Chapter XX

Cybercentrism: A Teleology of Knowledge Management Dynamics for the Virtually Extended Enterprise

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With the advent of ecommerce and the growth of ‘open’ systems communications networks, managers in industry have been confronted by the assaults of technology, an evolving employee profile and changing sets of leadership and motivational challenges. Corporate management architectures, so firmly built for the age of globalization, are today’s ruins of the global village. The virtually extended enterprise can no longer be managed with the tools of a lost era. A new management model is evolving that supports existing and future knowledge platforms and re-engineers rather than retards knowledge creation and systems. This chapter examines a Cybercentristic management model based upon a series of dynamics taken from past research, including collaborative workplace technologies, knowledge leadership methodologies and knowledge sharer and knowledge sharing networks. These are contrasted against Geocentric values. The results of this discussion are keyed into a Cybercentric teleology, constructed to form the basis for future research into the knowledge management model heir-apparent for the cyber century.

INTRODUCTION

The author examines the evolution of knowledge management dynamics, focusing on the traits of the new knowledge worker. The chapter sets precedents for the creation of a teleological guideline focused on leadership, workplace collaboration and knowledge sharing. These factors are set amid profound change in industry management modeling. As corporate fortunes turn for the better or for worse, the
question is posed: “What combination of organizational change and new technology is required for a breakthrough in knowledge management?” (Earl & Feeny, 2000). In answering this primary research question, the author attempts to capture marketing strategies and management models within the knowledge management environment.

Today’s virtual enterprise has evolved from Geocentrism (Pearlmutter, 1969), and the ruins of the global village ravaged by a burgeoning e-commerce economy with its workstations, server-centric systems integration and corporate Internet/intranet open architecture networking strategies. The traditional, hierarchical management models (see, Green, Tull & Albaum, 1988), still currently operating in today’s virtual enterprise, are self-destructing amid flattened management styles, downsizing, employee distrust, separatism and a lack of company ethos. Lifetime employment is replaced by contracts and consultancies, creating problems within the working matrix of a more youthful and diversified knowledge worker. The discussion centers around a determination of what may be going wrong with this new systems integration, and what new management mindsets and leadership initiatives can be brought to bear as enterprises attempt to extend themselves into the virtual arena. Enterprises are transcending from ‘place,’ or terrestrially grounded orientation, to a ‘space,’ or virtually extended orientation.

A technological discussion includes networking strategies relative to open knowledge systems interconnectivity, spanning the enterprise from the front office to the factory floor. New market entrants, as well as the virtually extended enterprise, may require a revised set of leadership criteria and employee initiatives. A rationale is presented toward the construction of a teleology of trans-enterprise innovation dynamics along a wide if not complete spectrum of knowledge management and knowledge creation criteria. The teleology identifies definite requirements and initiatives for successful knowledge management within the Cybercentric model and contributes to future assessments of change.

ISSUES

In the virtual enterprise working environment, the approach to understanding knowledge workers, how they are managed and in what context of management model, is varied, misunderstood and consequentially, often mismanaged. What is at risk is the business organization’s ability to change and adapt. Social changes are as dramatic as technological and economic processes of transformation (Castells, 1996). In the new era of work, it isn’t ‘workplace,’ its ‘workspace.’ The modern knowledge worker may be technology-intelligent but a nonconformist, membership-dependent (Suzuki, 1990) and difficult to manage. The strategic premises of global-versus-micro marketing or standardization-versus-localization (DeMooij, 1994) have reached a certain redundancy in light of the virtual Internet (Levy, 1997). The global village is in shambles. The burgeoning foundations of ecommercialism have risen in its place. Global organizational management hierarchies have crumbled into flat, lean and efficient entities. Knowledge management and knowledge creation in the virtually extended enterprise (VEE) are taking place in ethnic fiefdoms and centralized power nodes, with traditional working groups evolving into virtual communities (Tapscott, 1996). “Ethnic identity has been at the roots of meaning since
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