



# University of HUDDERSFIELD

## University of Huddersfield Repository

Schofield, Keith

An Ethnographic Exploration of Communities of Practice: Participating to Earn a Bonus

### Original Citation

Schofield, Keith (2010) An Ethnographic Exploration of Communities of Practice: Participating to Earn a Bonus. In: 2010 QMiP Conference, 23 Aug 2010 - 25 Aug 2010, University of Nottingham, UK.

This version is available at <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/21628/>

The University Repository is a digital collection of the research output of the University, available on Open Access. Copyright and Moral Rights for the items on this site are retained by the individual author and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full items free of charge; copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided:

- The authors, title and full bibliographic details is credited in any copy;
- A hyperlink and/or URL is included for the original metadata page; and
- The content is not changed in any way.

For more information, including our policy and submission procedure, please contact the Repository Team at: [E.mailbox@hud.ac.uk](mailto:E.mailbox@hud.ac.uk).

<http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/>

# An Ethnographic Exploration of Communities of Practice: Participating to Earn a Bonus

---

Keith Schofield  
[k.schofield@hud.ac.uk](mailto:k.schofield@hud.ac.uk)



# The Research

- Debt recovery agency – Smart Debt Recovery (SDR)
  - Based in West Yorkshire
  - One of the UK's most successful Debt Recovery Agency's
  - Large portfolio of consumer debt accounts from high street banks and retailers
- Telephone negotiators
  - Debt collectors
- Ethnographic methodology
  - Participant observation
  - Artifact collection
  - Interviews

# What is a Community of Practice?

- Defined by:
  - What it is about
  - How it functions
  - What capability it has produced
- Self organising system
  - Not directly controllable
  - Unpredictable
  - Flexible
- Members identify a value in participating
- Enable the preservation of tacit aspects of knowledge



# Community of Practice at SDR

- Practices:
  - Conversing with debtors
  - Suing debtors
  - Accessing knowledge
  - Contributing to knowledge
  - Providing assistance to others
- Knowledge pool:
  - Negotiation skills
  - Legalese
  - Procedural knowledge

# What does participation look like?

- The act of knowing
- Having access to situated knowledge:
  - Being competent on The Debt System
  - Communicating effectively with debtors
  - Following the correct course of action with debtor accounts
  - Having legalese & SDR-specific vocabulary
- Amending existing practices to suit
  - Not following SDR processes & procedures in order to maximise your own collections
- Contributing to existing practices



# Why Ethnography?

- Research Style encompassing a range of methodological approaches
  - Participant Observation
  - Interviews
  - Artefact & Document Collection
- Enables the co-construction of knowledge about new cultures
- Explores day to day happenings in minute detail
- Valid only within context, time and place

# Any questions?

---

Keith Schofield  
[k.schofield@hud.ac.uk](mailto:k.schofield@hud.ac.uk)