



## Human Resource Management

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### A responsibility of knowledge management in HRM

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#### ABSTRACT

Man's relentless quest for knowledge and its documentation have had profound impact on development of human race at every stage. The fast change in the quality of our lives over the centuries has been because of the knowledge flow in the information technology age of today. On a global basis, organizations are recognizing the importance of knowledge as a means to gain or sustain competitive advantage. Researchers have concluded that the only thing that is sustainable, for successful businesses, in the New Millennium – is what it knows, how it uses what it knows, and how fast it can know something new. In the past, the dilemma was finding enough information, but now the problem has shifted to identifying and managing the nuggets of mission-critical knowledge amongst the mountains of meaningless noise. Many organizations are primarily knowledge-focused. They obtain data and information and produce either a product or service. In this production process they use their own, and others, knowledge and information. Much of the knowledge in an enterprise is grounded in the minds of employees. The awareness of the value of knowledge to a business, coupled with its management, acts as an integrator that improves cross-functional communication and cooperation. Shared knowledge not only makes for a more effective, efficient and agile organization, but creates a common perspective and culture that produces a natural consistency of successful decisions and actions.

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#### Introduction

##### Why Knowledge Management?

Knowledge management is far reaching. Maybe you are considering developing your own personal knowledge management competencies, to become a more effective player in the global knowledge economy, or becoming a more competitive knowledge leader and knowledge driven organization. Maybe you wish to develop and apply knowledge management strategies to government, military operations, global poverty eradication, international disaster management and even, now, knowledge management for global climate change.

The list is endless. Knowledge management is applied today across the world, in all industry sectors, public and private organizations and humanitarian institutions and international charities. Most importantly, effective knowledge management is now recognized to be 'the key driver of new knowledge and new ideas' to the innovation process, to new innovative products, services and solutions.

##### Why chose knowledge management?

Today, some see knowledge management as a choice. Today, those that work with knowledge very well are considered extraordinary. Those that fail to understand knowledge management will consider it as 'extra effort' to our main work, or consider it a passing fad. They will risk 'throwing the baby out with the bathwater'. We predict that effective and extraordinary knowledge management, at all levels, for the individual, team, organization and global community will naturally become mainstream and ordinary, as the only way to successfully develop and grow for the future.

##### How do we create knowledge?

The ideal knowledge management process would work as follows: Data enters an organization in product and service

transactions. The data becomes information when it is analyzed to create summaries of customer, account, service, product, and business unit activity and performance. This information populates databases and is minded into knowledge repositories, where it can be integrated with other relevant information.

Knowledge is created when data and information from these repositories are used in the normal course of business and the results are recorded and codified. For example, the customer service representative can capture knowledge surrounding transaction data. Then the organization can use this customer knowledge to determine what products or services will provide value add for the customer. Decisions about such matters as product alternatives, additional products and services, better use of products might be made on the basis of knowledge garnered from previously successful scenarios.

Where does knowledge reside?

Knowledge resides in many forms within an organization, but the primary areas include structured and unstructured information, and employee expertise.

- Structured Information – Transaction-based data managed and maintained within information systems. Transaction data is often locked away from users because it is difficult to retrieve or synthesize.
  - Unstructured Information – Associated with documents. It includes PC, paper, video, and audio formats that are not easily accessed and shared.
  - Expertise – Experience base or innate understanding of employees. Because this type of knowledge is broadly dispersed and continually changing, it is rarely codified and moves through the organization unwittingly.
- What is Knowledge Management?

Although, throughout history, we have always managed our knowledge as best we could, it was the introduction of some new tools, new methods, new processes and new strategies that enabled us to think, for the first time, very differently about knowledge, and how to make some substantial improvements in the way we manage knowledge, as individuals, teams, organizations, and between organizations. We started to realize that there are now some radical and fundamentally new ways to accelerate learning and knowledge processes. During the early 1990's we started to think more about the knowledge processes of identifying, creating, storing, sharing and applying knowledge.

#### **KM Definitions**

- KM is about systems and technologies
  - KM is about people and learning organizations
  - KM is about processes, methods and techniques
  - KM is about managing knowledge assets
  - KM is a holistic initiative across the entire organization
  - KM is not a discipline, as such, and should be an integral part of every knowledge workers daily responsibilities
- "Knowledge Management is the discipline to enable individuals, teams, organizations and communities, more collectively and systematically capture, store, share and apply their knowledge, to achieve their objectives." Ron Young, CEO/CKO Knowledge Associates International )

**Knowledge Management Principle:** Knowledge management principles need to be embedded in the organization and embodied in the people. This is why we need an holistic KM Framework to act as a roadmap for the implementation of KM principles.

- They are timeless. They will be just as relevant in 50 years time as they are now.
- They are changeless. Whereas knowledge will change over time, principles do not change ever.
- They are universal. That is to say, they can be applied anywhere.
- They are scalable. That is, the same principles can apply to individuals, teams, organizations, inter-organizations, and even globally.

#### **Need for Knowledge Management:**

KM efforts have a long history, to include on-the-job discussions, formal apprenticeship, discussion forums, corporate libraries, professional training and mentoring programs. More recently, with increased use of computers in the second half of the 20th century, specific adaptations of technologies such as knowledge bases, expert systems, knowledge repositories, group decision support systems, intranets, and computer supported cooperative work have been introduced to further enhance such efforts. In 1999, the term personal knowledge management was introduced which refers to the management of knowledge at the individual level (Wright 2005). In terms of the enterprise, early collections of case studies recognized the importance of knowledge management dimensions of strategy, process, and measurement.

The need for knowledge management is self-explicit. With increasing competition, knowledge about how to produce and sell a service or a product efficiently has become the key factor distinguishing companies. Knowledge Management efforts typically focus on organizational objectives such as improved performance, competitive advantage, innovation, the sharing of lessons learned, integration and continuous improvement of the organization. KM efforts overlap with organizational learning,

and may be distinguished from that by a greater focus on the management of knowledge as a strategic asset and a focus on encouraging the sharing of knowledge.

To serve customers well and remain in business companies must reduce their cycle times, operate with minimum fixed assets and overhead , shorten product development time, improve customer service, empower employees, innovate and deliver high quality products, enhance flexibility and adoption, capture information, create knowledge, share and learn. None of this is possible without a continual focus on the creation, updating, availability, quality and use of knowledge by all employees and teams, at work and in the marketplace. Knowledge Management consists of activities focused on the organization gaining knowledge from its own experience and from the experience of others, and on the judicious application of that knowledge to fulfill the mission of the organization. These activities are executed by marrying technology, organizational structures, and cognitive based strategies to raise the yield of existing knowledge and produce new knowledge. Critical in this endeavor is the enhancement of the cognitive system in acquiring, storing and utilizing knowledge for learning, problem solving, and decision making.

#### **Drivers of Knowledge management:**

- Making available increased knowledge content in the development and provision of products and services
- Achieving shorter new product development cycles
- Facilitating and managing innovation and organizational learning
- Leveraging the expertise of people across the organization
- Increasing network connectivity between internal and external individuals
- Managing business environments and allowing employees to obtain relevant insights and ideas appropriate to their work
- Solving intractable or wicked problems
- Managing intellectual capital and intellectual assets in the workforce (such as the expertise and know-how possessed by key individuals)

#### **Features of KMS:**

1. Purpose: a KMS will have an explicit Knowledge Management objective of some type such as collaboration, sharing good practice or the like.
2. Context: One perspective on KMS would see knowledge is information that is meaningfully organized, accumulated and embedded in a context of creation and application.
3. Processes: KMS are developed to support and enhance knowledge-intensive processes, tasks or projects of e.g., creation, construction, identification, capturing, acquisition, selection, valuation, organization, linking, structuring, formalization, visualization, transfer, distribution, retention, maintenance, refinement, revision, evolution, accessing, retrieval and last but not least the application of knowledge, also called the knowledge life cycle.
4. Participants: Users can play the roles of active, involved participants in knowledge networks and communities fostered by KMS, although this is not necessarily the case. KMS designs are held to reflect that knowledge is developed collectively and that the "distribution" of knowledge leads to its continuous change, reconstruction and application in different contexts, by different participants with differing backgrounds and experiences.
5. Instruments: KMS support KM instruments, e.g., the capture, creation and sharing of the modifiable aspects of

experience, the creation of corporate knowledge directories, taxonomies or anthologies, expertise locators, skill management systems, collaborative filtering and handling of interests used to connect people, the creation and fostering of communities or knowledge networks.

#### **Advantages of KM Systems:**

1. Sharing of valuable organizational information throughout organizational hierarchy.
2. Can avoid duplication, reducing redundant work.
3. May reduce training time for new employees
4. Retention of Intellectual Property after the employee leaves if such knowledge can be codified.

#### **Examples:**

1) Infosys Technologies Ltd, Bangalore has been recognized as amongst the top 20 global companies to be listed in the prestigious 'Most Admired Knowledge Enterprises' (MAKE) study, 2008. "The company has won this award for organizational learning for its concerted effort over the last decade to provide an integrated knowledge management solution to meet the knowledge needs of the organization through content sharing, collaboration and professional networking." Hoping to reverse brain drain, Infosys chief mentor N R Narayana Murthy has offered to bring talented professionals from across the world to India. There is no growth without infrastructure. But what is important is the ability to attract talent, he said, stressing the need to create such an environment. "I will do whatever I can to attract good people," he said at the inauguration of International School of Information Management (ISiM).

2) Tata Steel, New Delhi has bagged the 'Most Admired Knowledge Enterprise Award' instituted by a global independent knowledge management company, Teleos. The award, in recognition of company's excellence and the importance given to knowledge management, which was the key driver of competitive advantage, was given at the World Knowledge Forum at Seoul in South Korea

#### **Conclusion:**

Knowledge Management appears to have the support of most major organizations. Many companies are still struggling to quantify benefits that can be displayed on the balance sheet, although some like BP Amoco, Shell and Chevron have shown some quantified benefits. More natural everyday processes will probably succeed the pilot initiatives with an emphasis on how knowledge can be re-used for idea generation. The transfer of tacit knowledge can have a profound effect on quality and overall strategic business value. Cultural and language barriers add challenges to the already difficult process of transferring tacit knowledge and are of particular concern in cases of cross-border outsourcing. Finally, once a decision has been made to outsource aspects of a business, specific knowledge management strategies can be implemented that will maximize the benefits that are available from a decentralized business model.

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