Chapter XXII

Knowledge Management and Sharing

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ABSTRACT

The knowledge economy is driven by growth and development of intellectual capital in organizations. Knowledge is defined to be reusable abstractions that can produce new knowledge and modify existing knowledge. Decision making, which includes task solving, is a common feature of the working organization, and it requires good knowledge as input. This chapter provides a review of the knowledge management (KM) concepts and perspectives, with an introduction to the knowledge management Systems (KMS) and its related technologies. The importance of a knowledge base for KM and knowledge sharing (KS) activities is illustrated for Callisma, a consulting firm. Models for knowledge cycle and conversions are covered to provide further theory for KM research. KS, in particular, is an important concern for a knowledge organization as it is believed that effective knowledge sharing or better knowledge utilization can result in increased organizational capabilities as defined by competitiveness, efficiency, competency, and creativity. The inquiring models based on Kant, Hegel, Locke and Liebnitz mental models are presented to provide an analytical framework for knowledge creating and sharing activities.
INTRODUCTION

The Webster dictionary defines knowledge to be a fact or condition of knowing with a considerable degree of familiarity gained through experience. An individual’s knowledge is personal and serendipitous and changes in content, form and applications. Organization knowledge, however, requires an understanding that the collective knowledge of its members ranging from business strategists to customer service representatives is an asset to be deployed for organization success. This collective knowledge is known as the organization intellectual capital. Though not accountable in today’s accounting and financial systems, organizations must be active in investing or recruiting knowledge Possessing individuals to continue to exist (Sveiby, 2001a).

Managing the knowledge assets of individuals in an organization is quite different from managing its fixed assets. This is because knowledge in an organization is both a driver and an outcome of the continuous learning process, which defines its being.

The management of knowledge or better known as knowledge management (KM), is the recent focus of management and organization theorists, business strategists, and top executives. An objective of KM is to gather, categorize, store, and disseminate a firm’s collective knowledge. This can be realized through a system of technologies. KM motivations can be summarized as greater knowledge utilization leading to increased organizational capabilities as defined by competitiveness, efficiency, competency, and creativity.

To capitalize on the knowledge in a work group or in an organization unit, processes and tools must exist for effective knowledge sharing and transfers. A system that rewards individual performance would place an organization on the low end of a hypothetical knowledge sharing scale. Therefore the firm’s human resource function needs to enhance its recognition and reward system to include identifying and rewarding members who contributed and shared their knowledge with others in the organization.

For knowledge-driven organizations such as consulting, technology, and pharmaceutical firms, knowledge exploitation means profitability, and long-term survivability. Knowledge repositories of consulting firms such as Ernst & Young’s Knowledge Center and Accenture’s Knowledge Xchange organize their companies’ knowledge. Successful implementations of knowledge repositories allow for knowledge sharing, which benefits the organization at all levels. At the very least an improved business operating synergy can be realized from sharing of knowledge about customer and supplier relationships.

KM repositories not only serve the individual who needs to look up information about a methodology, but work teams that are engaged in customer relationship management (CRM), enterprise resource management (ERP) and business reengineering initiatives in organizations. Such repositories consist of knowledge clusters of routine operating procedures, policies, processes, best practices, objectives, patents, and business intelligence. Well-built links that connect knowledge clusters or nodes (as defined by path efficiency and accessibility) can bring about business success. Companies such as AskMe, Knowledge Research Institute, and
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