Volume : 2 | Issue : 12 | Dec 2013 • ISSN No 2277 - 8160

Research Paper | Management

Decorous Utilisation of Knowledge and Knowledge Management Systems in Organizations: An Overview

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ABSTRACT

At present, knowledge has become an important capital for many organizations in the international competition. So knowledge management is gradually becoming the core competence and key of sustainable development for organizations. Many enterprises have already used concepts and methods of knowledge management for operation and achieved remarkable results. Based on the analysis of knowledge management system, a framework model for enterprise knowledge management is presented in this paper. For an enterprise, it is necessary to build this knowledge management system to share knowledge resources, provide scientific supports for decision-making, face fiercely competitive market, and so on. Therefore, the construction of knowledge management system plays an important role in enhancing enterprise's core competence. Finally, this paper introduces the directions of its appropriate development in an enterprise. ---www.ieeexplore.ieee.org

KEYWORDS : KNOLEDGE, KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT, UTILIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE

Introduction

Knowledge is a broad and abstract notion that has defined epistemological debate in western philosophy since the classical Greek era. In the past few years, however, there has been a growing interest in treating knowledge as a significant organizational resource. Consistent with the interest in organizational knowledge and knowledge management (KM), IS researchers have begun promoting a class of information systems, referred to as knowledge management systems (KMS). The objective of KMS is to support creation, transfer, and application of knowledge in organizations. Knowledge and knowledge management are complex and multi-faceted concepts. Thus, effective development and implementation of KMS requires a foundation in several rich literatures. To be credible, KMS research and development should preserve and build upon the significant literature that exists in different but related fields. This paper provides a review and interpretation of knowledge management literatures in different fields with an eye toward identifying the important areas for research. We present a detailed process view of organizational knowledge management with a focus on the potential role of information technology in this process. Drawing upon the literature review and analysis of knowledge management processes, we discuss several important research issues surrounding the knowledge management processes and the role of IT in support of these processes. ---- aisel.aisnet.org

Knowledge is a broad and abstract notion that has defined epistemological debate in western philosophy since the classical Greek era. In the past few years, however, there as been a raging interest in treating knowledge as a significant organizational resource. The heightened interest in organizational knowledge and knowledge management stems from the transition into the knowledge economy, where knowledge is viewed as the principle source of value creation and sustainable competitive advantage. ---- www.knowledge.emory.edu

some of the specific business factors which necessitates the need of Knowledge Management viz. competitive marketplaces, higher rate of innovation, downsizing, trends for employees to retire earlier and for increasing mobility and need to manage increasing complexity as small operating companies are trans-national sourcing operations. In addition to these, most of the wok today is information based, Inter-industry competition as well as offerings (whether of product or services) is mostly knowledge based now. In nut shell, we can formulate that knowledge and information have become the medium in which business problems occur.

For the successful management of knowledge, knowledge needs to be measured. Without valid measurement, it is hard to manage it effectively. However an intangible characteristic of knowledge makes the knowledge measurement a very challenging task. In considering a Knowledge Management (KM) initiative, a corporation's senior management has to answer several basic questions:

- Will Knowledge Management save the corporation money?
- Will it generate extra revenue?
- If so, how long will it take, and what resources will have to be invested?
- What's the downside of a failed initiative?

Knowledge Management may be viewed in terms of:

- People – how do you increase the ability of an individual in the organisation to influence others with their knowledge
- Processes – Its approach varies from organization to organization. There is no limit on the number of processes
- Technology – It needs to be chosen only after all the requirements of a knowledge management initiative have been established.
- Culture –The biggest enabler of successful knowledge-driven organizations is the establishment of a knowledge-focused culture
- Structure – the business processes and organisational structures that facilitate knowledge sharing
- Technology – a crucial enabler rather than the solution.

The Value of Knowledge Management

Some benefits of KM correlate directly to bottom-line savings, while others are more difficult to quantify. In today's information-driven economy, companies uncover the most opportunities — and ultimately derive the most value — from intellectual rather than physical assets. To get the most value from a company's intellectual assets, KM practitioners maintain that knowledge must be shared and serve as the foundation for collaboration. Yet better collaboration is not an end in itself; without an overarching business context, KM is meaningless at best and harmful at worst. Consequently, an effective KM program should help a company do one or more of the following:

- Foster innovation by encouraging the free flow of ideas
- Improve decision making
- Improve customer service by streamlining response time
- Boost revenues by getting products and services to market faster
- Enhance employee retention rates by recognizing the value of employees' knowledge and rewarding them for it
- Streamline operations and reduce costs by eliminating redundant or unnecessary processes
- Builds learning organizations by making learning routine
- Stimulates cultural change and innovation. ---- www.unc.edu

PROCESS OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

A knowledge management process compiles a variety of innovative

ideas, processes and the techniques which are diverse and having different applications for different purposes. The technological evolution is the resultant of the changed mindset of the people. Also knowledge itself further changes the attitudes of people which trigger a change process in turn. It involves the following steps mainly:

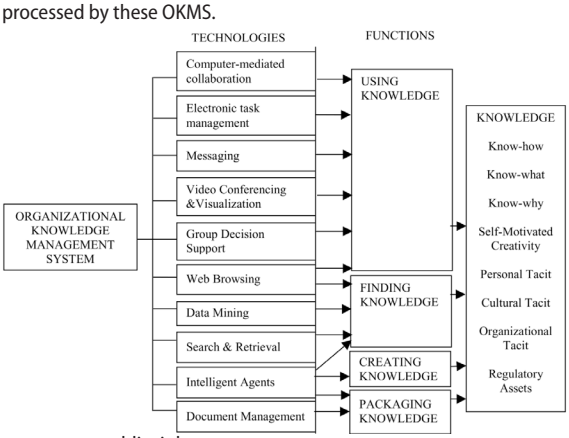
a). Appointment of the knowledge leader.
b). Companies set knowledge centres for the two way flow of the useful information.
c). Formation of the intellectual capital teams to identify and audit the intangible assets.
d). Focus is imparted upon the development of knowledge based best practices, expert, directives, market intelligence, etc.
e). Companies develop and master the collaborative technologies such as the intranets, web networks, etc. for exchange of the information and their respective proceedings.
f). Capturing and reusing the structured knowledge.
g). Capturing and sharing the experiences of the usage of the knowledge.
h). Identifying the sources and networks of experience.

i). Structuring and mapping Knowledge needed to enhance performance.

Both the internal as well the external sources are a must to be considered for development of this knowledge bank. The organisation must systematically study the economic value of its assets in terms of utility and applicability of them in social development and commercialization. If the organisation is unable to apply its knowledge bases it should pass this to external agencies and other organisations which may require it.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

With the advent of knowledge management, intellectual capital is gaining increasing recognition as the only true strategic asset. This has led to a proliferation of organizational knowledge management systems (OKMS), for managing intellectual capital. This article addresses the question: "Are OKMS strategic assets within the context of the resource-based view?" Two views of OKMS emerge – the technical and the socio-technical view. An analysis of OKMS from each perspective is presented and their resultant implications on the competitive position of the firm explained. The findings indicate that, for a firm to reap long-term strategic benefit from OKMS, it should adapt the broader socio-technical view when developing, implementing and managing its OKMS. This suggests that firms need to consider not only the technology but also the organizational infrastructure, the organizational culture and the people who form the OKMS, and the knowledge that is to be processed by these OKMS.



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All organizations need and use knowledge. Whether they are private or public, big or small, services, manufacturing or resources, every enterprise takes the knowledge embedded in its employees and its processes, and attempts to create value for itself and society. The degree of knowledge use varies from organization to organization but effective knowledge management, even for enterprises that seem to use little knowledge, has become an important management mandate. Knowledge management systems (KMS) are seen as the means to aid organizations in creating, sharing and using knowledge. In the past three years, firms have invested millions of dollars in these types of systems in order to create competitive value. The sustainable advantage that can be achieved by the effective and efficient generation, distribution and application of knowledge within an organization is not being lost on today's modern managers. Although still a young area, an increasing number of studies are being published examining issues related to the development, use and management of knowledge management systems.

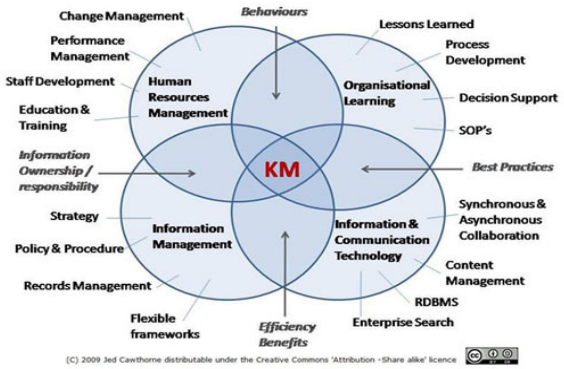
Knowledge and Knowledge management are concepts, which are debated extensively by managers, analyst and academicians. Managers ask for more information to support decisions. This led to the use of IT (Information Technology) to build transaction support system, management information systems and data warehouses resulting in too much information, which has neither helped the managers nor provided any value to the organizations. Data leads to information, but what organizations were really looking for was knowledge.

When we refer to knowledge, most of us mainly tend to think of codified and documented knowledge like patents, databases, manuals, white papers etc. With this "explicit knowledge" is important, what is even more important and value adding from the perspective of competitive advantage is the "tacit knowledge" which is embedded in the minds of the people. The tacit knowledge is intuitive, contextual, linked to experience, past memories and difficult to codify, document and communicate. It is estimated that this tacit knowledge constitutes between 70 and 80% of all knowledge in an organization and is difficult to identify, quantify, and convert into real value, unless a structured approach is adopted to manage knowledge. It is the practice of harnessing and exploiting intellectual capital to gain competitive advantage and customer commitment through efficiency, innovation and faster and more effective decision-making. Most often, generating value from such assets involves sharing them among employees, departments and even with other companies in an effort to devise best practices. It is important to note that the definition says nothing about technology, while KM is often facilitated by IT; technology by itself is not KM. Knowledge management is a cross-disciplinary domain. Library professionals are already ushered into knowledge management activities and practices and the paradigm shift that is taking place whereby libraries are getting transformed into knowledge management centres. KM will inject new blood into the library culture. The main contents include: mutual trust, Open exchange, studying, sharing and developing knowledge operations mechanism of libraries, enjoying the KM process. Customer's delighters, staff's quality and enrichment as well as an all-round improvement of library starting from housekeeping activities to knowledge marketing will become important objectives of KM in Business and Management Libraries.

Tools to Support Knowledge Management Systems

- Intranets
- Information Retrieval Programs
- Database Management Systems
- Document Management Software
- Groupware
- Intelligent Agents
- Knowledge Based or Expert Systems

Knowledge management tools are the basic technological building blocks of any specific knowledge management system. Individual tools can be combined or integrated to form a specific knowledge management system that performs particular functions such as knowledge storage and retrieval. Another specific KMS may be comprised of tools to generate ideas and share those ideas among a work group. Knowledge management generators are defined as those technologies that are self contained that can be used to generate or build a variety of specific KMS. These technologies typically consist of a number of tools such as document management, intelligent agents, and groupware that can be customized to the knowledge management application required. Lotus Notes is an example of a knowledge management generator. It contains a number of knowledge management features than can be combined in various ways to make different KMS.



----www.prescientdigital.com

Problems and Failure Factors

Building upon all this, and incorporating previously discussed elements, failure factors of knowledge management systems are as follows:

- Inadequate support: managerial and technical, during both implementation and use.
- Expecting that the technology is a KM solution in itself.
- Failure to understand exactly what the firm needs (whether technologically or otherwise).
- Not understanding the specific function and limitation of each individual system.
- Lack of organizational acceptance, and assuming that if you build it, they will come – lack of appropriate organizational culture.
- Inadequate quality measures (e.g. lack of content management).
- Lack of organizational/departmental/etc fit - does it make working in the organization. Easier? Is a system appropriate in one area of the firm but not another? Does it actually disrupt existing processes?
- Lack of understanding of knowledge dynamics and the inherent difficulty in transferring tacit knowledge with IT based systems (see segment on tacit knowledge under knowledge sharing).
- Lack of a separate budget.

----www.knowledge-management-tools.net

Findings & Conclusion

In summary, knowledge management systems consist of people, knowledge, and knowledge tools or technologies. Knowledge management means creating more appropriate technologies, more accurate and timely information base and more competent and confident human resources. Knowledge management is reflected in the capability of the organisation in giving organisation a distinct image in the industry as a hub of information and new innovations. Thus knowledge managements is the assimilation, formatted retention, and reuse of the foundation to impart an understanding of how all these subparts fit together and convey a meaningful frame to some other person. The basic but open mantras for the company to become an effective knowledge management company are commitment, establishment of clear values, vision, knowledge architecture, creating a learning culture, systematic knowledge processes and appropriate legal framework etc. And it's the perfect time for Indian corporate for embracing this new mantra for automating processes using document management and workflow technologies & to improve organizational performance by improving information sharing and collaboration, also to improve access to information and tools via your intranet. And on the other hand to stop valuable knowledge walking out of your front door. Therefore it is now a good time to be examining whether your organizational information management environment is doing all it can to help rather than hinder your workforce, to enable your management of extremely valuable information assets and knowledge.

There are numerous invaluable benefits of adopting a knowledge management strategy and thus have great implications both in short as well as in long run. The correct and timely use of knowledge management techniques can make a company more agile and thus enable it to respond to changes in the industry. The sharing of knowledge amongst the knowledge workers not only increases the performances but also reduces the amount of training required for new employees. The implantation of knowledge assets in the company's information technology infrastructure maximises return on investment, both in equipment and personnel. All of these factors greatly contribute to make the businesses more competitive and profitable. As a result, managing knowledge represents the primary opportunity for achieving substantial savings, significant improvements in human performance, and competitive advantage.

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