Developing an Enterprise Wide Knowledge Warehouse: Challenge of Optimal Designs in the Media Industry
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ABSTRACT

It has been common practice among organisations to develop standard operating procedures to gain advantages like standardisation, ensure continuity, and deal with contingency needs. Over time, processual perspectives of activity within organisations have enabled appreciation of such practices through what is commonly referred to as organisational knowledge. Whilst the process of knowledge development can be unique to the context, practical dimensions of development may be considerably different from those suggested by established theory. The present paper firstly reviews different frameworks that have come to be recognised as being effective in categorising organisational knowledge. Secondly, in the light of experiences of both authors in developing an interactive knowledge warehouse, the present paper discusses usefulness of these frameworks. Prevalence of non-disclosure conditions would mean that the mentioned organisation would need to remain anonymous. For the purposes of the present paper, the chosen organisation would be referred to as Kadrosi.

Keywords: enterprise wide knowledge sharing; knowledge categorisation; knowledge frameworks; knowledge modelling; knowledge warehouse; organizational knowledge

INTRODUCTION

Momentous developments in technology, products and services over the last few years have persuaded commercial organizations with a Web presence to reconsider their strategies to be able to survive and compete amidst unpredictable market conditions. With the advent of an ever-increasing variety of business models, facilitated by the Internet, emphasis of product development is gradually moving away towards an environment where service industries are likely to play a more dominating role (Westland & Clark, 1999). Somehow, such a proliferation of ventures has also influenced companies within the small and medium enterprise sector to look more carefully at their service offerings. Competence in bidding for new projects is directly related to sharing of previously
acquired experiences among employees. In 2003, the Chief Executive Officer of Intel went on record by saying that businesses will cease to exist if they do not have a World Wide Web presence. At the same time, a closer look will reveal (Elliot, 2002; Saloner & Spence, 2002; Timmers, 1999) that mere presence is not such a big challenge after all. Through the Web, sustenance of business and expansion of client base are areas that companies need to work on a continual basis. Some of such expansion is quite clearly dependent on assessing emergent opportunities. Others are based on ensuring that existing clients are sufficiently content with levels of available services. On the one hand, knowledge about emergent opportunities may be derived through new information, gleaned through market data. On the other, use of anecdotal client information could ensure fulfilment of expectations in relation to past experiences.

While recent dot-com failures have signalled the downfall of several large companies, many relatively smaller organisations have managed to attract business that would have hitherto gone to their larger rivals. Given such a shift in the direction of business, smaller organisations have tried to maximise their potential through a variety of measures. Storing information in formats that are reusable has been a more traditional means to ensure that organisations reduce redundancy and are able to learn from past experiences (Ruggles, 1998). But this has not necessarily meant that the organization will eventually succeed in maximizing ensuing advantages by reusing data. A transition into knowledge use probably requires both a different kind of experience as well as expectation mindset of involved actors. With the advent of substantial improvements in technology, storage per se has not been a problematic issue, anymore. The rate at which relevance disappears from stored information seems to be an abiding complexity for organisations, keen on maximizing advantages through stored information. In other words, speed with which data becomes obsolete makes the whole process of sustained knowledge use quite complicated (Drucker, 1993; Lam, 2000; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Quinn, 1992; Reich, 1992; Teece, 1998; Zack, 1999). Hence, judgement would need to be exercised when information or data is being considered for storage as to its net worth to the organization, in future.

This article is intended to firstly review types of knowledge as identified in the emergent literature on knowledge management. Secondly, the article considers the adopted processes of converting tacit into explicit knowledge within a media company based in Manchester, UK. Both of these two objectives of the article will be carried out with reference to experiences of both authors in developing an interactive knowledge warehouse for a media company called Kadrosi. The British Government’s department of trade and industry (dti) has funded the development of the mentioned interactive knowledge warehouse project. As a just completed project, conditions of confidentiality require the use of a pseudonym instead of the actual name for the mentioned media company.

Like a data warehouse a knowledge warehouse is also usually the result of an IT infrastructure project. In line with Duncan (1995), a knowledge warehouse may be defined as a set of shared IT resources that can be interrogated by members of an organization to enable present and future business applications. Unlike a data warehouse that tends to support business processes (Ross, Beath, & Goodhue, 1996), a knowledge warehouse is primarily targeted to strategic enhancement of capacity and to a lesser degree some basic needs like development of bids and pitches. Wixom and Watson (2001) in the context of success factors for data warehousing talk about the need for a correspondence between data quality and system quality. At Kadrosi, the IT infrastructure was of a fairly advanced standard in that all users of the knowledge warehouse were IT literate, consequently they did not expect output of “clean data” as can be envisaged after undergoing reconciliation in a traditional data warehouse implementation. Mitra, Brown, and Hackney (2005) in their study in developing knowledge tools for an electronics component manufacturing plant
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