Chapter III

Creating Organizational Knowledge

Introduction

Knowledge management (KM) involves processes through which organizations generate value from their intellectual capital and knowledge-based assets. Central to any knowledge management endeavor is the creation of knowledge. Knowledge however, is a multifaceted construct, exhibiting not only many manifestations of the phenomenon of duality such as subjective and objective aspects but also having tacit and explicit forms. It becomes important to keep this in mind when we focus on creating organizational knowledge, or else we may be too limited in our approaches. There are several frameworks that have been developed recently that help us understand what types of knowledge are involved in the process of knowledge creation, and under what organizational structures different types of knowledge are created and applied. These include the people-oriented perspective of knowledge creation as well as the technology-oriented perspective of knowledge creation, which combine the people and technology perspectives and offers the socio-technical perspective of knowledge management. Finally, by taking a process-oriented perspective and incorporating the ideas of Boyd (Barnett, 2004; Boyd, 1976), we have the final and most integrative model for knowledge creation.
The Socio-Technical Perspective for KM

Paramount to knowledge management is the incorporation of the socio-technical perspective of people, processes, and technologies (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Schultze & Leidner, 2002; von Lubitz & Wickramasinghe, 2005; Wickramasinghe, 2005). This stems primarily from the fact that knowledge itself is a multifaceted construct embedded in people’s heads, in processes, and created and generated by means of a wide range of technologies. It is useful to visualise this concept as the KM triad (Figure 1). The significance of the KM triad is to emphasise that knowledge can be created by people and/or technologies and can also be embedded in processes. Thus, to be successful, KM endeavors must always consider these three elements.

Figure 1. The KM triad (Adapted from Wickramasinghe, 2005b)

Figure 2. The primary steps of KM (Adapted from Wickramasinghe, 2005a)
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