

VDCW

Verband der deutschen Content Wirtschaft

VDCW

Your knowledge management association

Brochure of VDCW e.V., May 2002

VDCW - a survey

Management-Summary

In view of increasingly complex content topics and the converging media landscape, it is the objective of VDCW 'Verband der deutschen Content Wirtschaft' (Association of the German Content Economy) to offer orientation knowledge and to provide a platform for knowledge exchange and networking. While VDCW focuses on the German-speaking area, it also co-operates with international associations and organisations like the Milia (Cannes).

The defining feature of VDCW is its *specific approach* to the large range of content topics which makes it a **knowledge centre** and a place of **knowledge management**:

Month after month it seeks out and presents topical *format trends* (e.g. the hype around reality shows, the latest game developments or the most recent print concepts), *technical trends* (tendencies in the area of mobile communication, the offer of digital-rights-management-systems or new solutions in the broadband and convergence area, etc.), *inhouse trends* (the consequent application of content management systems in large firms, the use of IT and supply chain management strategies for the reduction of internal costs) & *business model trends* (trans-sector modelling of new business patterns based on the internet in the course of bundling or the development of media houses to service providers). For the presentation the VDCW also uses analyses and opinions of third parties, e.g. studies of major counselling firms or of internal research departments. The association processes this external material into an *independent picture* of a discovered trend and supplements it by internal research work. That way **orientation knowledge** is generated which is interesting for different groups. Besides, a *filtering* process takes place on several levels. It serves to distinguish between the important and the unimportant – important trends and unimportant ones – and so relevant knowledge is separated from irrelevant knowledge.

The orientation knowledge is published in two different ways: On the one hand in monthly reports (or quarterly reports, in case of stagnating innovation flow) – e.g. 'Format trends in September 2003' which note and interpret current developments pointedly on a maximum of ten pages (positions and news/ best practices/ portraits of key-persons and key-companies/ comments) to provide the members with stimulating impulses. On the other hand these monthly reports serve as modules for the comprehensive annual report which will be issued regularly in December ('**The great VDCW report 2003**') and shall represent the standard volume for the content economy. It will earn this position, among others, because it is to contain detailed studies supplementing and deepening the monthly reports and also trend forecasts.

Which trends do we have to reckon with in the near future? What kind of orientation knowledge will they demand? To find the answers to these questions VDCW uses the possibilities offered by **online-communities**: In the discussion forums of the **VDCW community** all kinds of format, technical, inhouse and business model trends are talked about. That does not only promote knowledge transfer between the community members but it enables the VDCW team to find out which concerns and problems there are around content and which approaches for solutions are considered.

As not all potential trend setters will be found in one of the online communities, the VDCW provides another platform for the exchange of ideas. The **Media-TradeMeetings** are a modular series of events where, e.g. a specialised event on a trend topic is followed by a business lunch or a club night where contacts are deepened. The online-community is thus supplemented by an offline community with the same objective: To enhance the knowledge transfer between the association and its members and to provide a structure which makes **networking** possible that subsequently leads to first business contacts and eventually to real *business*. Hence it is the second major concern of VDCW, apart from providing orientation knowledge, to serve as an independent room for business activities.

All this is made possible through the broad membership and partner structure of the association: Among the foundation members of VDCW you will find 'CSC Ploenzke Germany', the German branch office of the third-largest counselling house worldwide, furthermore 'PbS AG', the Munich analysis and counselling house in the Telekom sector and the sector of new-media content, then there is also 'Texte zur Wirtschaft' and 'CONTENS Software', one of the rising young CMS-producers of Germany.

In the meantime many others have joined the association: The Munich publishing house HighText; the Burgenland (eastern province of Austria) branch of the 'Institute for Higher Studies', Austria's most reputed non-university research; the Berlin 'Visono GmbH'.

The association constantly wins new members; at the moment 'Cisco Germany' and the 'Akademie des Deutschen Buchhandels'.

On an international level VDCW has entered into a partnership with 'Milia' in Cannes in view of the 'Milia 2003'.

The following types of membership are offered:

- (1) Individual Membership (EURO 500.00 annually)
- (2) SME membership (EURO 1,500.00 annually), and
- (3) membership for company group (EURO 2,500.00 annually for companies with more than EURO 250 million annual turnover).

For prospective members an application form is available. The benefits for VDCW members are:

- month after month access to compact surveys on the latest trends and best practices
- interviews that inform you about key-persons and key-players
- new impulses and inspiration through **pointed comments and interpretations** of format, technical, inhouse and business model trends
- indirect access to top-studies and inhouse reports that are usually not available
- the annual **VDCW-Report** and thus the most comprehensive volume on the present state of the German content economy
- the possibility to become part of an (online- as well as offline-) **community** which enables the generation of business in many ways.
- the use of **Media-TradeMeetings** to establish sound **business contacts**.

The fact that all this is possible in a neutral association secures VDCW its unique position on the European market today.

VDCW in detail:

Vision: From trade representation to knowledge centre

When identity arises from methodology

VDCW is characterised by a very special **methodological orientation** which is positioned beyond any borders of fashion or trade: The systematic discovery and concentrated imparting of the *relevant new* is the core competence of VDCW; the elaboration of *orientation knowledge* for a modern business world which is permeated by (digital) knowledge, information and content in many ways and, therefore, must remain up-to-date in this information world. Information and media technology play an essential role in all lines of trade and business enterprises. In big publishing houses as well as in the motor industry, where customer profiles are generated electronically, distributed digitally in the company group and evaluated automatically. Any *specialisation* – VDCW as association for web-content specialists or as association for web-content specialists *and* multi-media content firms or as association for web-content specialists, multi-media content firms *and* major content syndicators – would be *restricting* and besides it would lead to a trade orientation (i.e. to the media business) which is a thing of the past.

In practice that means that VDCW deals with the following trends:

- *Format Trends* (e.g. the hype around reality shows, the latest game developments, the most recent print concepts or developments in the area of corporate publishing) i.e. the latest state of *media-format development*.
- *Technical Trends* (tendencies in the area of mobile communication, the offer of digital-rights-management-systems or new solutions in the broadband and convergence field, and also developments around location based services, open roaming concepts and software technologies like MP3 or MPEG24), i. e. the latest *net, communication and IT technologies* that are currently appearing on the market.
- *Inhouse Trends* (e.g. the consequent application of content management systems in large firms, the use of IT and supply chain management strategies for the reduction of internal costs or the introduction of modern workflow systems which show the workflow of a large department and automate partly) i.e. up-to-date *problem solving* which is currently applied *in* the companies.
- *Business Model Trends* (pricing in the web-sector, trans-sector modelling of new business patterns based on the internet in the course of bundling or the development of media houses to service providers), i.e. *business models* which seem to prove successful at the moment.

Each of the four trend areas is explored and presented in several ways:

- by the conveyance of new positions and ideas,
- by the presentation of best practices,
- by the supply of portraits of key-persons and key-companies, as well as
- by the preparation of pointed interpretations and comments.

To reach this objective it will be necessary to rely on a broad partner structure and their production of content: **Focusing, summarizing, concluding** and **supplementing** are the basic principles of VDCW which show, after all, in what respect VDCW is an association that manages knowledge:

This work makes the VDCW a **crystallization point** and a **'filtering' institution** that does not only distinguish between important and unimportant trends but provides processing and bundling, a task that is more and more in demand. That way a reliable processing institution for corporate knowledge is created where orientation knowledge is presented that has been extracted from studies for internal purposes and processed by third parties on a high level to become attractive for others in a neutralized form, thus going far beyond traditional media reports.

To sum it up: A **knowledge centre** is founded which helps its members to organise their 'knowledge households'. That makes VDCW your 'knowledge manager'.

The knowledge centre and its core: The VDCW-community

'User ideas' as starting point

If you want to learn something about future developments, you will have to approach users of technologies and (media) products. Eric von Hippel (MIT/ Sloan School of Business) has shown us in many studies that it is always the user who is the source of new innovative ideas and technical solutions. Linux, for example, was invented by the student Linus Torvalds who had needed a UNIX system but could not afford one. The case is similar with the idea of online publishing that goes back to research circles who considered traditional magazines too slow. There are also examples in the music industry or the transport technology sector: In the beginning there is a *burning practical problem* that calls for a creative solution which is eventually found. The 'only' role of the enterprises and company groups is to take over these solutions and to professionalise them, i.e. to turn them into products.

A modern innovation strategy must therefore aim to spot relevant 'user ideas', to take them up and to turn them into attractive offers. This means being innovative and actively creative but at the same time passive, since not a 'genius masterpiece' is produced here but rather something that is already there is taken up and emphasised in an intelligent way. It is this act of *passive innovation*, as we call it, that counts today.

User integration through communities

As modern knowledge centre VDCW must run an *online-community* that is not only open to members but to all those who might be interested.

It is necessary to establish discussion forums where specialists from all over the world express their opinions on selected questions of format, technical, inhouse and business model matters or tell us about their concrete problems and solutions. That way the community becomes a place of **knowledge transfer**, not only for the participants in the discussion but also for those who run it: Simply by getting involved, moderating, joining the discussion or following ongoing discussions the VDCW team learns about up-to-date developments and trends, more precisely about trends that are about to become trends. In the sense of *passive innovation* the team can then join in various ways and formulate orientation knowledge; e. g. by presenting, analysing and following up the positions and solution approaches discussed in the community.

Furthermore, communities are the perfect place for **networking**. A brief answer to a posting can develop into a discussion that continues perhaps via e-mail at first but soon on the phone or over lunch. Communities are communication, business is communication, too – that alone shows that the two belong together.

Where you find communities, there are also many – voluntarily given – e-mail addresses which each members as well as the board of the association can use for mailings that are of obvious interest for the community. Hence a community is the basis of each reliable *e-mail distribution list* and thus a real asset.

The VDCW community in detail

Based on a *community-server* and its specific discussion forums, the VDCW community allows an intensive exchange of knowledge – made possible by modern community servers- which is saved as a kind of group dialogue for a non-defined time.

Each discussion on a topic is stored as little chronology which makes the VDCW community automatically a *knowledge bank* for *content economy trends* that, like the community itself, is open to all those interested.

To stimulate the community and to give it a jump-start, the association will launch and moderate four different discussions in *July 2002*. There will be one discussion for each of the four VDCW trend areas. The aim, however, is the self-evolution of the community; i.e. the interested participants are encouraged to start and moderate their own trend discussions. That is also necessary because communities can only live and grow when they actually become a place where real problems of those concerned are the topics; all other approaches are bound to fail.

A separate 'networking space' will be realised with the help of chat technologies where undisturbed business is possible. What about the e-mail addresses: They are collected, stored in a profile data base and kept up-to-date, so that they can be used efficiently. They can only be retrieved by community members, however, and that only if the intended mailing is really topically relevant for the entire community or selected segments.

The VDCW community is the easiest way to get into contact with VDCW 'Association of the German Content Economy'. It is its core, its entrance area, its virtual business centre, its knowledge bank and its knowledge management tool.

As of July 2002 you can reach VDCW at www.vdcw.de in the internet.

VDCW report 200x and its modules

Monthly reports

One of the benefits offered are the so-called 'monthly reports' that are won with the help of the community. They are generated from monthly inspections whether there is any news in the fields 'format trends', 'technical trends', 'inhouse trends' and 'business model trends':

Let's assume that – thanks to the various community discussions – some format trends are spotted. The reports will tell you about them, or – more precisely – they will show the new positions and ideas. Then the VDCW team will check whether any best practices have already developed around the newly discovered trend. If that is the case, it will be presented together with key-players and key-companies connected with this new trend. All that will, of course, be immediately interpreted and commented upon. After all VDCW does not only strive to make orientation possible for its members, but it also wants to inspire them and set impulses, which is done in cross-thinking comments and analyses:

That way the monthly report is created which will carry the title corresponding the reporting period, e. g. 'Format trends of August 2003'. It will not be longer than 10 pages – positions, best practices, portraits and comments – and will not exclusively deal with news: It will be equally interesting to keep presenting best practices of established trends, e.g. of the content management sector. Especially here the contents of others will be used – studies of counselling houses, for example – which will have gone through a neutralisation and supplementation process, however. Should the flow of innovation slow down, as it may happen from time to time, the reports will be issued quarterly.

Such a monthly or quarterly report will be worked out for all four trend sectors, if there is sufficient information from discussions and studies. A pdf file is made which is put in the report archive of the VDCW site or sent via e-mail to those members who wish so. While the online community is open for all those interested, the orientation knowledge produced by the association is only available to paying VDCW members.

The great VDCW report 200x

At the end of the year all single reports, that can also be regarded as *modules*, are packed together and supplemented by additional features turning them into a kind of 'annual report'. Concretely, extensive comments to each month are added which analyse the developments from a certain time distance. (What has become of the trends presented in February?) That way an overall survey about each trend area is produced which concludes with a forecast for the coming year.

Moreover, in the second half of the year two institutes are invited to make a little detail study dealing with one of the specific trends on the basis of the monthly reports of the first six months. The results of these studies are published exclusively in the final report: That probably makes it the most comprehensive compendium on the market situation of the content economy. The name was chosen accordingly: **The great VDCW report 2003** (2004, 2005, etc.) which is intended to be not more or less than THE annually published standard volume for its area.

The report is only available for VDCW members and will also be distributed via pdf file. For a small fee a hard copy can also be delivered.

VDCW does not only deal with content it also produces content.

And that *unique content*, which is not available anywhere else and offers orientation knowledge in its purest form.

Media-TradeMeetings

From the event to the series of events

Not all people who want to contribute to current and future content trends can be attracted to an online-community. We must provide a different communication platform for them if we want to include them in the 'knowledge metabolism' of VDCW. *Media-TradeMeetings* are one option.

They are a kind of event format that answers the changes observed in the conference and seminar landscape: People want to get information, of course, when they participate in meetings, and they want to learn e.g. who solves which problem how. That is not necessarily their primary concern, however. Actually, the contacts that can be made at these events have become more important. This tendency is often described as trend to **networking**.

An intelligent **series of events** may well be the best answer to this tendency:

The beginning of such a series can be a brief specialist meeting where a new inhouse-trend can be analysed and made transparent in its essence, followed by a business lunch with one key-person of this trend section and later at the club night consequences for your own business can be discussed and business can be made.

That way media meetings become Media-TradeMeetings; the VDCW event package that answers a clear concept and strategy. The individual packages overlap and interweave the presentation of know-how with the supply of 'individual' and 'broad' communication situations in such a dexterous way that group effects on a small scale develop ('I'll be seeing you at the club-meeting, won't I?') which lead to networking and the generation of **sound business contacts**. It may even lead to the development of a little 'in-group' that meets – also outside their own events – regularly at (outside) events to discuss specific topics and to position themselves in a public environment.

At the events special attention is always given to the 'touch and feel' effect for the participants of a specialist meeting, i. e. theoretic aspects of technologies and trends are supported by show cases and the participants get the opportunity to test the latest technologies themselves.

A second community

Knowledge and experience are exchanged among the participants, of course, that's clear. At Media-TradeMeetings not only the participants will learn, however, knowledge is also flowing back to the association. So these meetings are the second 'community tool' of VDCW.

The meetings are actually in contact with the online-community, because after each event a little m-story (meeting story) is published on the community server. That way a discussion that has begun at a business lunch can be continued and deepened on the net. Things may develop the other way round as well: Many an impulse for the content of an event package will have had its source in the online-community.

What a package exactly looks like – whether it starts out with a specialist meeting or resorts to completely different measures – will depend on the topic and the urgency and intensity demanded by it. There are no rules or prerequisites set in advance but one: At Media-TradeMeetings innovative and company political topics shall be treated neutrally, and that in a way that makes sure that an efficient transfer of knowledge and generation of business takes place for the VDCW members, who may participate in these meetings either completely free of any charges or for a contribution covering the expenses. What that actually means in detail is a question of the strategy adopted appropriately to the topic.

The 'Akademie des Deutschen Buchhandels' (Academy of the German Booktrade) as central partner

Media-TradeMeetings acquire an especially attractive quality by the fact that VDCW closely co-operates with the 'Akademie des Deutschen Buchhandels' in these events: Through its participation in a newly founded subsidiary of the 'Akademie', VDCW can coordinate the Media TradeMeetings with the programme of the 'Akademie' thus offering the VDCW members access to a broad and complementing range of events. VDCW members are generally granted special favourable conditions for events of the 'Akademie des Deutschen Buchhandels' owing to the VDCW's participation in the 'Academy'subsiary.

Our members and partners

Among the foundation members of VDCW you will find 'CSC Ploenzke Germany', the German branch office of the third-largest counselling house worldwide, furthermore 'PbS AG', the Munich analysis and counselling house in the Telekom sector and the sector of new-media content, then there is also 'Texte zur Wirtschaft' and 'CONTENS Software', one of the rising young CMS-producers of Germany.

In the meantime many others have joined the association: The Munich publishing house HighText; the Burgenland (eastern province of Austria) branch of the 'Institute for Higher Studies', Austria's most reputed non-university research centre; the Frankfurt 'Cocomore AG'; the Berlin 'Visono GmbH'.

And we keep growing, of course: At the moment in the direction of 'Cisco Germany' and the 'Akademie des Deutschen Buchhandels'. We would like to mention also 'evolaris', Austria's most important 'e-business competence centre' whose founder companies are among others 'AVL' the biggest private engine producer worldwide and 'Styria Medien AG' one of the largest Austrian media enterprises. Then there is the 'Institut für Internationales Management' (Institute for international management) of the University Graz, which is known for its pioneer work in the field of knowledge management under the chair of Ursula Schneider; there is 'dion-software', one of the youngest daughters of 'funworld ag' which is the global market leader with 'Photo Play' for touch-screen based game terminals; there is the counselling firm 'Nausner & Nausner' specialised in project development and project management; and 'wiki-service.at'.

On an international level VDCW has entered into a partnership with 'Milia' in Cannes in view of the 'Milia 2003'.

Together we can reach and realise a lot.

Also a positioning of VDCW on the European market.

Join us and profit

If you are interested in joining us as a member please send us an e-mail to office@vdcw.de with your name and the name of your company. Please let us know the type of membership you seek:

- (1) Individual Membership (EURO 500.00 annually)
- (2) SME membership (EURO 1,500.00 annually), and
- (3) membership for company group (EURO 2,500.00 annually for companies with more than EURO 250 million annual turnover).

We will send you a filled-in membership form without delay which requires only your signature. As soon as the respective membership fees are credited to our account you will receive your confirmation of membership. Your access to the report archives will be opened and you will be able to use the wide range of VDCW offers.

Alternatively, you may want to download the membership application form at www.vdcw.de and send it to us. The further process will then be the same.

The benefits for VDCW members are:

- **month after month** access to **compact surveys** on the latest trends and best practices
- **interviews** that inform you about key-persons and key-players
- new impulses and inspiration through **pointed comments and interpretations** of format, technical, inhouse and business model trends
- indirect access to top-studies and inhouse reports that are usually not available
- the annual **VDCW-Report** and thus the most comprehensive volume on the present state of the German content economy
- the possibility to become part of an (online- as well as offline-) **community** which allows the generation of business in many ways.
- the use of **Media-TradeMeetings** to establish **sound business contacts**.

This is all possible in a neutral association that is, furthermore, open to your individual wishes:

Should you need a special report or special monitoring – that can be arranged for you. You can use the association as your ‘personal editor’ that takes on such tasks for special membership conditions and delivers at the speed and quality you have come to estimate. For the sponsors of our association such tasks are part of the service! (Sponsors pay an annual fee of at least EURO 7,000.00; for more details please contact the board at vorstand@vdcw.de; you will find postal addresses and names on the last page of the brochure).

Knowledge management as an association service – VDCW offers it.

Imprint:

The responsibility for the content of the brochure lies with VDCW e.V., 'Verband der deutschen Content Wirtschaft' (Association of the German Content Economy; incorporated association in Germany).

VDCW was founded in 2000, seat Munich, Germany.

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- Christian Eigner, 'Texte zur Wirtschaft' (www.tzw.biz), Chair
- Swantje Benussi, 'PbS AG' (www.pbsag.de), Vice-Chair
- Klaus Wagner, 'CSC Ploenzke' (www.cscploenzke.de)
- Jörg Wilcke, 'CONTENS Software' (www.contens.de)
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