

International Journal of Advance Research in Computer Science and Management Studies

Research Paper

Available online at: www.ijarcsms.com

Knowledge Management

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Abstract: Knowledge management has emerged as an important field for practice and research in information systems. This field is building on theoretical foundations from information economics, strategic management, organizational culture, organizational behavior, organizational structure, artificial intelligence, quality management, and organizational performance measurement. These theories are being used as foundations for new concepts that provide a rationale for managing knowledge, define the process of managing knowledge, and enable us to evaluate the results of this process. Based on articles published between 1995 and 2005, new concepts are emerging, including knowledge economy, knowledge alliance, knowledge culture, knowledge organization, knowledge infrastructure, and knowledge equity. An analysis of the theoretical foundations of knowledge management reveals a healthy arena with a strong foundation and clear directions for future work.

Keyword: Knowledge Management, Organizational Learning, Knowledge Infrastructure, Organizational Memory, Intellectual Capital, Information Systems Strategy.

I. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge Management (KM) refers to a range of practices and techniques used by organizations to identify, represent and distribute knowledge, know-how, expertise, intellectual capital and other forms of knowledge for leverage, reuse and transfer of knowledge and learning across the organization. It suffices crucial issues on organizational adaptation, survival and competence threatened by unpredictable environmental change.

Generally, it represents the organizational processes that aim synchronous coalition of data and information processing capacity of information technologies, and the ingenious capacity of human beings.

In simpler terms, knowledge management strives to make the most out of the knowledge that is available to an organization, generating understanding, incrementing awareness and knowledge in the process.

SOME WELL KNOWN KM DEFINITIONS

"If only HP knew what it knows it would make three times more profit tomorrow"

Lew Platt, ex CEO Hewlett Packard

"Knowledge Management is the discipline of enabling individuals, teams and entire organizations to collectively and systematically create, share and apply knowledge, to better achieve their objectives"

Ron Young, CEO/CKO Knowledge Associates International

"Most activities or tasks are not one-time events. Whether it's drilling a well or conducting a transaction at a service station, we do the same things repeatedly. Our philosophy is fairly simple: every time we do something again, we should do it better than the last time".

Sir John Steely Browne, BP, Harvard Business Review, 1997.

"The capabilities by which communities within an organization capture the knowledge that is critical to them, constantly improve it and make it available in the most effective manner to those who need it, so that they can exploit it creatively to add value as a normal part of their work"

GlaxoSmithKline

"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".

West Midlands Regional Observatory, UK

"We recognize that our most important asset is people and their knowledge. We understand Knowledge Management (KM) as the cultivation of an environment within which people are willing to share, learn and collaborate together leading to improvement".

Care Services Improvement Partnership (CSIP)

"Knowledge Management ('KM') comprises a range of practices used by organizations to identify, create, represent, and distribute knowledge. It has been an established discipline since 1995 with a body of university courses and both professional and academic journals dedicated to it. Many large companies have resources dedicated to Knowledge Management, often as a part of 'Information Technology' or 'Human Resource Management' departments. Knowledge Management is a multi-billion dollar worldwide market.

Knowledge Management programs are typically tied to organizational objectives such as improved performance, competitive advantage innovation, lessons learnt transfer (for example between projects) and the general development of collaborative practices. Knowledge Management is frequently linked to the idea of the learning organization although neither practice encompasses the other. Knowledge Management may be distinguished from Organizational Learning by a greater focus on specific knowledge assets and the development and cultivation of the channels through which knowledge flows"

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Gold, A. H., A. Malhotra, et al. (2001). "Knowledge management: An organizational capabilities perspective." Journal of Management Information Systems **18**(1): 185-214.

A hallmark of the new economy is the ability of organizations to realize economic value from their collection of knowledge assets as well as their assets of information, production distribution, and affiliation. Despite the competitive necessity of becoming a knowledge-based organization, senior managers have found it difficult to transform their firms through programs of knowledge management. This is particularly true if their organizations have long histories of process and a tradition of business success. This research examines the issue of effective knowledge management from the perspective of organizational capabilities. This perspective suggests that a knowledge infrastructure consisting of technology, structure, and culture along with knowledge process architecture of acquisition, conversion, application, and protection are essential organizational capabilities or "preconditions" for effective knowledge management. Through analysis of surveys collected from over 300 senior executives, this research empirically models and uncovers key aspects of these dimensions. The results provide a basis for understanding the competitive predisposition of a firm as it enters a program of knowledge management.

McAdam, R. and S. McCreedy (1999). "The process of Knowledge Management within Organizations: a Critical Assessment of both Theory and Practice." Knowledge and Process Management **6**(2): 101-112.

This article critically assesses the current understanding of the theory and practice of the emergent field of Knowledge Management (KM), so that it can be more beneficially applied to organizations and those who work in them. More specifically the article discusses the emergent nature of KM, presents a short critical assessment of the literature on KM models, gives the results of primary research to assess the current state of KM theory and practice in organizations, and develops a model based on the research to illustrate the knowledge management process within organizations.

Miles, G., R. E. Miles, et al. (1998). "Some conceptual and research barriers to the utilization of knowledge." *California Management Review (Special Issue on Knowledge and the Firm)* 40(3): 281-289.

Whether in high-tech, service, or traditional industries, the role of knowledge as a primary driver of development is being increasingly recognized. It is not clear, however, whether managerial approaches based on mindsets rooted in past practice are appropriate for, or capable of, fully realizing the potential value of knowledge within the firm and/or industry. At least three related issues stand in the way of full knowledge utilization: conceptualization and measurement of knowledge capital as a primary organizational asset, the integration of knowledge capital into the strategic management process, and the development of knowledge. While leading-edge firms are already wrestling with these issues, advances in theory and research are needed to help develop appropriate responses and provide frameworks that will help spread these new approaches. In doing so, advances may also be made that allow for the recognition of the central role of collaboration in the knowledge process.

III. OBJECTIVE

Knowledge management involves a strategic commitment to improving the organization's effectiveness, as well as to improving its opportunity enhancement. The goal of knowledge management as a process is to improve the organization's ability to execute its core processes more efficiently. Davenport et al. (1998) describes four broad objectives of knowledge management systems in practice:

- Create knowledge repository
- Improve knowledge assets
- Enhance the knowledge environment
- Manage knowledge as an asset

The key to knowledge management is capturing intellectual assets for the tangible benefits for the organization. As such, imperatives of knowledge management are to:

1. Transform knowledge to add value to the processes and operations of the business leverage knowledge strategic to business to accelerate growth and innovation
2. Use knowledge to provide a competitive advantage for the business.

The aim of knowledge management is to continuously improve an organization's performance through the improvement and sharing of organizational knowledge throughout the organization (i.e., the aim is to ensure the organization has the right knowledge at the right time and place).

Knowledge management is the set of proactive activities to support an organization in creating, assimilating, disseminating, and applying its knowledge. Knowledge management is a continuous process to understand the organization's knowledge needs, the location of the knowledge, and how to improve the knowledge.

IV. DIMENSION OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

It is important to remember that knowledge management is not about managing knowledge for knowledge's sake; the overall objective is to create value and to leverage, improve, and refine the firm's competences and knowledge assets to meet organizational goals and targets. Implementing knowledge management thus has several dimensions including:

- **Organizational:** The right processes, environments, culture, and systems.
- **Managerial:** The right leadership, strategy, etc.
- **Technological:** The right systems, tools, and technologies - properly implemented
- **Political:** The support to implement and sustain initiatives that involve virtually all organizational functions; that may be costly to implement (both from the perspective of time and money); and which often do not have a directly visible return on investment.

V. COMPONENTS OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

What are the components of a knowledge management framework? At the most basic level, KM consists of the following steps:

- Identification of needs
- Identification of knowledge resources
- Acquisition, creation, or elimination of knowledge related resources/processes/environments
- Retrieval, application and sharing of knowledge
- Storage of knowledge

VI. TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE FROM KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT POINT

Skills: These are personalized skills possessed by individuals. Many times experts explicit their skills so that their knowledge can be used more effectively by users.

Cases: Cases are stories of real time events that give practical knowledge to the users. Thus we learn how the world works in real life. This is the best way to learn from previous mistakes and achieve from previous successes.

Processes: are supposed to be high-level skills that are systematized to provide most abstract form of knowledge. Out of many skills required for a work, few are worked out into processes to make them standards.

VII. APPROACH TO KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The Division's approach to knowledge management is characterized by:

- Attention to all aspects of the knowledge lifecycle, including but not limited to knowledge creation, sharing, capture, organization, management, reuse, and preservation.
- Innovative means to link and enable people to directly exchange ideas and learning to increase the relevant knowledge available for use in their organizations.
- Concern for all aspects of an organization, including culture, policy, process, management and technology, which affect its ability to create and transfer knowledge.

- Focus on techniques and tools for collaboration, for organizing knowledge repositories (e.g. taxonomies, ontologies), for demonstrating the economic value of KM activities, for promoting organizational learning techniques and applications; and for increasing understanding of knowledge economics.
- An interest in all dimensions of knowledge as acquired and developed by members to be used for their organizations, including analysis and synthesis of this knowledge into tools for learning, using, developing and sharing through a variety of means including but not limited to documenting knowledge for later use.
- Fostering networking and collaborating with all parts of the organization, including but not limited to information technology, human resources, research & development, document management and management, to facilitate a continuous learning environment and reduce knowledge hoarding.

VIII. FUTURE OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Nowadays, Knowledge-Management is highly concentrated in connecting **people to documents**. Tools like Microsoft SharePoint, and newcomers such as, Huddle and Box, all assist your company with managing your document content and aid you to reach them when needed.

However, is it enough, according to the social revolution of 2012, which we are witnessing? How many times have you found yourself looking at the document, but still unsure of how to use it for occupational purposes?

Knowledge Management in 2012 should be about connecting ‘people to people’ – after all, the knowledge lays within the people.

IX. CONCLUSION

Knowledge management as a concept is very attractive and too many organizations are trendy and nice to be associated with. For many management consultants, it is a business opportunity that should not be missed. But while there is nothing wrong with making business sense out of knowledge management, there is a need to go beyond the search and replace practice of the word information to the word knowledge. Information management is a subset of knowledge management and technology should be seen as an enabler and part of infrastructure. For the majority of those interested in knowledge management, the key drivers are organizational efficiency, maximizing organization’s potential, competitive advantage, building a learning organization and managing intellectual capital. However, implementing knowledge management is also not that easy. Organizations’ wanting to implement knowledge management have to grapple with issues such as strategy, technology, organizational culture and knowledge organization. But despite all these issues, companies worldwide in both the private and public sector have shown keen interest in knowledge management, judging from the amount of money expected to be committed for knowledge management in the next few years.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my gratitude to the many people who saw me through this paper, to all those who provided support, talked things over, read, wrote, offered comments, allowed me to quote their remarks and assisted in the editing, proof reading and design.

I would like to thank my Father Dr. S .L. Gupta, for earning an honest living for me and for supporting and encouraging me to believe in myself, My Mother Smt. P. L. Gupta, A strong and gentle soul who taught me to trust in god, believe in hard work and that so much can be done with little and My Brother Er. Akhil Agrawal & my Sisters Smt. Prabha Agrawal & Smt. Rekha Agrawal, for being my guardian during my educational career.

I want to extend my gratitude towards my Guide Prof. Shakoor Khan my Wife Mrs. Meena Agrawal, Friends, Colleagues, Well wishers, Teachers, my Children Aarush & Akarsh, my niece Ashima, my nephew Abhishekh and my Brother in laws who supported and encouraged me in spite of all the time it took me away from them.

Last and not least, I beg forgiveness of all those who have been with me over the course of the years and whose names I have failed to mention.

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