Chapter 11
The Impact of Supporting Organizational Knowledge Management through a Corporate Portal on Employees and Business Processes

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ABSTRACT

Due to corporate portal playing a major role on organizational knowledge management (KM), this study was conducted to assess the impact of supporting KM processes through a corporate portal on business processes and employees at an academic institution. This paper specifically assesses the impact of knowledge acquisition, knowledge conversion, knowledge application and knowledge protection on business processes’ effectiveness, efficiency and innovation, and employees’ learning, adaptability, and job satisfaction. Findings suggest that the ending KM process, knowledge application, produces the highest impact on business processes and employees. First, supporting knowledge application through a corporate portal was positively associated with business processes’ effectiveness and innovation and employees’ learning, adaptability, and job satisfaction. Second, supporting knowledge conversion was positively associated with business processes’ effectiveness and employees’ learning, whereas supporting knowledge protection was positively associated with business processes’ effectiveness and efficiency but negatively associated with employees’ learning. Finally, supporting knowledge acquisition was positively associated with only business processes’ innovation.

INTRODUCTION

In the knowledge age, knowledge what creates value to individuals and organizations. Governments, organizations and individuals that manage knowledge and harness it are the ones that most likely achieve competitive advantage. Therefore, knowledge management (KM) is essential for organizations; KM improves organizations’ learning and innovative performance (Chang & Lee, 2007; Jiang & Lia, 2008), which consequently enables organizations to differentiate themselves and achieve competitive advantage. KM involves
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several processes starting from knowledge acquisition to knowledge application.

Deploying information technologies (IT) that facilitate knowledge management and exchange are imperative for the development of a knowledge-based economy. Knowledge management systems (KMS) improve the effectiveness and efficiency of organizational KM. KM and KMS result in employees’ and business processes’ benefits such as productivity, learning, innovation, effectiveness, efficiency and many others (Alavi & Lidner, 1999; Becerra-Fernandez, Gonzalez, & Sabherwal, 2004; Davenport & Prusak, 1998).

Several information technologies have been used to support one or several KM processes, including databases, data warehouses, document management systems, and artificial intelligence techniques such as expert systems, neural network and case-based reasoning. One of the new web-based technologies that provide a gateway into integrated internal and external data, information and knowledge sources is portal. Corporate portal is a type of portals that provides a gateway into corporate internal and external information and knowledge resources. Corporate portal plays a major role on supporting organizational knowledge management processes. Several researchers have conceptually illustrated the strengths of using corporate portal to support organizational KM processes (Benbya, Passiante, & Belbaly, 2004). Goh, Chua, Luyt, and Lee (2008) validated a model for the use of corporate portal to support KM processes. The literature, however, lacks the empirical evaluation of the impacts of using corporate portal to support KM processes. Most of the claimed benefits of corporate portals are intuitive; a more rigorous methodology is needed to verify these benefits through real case studies (Dias, 2001). A Review of the portals literature shows that there are very limited studies investigating the impacts and returns of using portals especially for organizational KM. Most previous studies have focused on issues related to the service quality or the Web design quality (Yang, Cai, Zhou, & Zhou, 2005); hence future research should explore and examine the benefits of corporate portals (Daniel & Ward, 2006). There are some studies in the KM literature, such as Chang and Lee (2007), Liu and Tsai (2007), Jiang and Liab (2008), Tiwana (2004) and Norman (2002), that have investigated the impact of KM, but at very limited KM processes and/or benefits scales. Assessing the specific impact of each KM process independently, a crucial aspect of KM has not been addressed adequately. Investigating the activities required for the systematic handling of knowledge resources is necessarily (Heisig, 2009; Holsaple & Joshi, 2002).

Linking KM and business processes, and the support of senior managers are two critical success factors for KM (Heisig, 2009) and for effective deployment of corporate portal (Benbya et al., 2004). Gaining senior managers’ support can be achieved by linking the deployment of information technologies to economic and productivity values (Turban, Leidner, McLean, & Wetherbe, 2008). Likewise, end users' perceived KMS benefits are a significant determinant of their use (Wu & Wang, 2006). Therefore, it is vital for organizations to recognize the impact of supporting organizational KM processes through corporate portals on employees and business processes.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the impact of supporting organizational knowledge management processes, as identified by Gold, Malhotra and Segars (2001), through corporate portal on employees and business processes, as identified by Becerra-Fernandez et al. (2004), in an academic institution. It specifically assesses the specific impact of supporting knowledge acquisition, knowledge conversion, knowledge application and knowledge protection on employees’ learning, adaptability, and job satisfaction and business processes’ effectiveness, efficiency and innovation.

The use of corporate portals in academic institutions is gaining momentum worldwide. They are getting a wide-spread attention in the
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