The Impact of Personal and Positional Powers on Knowledge Management Systems

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ABSTRACT

The importance of Knowledge Management System (KMS) to an evolving knowledge economy has been reported in the literature for many years. This importance, in part, is due to KMS’s ability to foster positive organizational value by increase its competitive edge. Organizational leadership has repeatedly appeared in the literature as a reliable determinant of KMS success. While researchers have identified many of the critical success factors that influence that success, the subconstructs of leader power remains elusive. This study was able to empirically demonstrate the predominate construct of Expert and Reward powers were positive, significant, and consistent across all KMS constructs (leadership commitment to KMS, knowledge content quality, knowledge system quality, and knowledge use). Legitimate power demonstrated negative influences on various KMS constructs. Information powers had varying degrees of success while Coercive power was not statistically significant.

KEYWORDS

Knowledge Management, Knowledge Management Systems, Knowledge Quality, Knowledge Use, Leadership, Leadership Social Power, Personal Power, Position Power, System Quality

INTRODUCTION

The importance of Knowledge Management (KM) to an evolving knowledge economy has been reported in the literature for many years (Cardoso, et al., 2012; Davenport, et al., 1998; Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Jennex, 2008). This importance due, in part, to KM’s ability to foster positive organizational value by its ability to increase its competitive edge (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Jennex, 2007; Liebowitz, 2008). Knowledge Management System (KMS), as an integrated set of KMS technology based architecture, has been used to effectively manage organizational knowledge (Alavi, et al., 2006; Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Kayworth & Leidner, 2003). Researchers, studying the constructs of successful KMS implementation (Davenport, et al., 1998; Delone & Mclean, 2003; Jennex, 2008; Kulkarni, et al., 2006), have developed representational models used to empirically demonstrated the constructs that impact KMS. Many of these constructs have shown to be reliable predictor KMS success (Jennex, 2006; Kulkarni, et al., 2006). It is not adequate to merely draw upon these conclusions without doing an in-depth exploration into each of their associated subconstructs in terms of how they are constituted, observed, and measured.

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While prior research empirically demonstrated the constructs of Leadership Social Power (LSP) had a positive and significant impact KMS success (Scovetta, 2012), the relatively new subconstructs of information power has been proposed and remains untested (Raven, 2008). This study extends prior research by examining organizational leadership’s social influences, in terms of Positional and Personal powers, on the critical success factors KMS.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Organizational leadership has been shown to be a reliable determinant of KMS success (Kulkarni, et al., 2006; Scovetta & Ellis, 2014), yet researchers remain perplexed in their understanding of the impact the subconstructs of leadership may have on that success (Lakshman, 2009). Researchers continue to study the dynamics of the social interactions (Van Dijke & Poppe, 2006) suggesting organizational improvements. Leadership Social Power (LSP) has been shown to have an impact on KMS success (Scovetta, 2012). An alternate prospective to this theory may lay in the understanding of how positional and personal powers impact KMS (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2006; Hakan & Jamel, 2006).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Turban, et al. (2007) believed understanding the critical success factors of KMS are important to understanding organizational success. Because these factors should not be judged subjectively, it is imperative to learn what has been reported in the literature. Therefore, this review begins with an understanding of the constructs of KM and KMS. Investigating the constructs of leadership and management will also be undertaken in order to determine their distinctive characteristics. Social power theory, as a means by which followers are influenced (Drucker, 1999; Yukl, 2012), will then be investigated. Finally, the researcher will investigate the constructs of personal and positional powers (Liu & Fang, 2006) to determine how these constructs influence a successful KMS. Doing so will provide researchers with a clearer understanding of how best to promote organizational success.

Knowledge Management

While the objective of KM is to increase organizational value derived from its tangible and intangible assets (Wiig, 1993), a consistent definition of KM remained somewhat elusive. Wiig (1997) noted KM was a systematic and deliberate act focused on the delivery and application of organizational knowledge. Choi (2000) later argued the proliferation of KM interpretations made it more difficult to understand. Alavi & Leidner (2001) concluded KM necessarily included knowledge acquisition, creation, sharing, and application. Turban, et al. (2007) contended that while KM typically focus on identifying appropriate knowledge, a detailed explanation of the referent knowledge was necessary so that it may be shared in a formal manner. Jennex, et al. (2009) surveyed 103 KM researchers, practitioners, and students in order to understand the constructs of KMS success. Findings suggested KM success centered on the ability to capture the right knowledge and deliver it to the right person at the right time.

Knowledge Management Systems

A central theme in the literature is the notion that KM success necessarily include factors of people, processes, and technology (Jennex, 2008). Knowledge Management Systems (KMS) include those technology and processes used to manage knowledge. O’Dell and Hubert (2011) focused on the
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