The Knowledge Intervention Integration Process: A Process-Oriented View to Enable Global Social Knowledge Management

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ABSTRACT

Process-oriented Knowledge Management (pKM) has been a widely discussed approach for KM initiatives. The approach ties business strategy closely to KM by connecting knowledge activities to key business processes. Social Software has been taken up in many domains as an organizational tool for managing knowledge. Up till now, the impact of being globally distributed (organizations and teams) has not been emphasized within the pKM view, nor has been the Social Software approach. The globally distributed, Social Software-supported approach has clear impacts for designing and implementing KM processes in the pKM view. Within this paper the authors clarify these implications with an integrated model for introducing Social Software tools for Knowledge Management and aligning those with KM as well as business processes. Their approach emphasizes on aligning the Social Software activities with KM coordination processes, knowledge-intensive business processes and knowledge activities. The authors’ work also stresses the need to recognize and deal with KM barriers within the coordination processes in order to define and implement appropriate interventions and activities.

Keywords: Barriers, Globally Distributed Organizations, Interventions, Process-Oriented Knowledge Management (pKM), Social Software

1. INTRODUCTION

The goal of this paper is to investigate and focus on integration of globally distributed and Social Software-supported organizational activities to versatile Knowledge Management (KM) processes. KM initiatives in globally acting organizations are nothing new. The role of knowledge as a crucial strategic resource of a company is highly valued while the challenges to manage knowledge in globally distributed organizational units and teams seem to remain. The benefits of well-found KM are evident while a large portion of KM initiatives in organizations are failing (Wong & Aspinwall, 2004). Social Software has been seen a promising tool to support Knowledge Management activities (Avram, 2006; Zheng, Li, & Zheng, 2010). Setting up KM is a complex effort which must deal with human and technology-oriented aspects such as
as technological infrastructure, organizational culture and processes (Wong & Aspinwall, 2004). Development and implementation of KM strategies for globally acting companies have been present to some extent in literature (Kwan & Balasubramanian, 2003; Desouza & Evaristo, 2003). However, the implications of the globally distributed, Social Software-supported Knowledge Management (GSKM) to design and practice of organizational and KM processes has not been emphasized on. There still is a need to analyze how these GSKM aspects affect those processes. In this paper, we analyze the literature on process-oriented KM and extend the analysis for the Social Software supported global KM to find out indications and evidence how interventions should be designed and integrated to KM processes, focusing on the crucial factors that too often disrupt the KM projects.

Our two research questions for the paper are: “What type of implications Social Software-supported and globally distributed workforces have on the design of KM processes?” and “how to design interventions and approach for a global Social pKM approach?” To examine these issues, a literature review was conducted for the KM and Social Software research. An integrated approach for managing GSKM processes was constructed to serve as a reference model. The integration of this approach to a case study is presented within this paper with an initial model validation. The paper concludes on recommendations for further usage of this knowledge intervention integration process.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Process-oriented KM (pKM) has been seen an approach to bridge the gap between the technology and human-driven KM approaches (Maier & Remus, 2003). PKM can be seen a management function and a strategic tool for maintaining, implementing and selecting strategies for organizational knowledge management (Maier & Remus, 2003). As indicated by Crowston (2000) processes enable organizations to accomplish desired goals. In pKM approach, several types of processes are discussed. Within this paper we address the integration of various KM processes to Social Software-supported KM efforts, focusing especially on interventions which can be defined as organized actions that can be both technical and organizational to put KM in use (Samiotis & Poulymenakou, 2003). We analyze especially the following process types:

- **Knowledge processes**: often described in form of a knowledge life cycle (KLC) ranging from creating, acquiring, identifying, adapting, organizing, distributing and applying knowledge (Ward & Aurum, 2004). These Knowledge processes support knowledge flows between business processes and actors (Maier & Remus, 2001).

- **Knowledge-intensive business processes**: core processes along the value chain of an organization (Maier & Remus, 2003).

As pKM approach tightly is related to organizational processes, the importance of creation of a process theory should be raised. In process theories, the outcomes of interest in organizations are described by performance and sequence of events (Crowston, 2000; Mohr, 1982). Process theories can describe and help to understand complex causal relationships by showing how individual and organizational inputs and outputs are related (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Within this paper, we base on process theories by extend the pKM approach towards understanding globally distributed, Social Software-supported KM.

Fiedler and Welpe (2011) have argued that it is crucial to study how Social Software could be taken up successfully in KM processes. Social Software enables interactive collaboration, managing content and networking with others. It supports the desire of users to be pulled into groups in order to achieve their personal goals (Wever, Mechant, Veevaete, & Hauttekeete, 2007). The role of culture in KM has been emphasized as highly crucial in the
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