ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the factors limiting organizational information and knowledge management (IKM) through the perceptions of IKM practitioners. The authors propose that a number of organisational factors – which for them are enablers – have the ability to influence IKM project outcomes. It follows that explication of these enablers in an integrated framework could, therefore, be beneficial for practitioners. This chapter itemises 10 candidate enablers identified from a review of the literature and explored in previous research work. The authors discuss the findings of two exploratory surveys, which indicated that all ten enablers were perceived as important to the performance of IKM. However, the amount of management attention required by each enabler appears to be IKM project specific.

INTRODUCTION

Information systems, business professionals and academics have become increasingly fascinated with a seemingly new phenomenon, knowledge management. While some authors believe KM to be merely a reinterpretation of information
An Exploratory Analysis of Information and Knowledge Management Enablers in Business Contexts

BACKGROUND

Integrated Information and Knowledge Processes

The relationship between data, information and knowledge existing at various points along a continuum (leading to wisdom) has been discussed and debated for some time. Although there is some confusion in the use of these terms, most authors agree that knowledge is the ultimate result of the capture of raw facts (data), applying specific context and purpose to it to produce information, and finally applying one’s own terms of reference to produce knowledge within the minds of individuals. Tuomi (1999) challenges this view, and proposes that knowledge comes first and is used to create data. His view is that individual knowledge is represented in the design of databases and, as such, information is derived from the data contained within these repositories.

Some authors find that making a distinction between the three information stages is unwarranted and does not provide any benefit. Others, although they agree that making a distinction is largely unnecessary, create boundaries for their work in a specific area by providing definitions. Still others (including the authors of this paper) believe that effective IM and KM activities rely on a sound understanding of these stages and what they mean. We have, therefore, adopted definitions from Marchand (1998) for this paper:

- Data are context free and can always be shared because the receiver cannot or does not interpret them (e-mail is data to those who do not share the context for its interpretation).
- Information includes all documents and verbal messages that make sense or can be interpreted by organisational members and is never context or value-free. Information always encompasses an act of transfer or sharing among people and involves inter-
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