



Identifying Key Aspects of Knowledge Management for Hospitality Industry

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ABSTRACT

In 21st century competition has also touched the hospitality industry across the globe and so in India. With change in the expectations and demands of customer base, hospitality industry also requires sound knowledge in accordance with the changes in customer preferences. Hospitality industry including hotels requires sufficient knowledge about the internal functioning and knowledge of key process for achieving high level of competency to combat ever increasing global competition in wake of rapid and dynamic change in the environment. Therefore, knowledge management in hospitality industry is required not only for value creation but also for reducing risk of failure and providing satisfactory customer experience. This paper tries to explore the key aspects for adopting knowledge management practices successfully in the hospitality industry.

KEYWORDS : Knowledge Management; Hospitality Industry; Services

Knowledge Management is important for the organisations in lieu of availing competitive advantage in all the Industries whether product based or services based. The organisations need to develop the capabilities for capturing, restoring, reusing, regenerating of knowledge which is critical to their growth. Through sustainable and sound knowledge management practices, organization will be able to convert right knowledge for right action and will help in achieving the desired results of increased value in the organization.

It is therefore rational to infer about the knowledge management from the definitions quoted below;

Dalkir Kimiz (2005) defines Knowledge Management as "the deliberate and systematic coordination of an organization's people, technology, processes, and organizational structure in order to add value through reuse and innovation. This is achieved through the promotion of creating, sharing, and applying knowledge as well as through the feeding of valuable lessons learned and best practices into corporate memory in order to foster continued organizational learning."

According to West Midland Regional Observatory, UK "Knowledge management will deliver outstanding collaboration and partnership working. It will ensure the region maximizes the value of its information and knowledge assets and it will help its citizens to use their creativity and skills better, leading to improved effectiveness and greater innovation".

Knowledge Management is the systematic, explicit, and deliberate building, renewal, and application of knowledge to maximize an enterprise's knowledge-related effectiveness and tries to maximize returns from its knowledge and intellectual capital assets. The field covers deliberate and systematic analysis, synthesis, assessment, and implementation of knowledge-related changes to attain a set of objectives. It also tries to monitor that KM activities are appropriately carried out for meeting organizational objectives and goals.

Bureau of Indian Standards provides an exhaustive definition of Knowledge Management. "Knowledge is commonly understood as capacity for effective action, which includes information useful for effective action. Knowledge Management is enabling and enhancing capabilities to perform such processes, including sourcing and deployment of the right knowledge assets, in order to achieve the desired results. Knowledge assets include embodied knowledge in people; embedded knowledge in technology, systems and processes; embedded knowledge in work relationships, teams and networks; and actionable information and insights. The ultimate aim of knowledge management is to create value."

It is advent from the various definitions that knowledge management is systematic process of identifying and managing knowledge in the organizations and converting them into sound knowledge assets with an aim to conquer new opportunities. Thus, it is a proactive approach of managing knowledge capital with an aim of value creation in an enterprise. Therefore, Knowledge Management may be defined as a systematic approach of creating, sharing and managing knowledge, both *explicit* and *tacit*, for value creation in an enterprise. It is a continuous process which involves acquiring, creating, refining, transferring, sharing and utilizing knowledge for overall and sustainable development. Thus, Knowledge Management helps an organization to enhance its overall performance by chalking right decisions at right time by the right individual using right information.

Knowledge Management for Hospitality Industry

In 21st century competition has also touched the hospitality industry across the globe and so in India. With change in the expectations and demands of customer base, hospitality industry also requires sound knowledge in accordance with the changes in customer preferences. Hospitality Industry including hotels requires sufficient knowledge about the internal functioning and knowledge of key process for achieving high level of competency to combat ever increasing global competition in wake of rapid and dynamic change in the environment. Therefore, knowledge management in hospitality industry is required not only for value creation but also for reducing risk of failure and providing satisfactory customer experience. Knowledge Management is essentially required in Hospitality Industry which is loaded with continuous flow of information and which is resulted due to interactions within the employees and also with other stakeholders like *Members, guests, newspapers, event organizers, regional tourist office, business organization, government etc.*

Human Resources are very important in hospitality industry and their performance influences hotels and tourism organizations. Therefore, these human resources need to be trained as intellectual assets that foster Knowledge Management Culture and applications in the hospitality Industry. This industry is highly service oriented industry with high human component therefore it is important to adopt KM approach for retaining employees and making customer satisfied with the services offered. As pointed by Bouncken in year 2002, Hospitality and Tourism employees have direct contact with customers. It is especially important for employees to have the knowledge about customer preferences and how to provide the best service

Hence, Knowledge Management and Hospitality needs to be knitted firmly as it will help Organisations/Institutions/Hotels to

adapt, survive, prosper and remain competitive across the globe. Therefore, hotels, tourism organizations and other players in the hospitality industry need to withhold varied service and customer experiences and thus KM helps in quality improvement which in turn leads to increased competitiveness and long term sustainability.

Key Aspects of Knowledge Management in Hospitality Industry

The following Eleven Cs are identified as the key aspects for implementing knowledge management in hospitality industry. These Cs may help in successfully leveraging knowledge in everyday operations in the industry which is services oriented. These are as follows;



1. Customer is the key in the hospitality industry; therefore it is important to transform customer data into knowledge which is required for gaining customer loyalty and satisfaction. Since there are ever-increasing expectations in customer service and in hospitality industry there are lot many customer service delivery channels therefore frontline staff and backhand staff are increasingly challenged for easy access and response to authentic and satisfactory answers and information. Knowledge Management helps in building Customer Relationship Management envisioned with gaining loyalty of customers.

2. Creation of knowledge is in fact challenging in the hospitality industry as there are multiple layers of knowledge. These layers of information is due to Accounting Data, Cases, lessons learned, Policy, Manuals, Standards, training material, Guest Service Data Base (preferences / likings), Guest (Sales) Data Base and the likes. Therefore, it is imperative to continuous create knowledge through research and development for assisting innovation in customer satisfaction and delight using these multiple layers of information.

3. Contents are yet another aspect of knowledge management in the hospitality industry. Contents need to be developed and analyzed for gaining better insight about value creation in the hospitality industry. These contents are then transformed into information which is provided to the stakeholders as and when desired.

4. Competitiveness can be achieved by adopting knowledge management practices. To have competitive edge it is necessary to create, distribute and utilize knowledge in the hospitality industry particularly in hotels, event planning, theme parks, transportation and additional fields of the tourism industry which are quite exposed to competition. Therefore, management of resources by adopting knowledge management practices helps organizations in achieving sustainable competitive advantage in the long term.

5. Capabilities to assist hotels, tourism institutions and other organizations in hospitality industry can be strengthen through knowledge management strategies. Thus through KM practices such organizations can act effectively and efficiently which will help in long term viability and superior performance and on the basis of enhanced capabilities better performance, innovation, and increased customer value can be achieved.

6. Communication of knowledge so created is another essential aspect of knowledge management in the hospitality industry. Knowledge Management is not only retrieving, creating and storing information but actually there is much more to it. KM is transferring of knowledge to decision makers at the right time and providing

easy access of the knowledge to the different stakeholders. Information and Communication Technology has provided the way forward for building an empowered knowledge system especially in hospitality industry which can provide a platform for knowledge creation and sharing.

7. Collaboration is yet another aspect in the knowledge management which helps in developing appropriate knowledge management systems in the organizations. Since hospitality industry is categorized with various units like front-desk, customer service, finances, marketing, promotions, accounting etc. and therefore it is essential to align with each other for better understanding of customer preferences and for achieving the common goals through proper knowledge creation and management.

8. Communities of Practice are paramount for promoting knowledge management in the hospitality industry which is abounded by professionals and specialized staff. These communities shall help in collectively pooling and managing knowledge thus helping in gaining knowledge from different areas and assist in re-channelizing knowledge to the Community of Practice.

9. Core Competence Areas can be identified using knowledge management practices. Competencies and core capabilities can be explored using embedded knowledge and intellectual capital which will help in capitalizing opportunities in future.

10. Culture is again an important parameter for promoting knowledge management. Sound Knowledge Management Culture is required for promoting knowledge sharing and development in the industry. Since this industry is indeed multicultural therefore it required to manage knowledge and information inflows appropriately.

11. Channelization of knowledge to the different stakeholders from the knowledge so pooled and created is again important to the hospitality industry as this industry is characterized by stakeholders like government, associations, ministry, including general public. Thus channelization of such knowledge when required is yet another aspect which needs to be strengthened appropriately.

Conclusion

Since knowledge is important for efficient service provisions, better quality norms, low operations cost, easy acceptability of fast changing technologies and innovative structure that helps hotels and other organizations for keeping strong foothold in the market. Knowledge management system helps organizations including hotels in promoting coordination and helps them in identifying their own niche areas for long term sustainability. Since there is lot of channels between employees and top authorities in hospitality industry, therefore it is important to continuous provide trainings to all the members in the hierarchy for actual transferring and applying knowledge in the organizations. Further, Information and Communication Technologies may also help in assisting Knowledge Management Systems in the enterprise and hence, shall facilitate knowledge management practices for enhancing dynamic capabilities of the organizations.

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