Chapter XVI

Case Study:
Knowledge Sharing, Communities of Practice, and Organizational Change at the World Bank Group
Lesley Shneier, World Bank, USA

Editors’ Notes
Lesley, from the World Bank, prepared an excellent case study. The World Bank or the “Knowledge Bank” Case is an excellent teaching tool for those who wish to exploit the contents of this book for learning purposes. We put some effort and developed some assignments for students (available at the end of the case study).

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Abstract

In October 1996, the president of World Bank Group, Mr. James Wolfensohn, announced that the Bank would become a “knowledge bank” to make development knowledge available and accessible to everyone. What happened after this public statement? How did people respond and react? This chapter provides an overview of the way this vision was put into effect in order to give readers a sense of how to carry out knowledge programs. The chapter focuses on the organizational change implications of knowledge programs and especially the role played by communities of practice (which we call “therapeutic groups” or “TGs” in changing the organizational culture. The journal describes the evolution from building a knowlege management system for collecting development know-how, to realizing the greater importance of connecting the people who know with those who need to know. The challenge facing the Bank is to continue improving the knowledge and learning programs, resolve issues involved in bringing these two sides together, and importantly, work deliberately to embed knowledge sharing behaviors in the business processes.
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