Chapter 5
Social Media in Knowledge Management

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses in detail about Knowledge Management and how Social Media tools and platforms can be used for Knowledge Management and how they can be integrated into Knowledge Management system. This chapter explains the key aspects of Knowledge Management and Social Media and how Social media can be used to capture both tacit and explicit knowledge and also to share knowledge among the communities of practice both within organizations and also outside the organizations. The chapter provides an overview of using social media to enhance knowledge management and collaboration in a corporate context and gives an insight on how firms get the most value from social media tools like wikis, blogs, microblogging, social tagging and some such similar tools in Knowledge Management. Further research directions based on the review of the literature are proposed.

BACKGROUND

Importance

As novel and evolving technologies, the integration of social tools into knowledge management programs in corporates is gaining utmost importance. Many corporates have been leveraging certain type of social media tools like microblogging and wikis to collect and share knowledge. Social Media has the potential to reinvent the management of knowledge and communication inside and outside the organizational borders. Recent innovations in knowledge management have been associated with emerging concepts such as Web 2.0, enterprise social software, knowledge management 2.0, corporate semantic web, harnessing the collective intelligence, and open innovation. These novel technologies along with the associated emerging concepts are recognized to be critical for creating competitive success in a global
business environment. For example, social media can be exploited as a driver for innovation within and
outside the company’s boundaries. So the importance of the chapter is that how companies may explore
these new ways of managing knowledge, communicating and innovating in order to gain or maintain
their competitive advantage.

Implication to Organizations

With the current popularity of Internet and Internet based social media, these platforms have become one
of the most vibrant and dynamic source of user interaction for large multinational organizations serving
millions of customers. These organizations are utilizing their accounts in social media like Facebook
and Twitter for interacting with customers, publishing their offers and important announcements and
getting user opinions, complaints and feedbacks.

Let us consider the scenario of a large Telecom major. It is serving millions of individual customers
who have various types of queries and complaints to be made. The company encourages its customers
to post their queries or complaints on its Facebook page or Twitter handle and these are resolved by
dedicated executives working online. Such a large company will receive hundreds and thousands of posts
in their page daily. If there is a way to effectively store and retrieve relevant knowledge from these posts
over a period of history, the executive management can make use of this information to make strategic
decisions and plan and implement Business processes.

For example, by exclusively analyzing the geographical trend of the number of network related
complaints generated in the past 2-3 months, the management can identify in which telecom circle the
network of the company need additional investment. Such specific investment will not only give ROI but
also leads to customer satisfaction and improves customer confidence. There are numerous other types
of business critical information and knowledge that can be extracted out of the user data.

INTRODUCTION

The 20th anniversary of the landing of an American on the surface of the Moon occasioned many bittersweet
reflections. Sweet was the celebration of the historic event itself... Bitter, for those same enthusiasts,
was the knowledge that during the twenty intervening years much of the national consensus that
launched this country on its first lunar adventure had evaporated... (Fries, S. 1992).

Historian with NASA, USA, here, Fries expressed a deep regret on the fact that if KM had been introduced
in the management of the Space’s project at NASA, the wealth of knowledge that were accumulated in
those who were involved in the expedition (or project) would not have been lost.

Perhaps this sounds a bit ironical. A common and obvious thought should be that NASA, being the
headquarter of US’s space projects and the origin of many breakthroughs in science and technologies
would have the capability to retain the vast amount of knowledge that was generated behind their suc-
cessful space missions. But, as Fries’ study found out, the reality is that most of these knowledge that
should have been captured and retained were somehow lost when those who were involved retired,
moved on to other opportunities, etc. Having said that, yet another thought should be that, some of that
knowledge must have been documented one way or another in notebooks, records that have been used by
those who were involved. Even if that would be true, trying to uncover, dig out and pull together these