regard to consequences on the corporation—dealing with the corporate brand (G.4) and the corporate image (G.12); responsibility to its organizational members—to own content (G.2), the personal brand (G.3), corporate confidentiality (G.6), clients' confidentiality (G.7), the general audience (G.8), organizational members (G.9), and other agents and their opinions (G.10); and mandatory responsibility—to respect guidelines (G.1) and the law (G.5).

This analysis helps us outline two functionalities of the ISCG instrument regarding the actions of crowd participants: (1) the ISCG instrument restricts crowd participants' actions and (2) the ISCG instrument provides the conditions for crowd participants' actions. On the one hand, the negative approach used to restrict participant actions is intended to avoid the arbitrariness in the interactions of the crowd in the internal crowdsourcing. On the other hand, establishment of the conditions aims to provide a solid framework to create a concrete discretionary space of interaction. In other words, the generation of guidelines is an instrument to delimit the discretionary behavioural framework of the crowd (hereinafter DBFC).

DBFC is a useful and necessary tool for internal crowdsourcing behaviours, but according to its nature, it is also insufficient. As we noted previously, internal crowdsourcing is a relationship rooted in volunteerism and, as such, cannot be based on regulation and control. These limitations lead to serious problems when the crowd interacts in areas not accounted for by the DBFC. In these cases, what must the crowd do? If the DBFC is considered insufficient, how can firms guide the crowd?

Certainly, the answer is complex because, on the one hand, there is a need to regulate this (voluntary) relationship and, on the other hand, there is a strong limitation established by its own nature (volunteerism) that requires the respect of the individual freedoms of crowd participants. Thus, it is necessary to extract a series of ethical values (or goods to be pursued; McGhee and Grant 2008), to guide the decisions and actions of crowd participants in an unrestricted and open manner. According to Argandoña (2003: 16), values are “central desires or beliefs regarding final states or desirable conducts that transcend specific situations, guide the choice and evaluation of our decisions and, therefore, of our conducts, becoming an integral part of our way of being and acting to the point of shaping our character”. Furthermore, when these values are ethically based, they are worth having because they contribute to the perfection of the individual as a human being and resemble



the objective moral goods of the person (McGhee and Grant 2008). Therefore, with the enumeration of a series of ethical values (goods) to commit and pursue, human relationships that form from the crowdsourcing practice can be humanized. In addition, crowd participants’ respective individual freedoms can be simultaneously preserved.

**Table 9.1** ‘Internal crowdsourcing’ values and principle proposition

	Value	Principle
	Trust	Promote an open dialogue and the exchange of ideas based on trust
General	Justice	Add value to others
		Add value without forgetting your day job
		Add value recognizing your own mistakes
		Add value with rigour
	Prudence	Add value using your best judgement
Knowledge	Justice	( <i>Intra</i> -organizational) know the organization (business conduct guidelines)
	Prudence	( <i>Extra</i> -organizational) respect copyright and fair use laws
Corporation	Responsibility	Speak in the first person
		Use a disclaimer
	Temperance and prudence	Understand the potential dangers of publishing personal thoughts (especially if you are a manager or an executive)
	Prudence	Be cautions in the use of the corporate brand
Organizational members	Coherence	Be thoughtful about how you present yourself in online social networks
	Consistency	Be consistent about how you present yourself and your professional activity
	Dignity	Respect others’ dignity
	Honesty	Be clear on who you are
		Be the first to point it out
		Be who you are
	Prudence	Be careful and judicious in disclosing personal details
		Protect confidential and proprietary information
		Organizational business performance and other sensitive “inside information”
Respect	Protect the organization’s clients, business partners and suppliers	
	Respect your audience	
	Respect your co-workers	
	Transparency	Use your real name

Source Own elaboration

Based on the four groups of responsibilities extracted previously from the IBM DBFC, a series of ethical values and principles can be proposed as “best-practice” guidelines for other corporations interested in launching internal crowdsourcing activities in their strategic plans. The major value to attain is trust because trust promotes an open dialogue and the exchange of ideas. Other values, such as coherence, consistency, dignity, honesty, justice, prudence, respect, responsibility, temperance and transparency (see Table 9.1), are also applicable according to the scope of the action affected. For example, with regard to responsibility in general, actions involved in this business practice should serve to reach justice and prudence goods (e.g. adding value without forgetting the daily job or using the best judgment). These same values, justice and prudence, should be applicable to the knowledge about the mandatory responsibilities that any party should have (e.g. respecting copyright and fair use laws). Responsibility, temperance and prudence are also values to be committed, so as not to damage the corporation (e.g. speaking in first person, being cautious in the use of the corporate brand, using a disclaimer). Finally, with regard to organizational members, ethical values such as coherence, consistency, dignity, honesty, prudence and respect all help crowd participants take humanizing actions (e.g. being thoughtful about how they present themselves in online social networks, respecting others’ dignity, being careful in disclosing personal details). In summary, the application of these values in action, together with their corresponding principles, can serve as a proposal for internal crowdsourcing activities, one that contributes to building a humanizing framework of guidance for this type of crowd participant.

## 9.5 Conclusions

This chapter provides valuable contributions to the literature by specifying a series of operational and ethical values and principles in response to the need to humanize the internal crowdsourcing practice. In particular, we addressed the issue of value addition that goes along with the launching of this business practice to better understand how to manage the human relationships involved, with regard to one major firm’s stakeholders: organizational members.

Although a great deal of attention has been paid to this emerging crowdsourcing concept in the recent past (Zhao and Zhu 2014), scant research has provided cues for practitioners on how to manage and guide actions of those who want to participate in new tasks. This is an aspect that merits consideration by managers. Otherwise, the positive and innovative results expected from the launching of a collaborative project might fall by the wayside, if the crowdsourcing work climate becomes permeated with dehumanizing acts and decisions.

The crowdsourcing practice constitutes new working situations in which connection and collaboration with others are the norm in achieving the newest and greatest products. As a result, the temptation might arise to act in this scenario outside the umbrella of current values established by the corporation. Crowd

participants might be motivated to participate in the crowdsourcing activities because of reasons that both differ and are opposite to those of the corporation. As we described in this chapter, each internal crowd participant might become involved in new tasks for myriad motives (i.e. intrinsic, extrinsic and intermediate) and, as a result, act in ways that might conflict with one another.

With this in mind, and with the need to avoid dehumanized behaviours by giving exclusive importance to the production of newer and greater things, in this chapter, we drew on the case of IBM and, specifically, its ISCG (see Annex I) to design a series of best-practice principles to address internal crowdsourcing on a humanizing basis. While the design of a series of sanctioning regulations might be useful in many different contexts, it is not wholly compatible with the crowdsourcing practice. By its very nature, internal corporate crowdsourcing involves people, societies and organizations' desire to collaborate in projects in a voluntary manner. It is clear that considering the freedom of crowds in the logic of human relationships is a risky challenge. In doing so, management would be basing the proper functioning of these relationships on the goodwill of each party. Thus, management needs to rethink ways to interrelate with others beyond paradigms based on regulation and control; in turn, these ways must be in accord with the voluntary nature of crowdsourcing.

This proposal should merit management consideration to build a humanizing framework to guide internal crowd participants in their firms. However, the successful implementation of this code for internal crowdsourcing participants will be useless if employees fail to recognize that the values underlying these guidelines should become a reality in aspects that directly affect their working lives. Indeed, several limitations that could interfere with the proper influence of these guidelines on internal crowd participants must be taken into account around crowdsourcing. For example, because large companies may conceive of crowdsourcing as an easy path to fast, cheap, high-quality labour, they could try to benefit from the work of crowds without offering the kinds of monetary rewards that are the norm in traditional work arrangements (Brabham 2013). This lack of rewards could be perceived as unfair and dishonest and thus infringe on the ethical values underlying the best-practice guidelines in crowdsourcing. This perception is not uncommon, and crowdsourcing is sometimes called “digital slavery” and “crowdsplotation” (Brabham 2013), meaning that management's self-interests permeate the real purposes for launching certain business activities. However, the perception of a dishonest or unfair situation would strongly influence the likelihood of future participation beyond considerations of self-interest (Franke et al. 2013).

The IBM case has greatly helped us in elucidating a series of practical and ethical values and principles to guide participants in internal corporate crowdsourcing, but more efforts should be undertaken to collect information from other companies that also issue open calls for people to get involved in temporary problem-solving activities—that is crowdsourcing activities. In addition, the focus in this chapter was on one specific type of crowdsourcing activity—involving internal personnel. However, many other stakeholders (e.g. consumers, local communities, Internet users, suppliers, non-governmental organization activists)

could be involved in these activities to help the firm. By adopting the methodology used here (i.e. case study), research could analyse the different modalities of crowdsourcing according to the stakeholders involved to extract the best-practice principles to operate optimally in such cases. Finally, further work on our proposal is necessary to clarify how managers can humanize their internal corporate crowdsourcing operations from an ethical standpoint. For example, perhaps virtues would be a logical next step to consider.

## **Annex I: Current and Official IBM's Social Computing Guidelines**

1. Know and follow IBM's Business Conduct Guidelines.
2. IBMers are personally responsible for the content they publish on-line, whether in a blog, social computing site or any other form of user-generated media. Be mindful that what you publish will be public for a long time—protect your privacy and take care to understand a site's terms of service.
3. Identify yourself-name and, when relevant, role at IBM—when you discuss IBM-related matters such as IBM products or services. You must make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of IBM.
4. If you publish content online relevant to IBM in your personal capacity it is best to use a disclaimer such as this: "The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent IBM's positions, strategies or opinions."
5. Respect copyright, fair use and financial disclosure laws.
6. Don't provide IBM's or a client's, partner's or supplier's confidential or other proprietary information and never discuss IBM business performance or other sensitive matters about business results or plans publicly.
7. Don't cite or reference clients, partners or suppliers on business-related matters without their approval. When you do make a reference, link back to the source and do not publish content that might allow inferences to be drawn which could damage a client relationship with IBM.
8. Respect your audience. Don't use ethnic slurs, discriminatory remarks, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any similar conduct that would not be appropriate or acceptable in IBM's workplace. You should also show proper consideration for others' privacy.
9. Be aware of your association with IBM in online social networks. If you identify yourself as an IBMer, ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself with colleagues and clients.
10. Spirited and passionate discussions and debates are fine, but you should be respectful of others and their opinions. Be the first to correct your own mistakes.

11. Try to add value. Provide worthwhile information and perspective. IBM's brand is best represented by its people and what you publish may reflect on IBM's brand.
12. Don't misuse IBM logos or trademarks and only use them if you have the authority to do so. For example, you shouldn't use IBM in your screen name or other social media ID.

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