Knowledge Sharing

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1. Introduction

In a growing global economy managing knowledge effectively has become a source of competitive advantage. Companies are adopting integrated approaches to identify, manage, share and capitalize on the know-how, experience and intellectual capital of employees. During the past decade, many companies invested heavily in electronic knowledge management (KM) systems hoping to increase their ability to manage the vast array of knowledge hidden within the many nooks and crannies of organizational life. However, experienced users of electronic KM systems now realize that managing knowledge is a much more complicated process.

It's an open secrete that today's business organizations greatly depend upon maximizing resources, eliminating redundancy and automating process to meet the business goals. Further it's also clear that Knowledge Sharing [KS] has become as essential part of Knowledge Management [KM]. The effective use of knowledge is a key ingredient in all successful organizations, no matter what business they are doing, what services they may provide. Using knowledge correctly in an organization requires an understanding that the mere availability of simple, disconnected bits of information is not knowledge and can't adequately address these enterprise imperatives. While KM must focus on supporting the sharing of knowledge between individuals, this can't be done in isolation. Instead KM projects must recognize the importance of providing effective platforms for this dissemination of knowledge.

2. Why Knowledge Sharing?

The ultimate goal of KS is to distribute the right content to right people at right time. The system therefore must enable us quickly and effectively to find relevant information & expertise and that can aid into decision-making & problem solving. Hence, the tacit knowledge resides in the minds of individuals, in their skills, experiences, value judgments. Individuals are often the most difficult source to document because they feel that sharing what they know will make them expandable or that their knowledge on any given subject is what makes them unique. Another biggest challenge for KS is each time employees leave their job, they carry what they know with them. If they share tacit knowledge among employees it ensures that pertinent employees knowledge stay around long after the employees leave the company.

3. Platforms of KS

Knowledge sharing (KS) has become an essential part of knowledge management (KM). The ultimate goal of KS is to distribute the right content to the right people at right time. To accomplish this goal each and every organization are using many distributing channels, here are some most popular platforms of KS, which are being widely used by many organizations.

3.1   Team Meetings

Meetings are the one of the best ways and means of KS, where the people come together formally in order to discuss about the problems, projects, experiences, opinions and take decisions. In such meetings people express their opinions, expertise and their knowledge about particular subject or topic, which enhances the knowledge of other participants and leads to KS

3.2   Video Screening Sessions

This is one of the most effective means of KS. It's an act of sharing a film / movie / television program. The program usually contains case studies, past experiences, best practices and methods etc to achieve the objectives, goals and meet the deadlines.

3.3   Training Programs

Training sessions / training programs are the process of learning the skills, procedures, activities for a particular job or task. Training programs allow the trainees to interact with each other, interact with trainers/experts. In such programs trainer shares his knowledge with the trainees and trains them to do a particular job

3.4   Workshops / Seminars / Conferences

Seminars/conferences allows the people to discuss their views. Usually the people at seminars have common work or interest. With the advancement of technology " video conferencing" a system that enables people in different parts of the world/region can meet by watching and listening to each other by using video screens.

4.   Knowledge Sharing Tools

Once knowledge shared properly by using effective platforms now its time to store this knowledge for future use, reuse and refinement. The tools mentioned here are widely used by many organizations .

4.1   Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)

The Enterprise Resource Planning facilitates the configurable information systems packages that integrate information and information based processes within and across functional areas in an organization. The ERP is one such program, which allows the effective deployment and mobilization of knowledge resources available across the organization

4.2   Content Management

There are many tools that are designed for knowledge sharing and leveraging. Content Management is one such tool, which helps in creating, reviewing, approving and otherwise managing the complex, hyperlinked relationships of huge websites.

4.3 Document Management Tools

These are used to create discrete document. These tools revolve around the ability for an author to build a single document or set of documents from a variety of source material. Policy documents are a classic case because they often have to be customized for different reasons.

4.4 Portals

Today's corporate portals have greatly been helping the companies to search, browse and personalization of information. Intranets in general and portals in particular started with the objective of giving employees access to any and all information they needed a self-help approach. It helps to publish all types of documents ranging from human resources policies to product manuals.

4.5 Data Warehousing

According to Bill Inmon, known as the father of data warehousing, a data warehouse is a subject-oriented, integrated, time-variant, nonvolatile collection of data in support of management decisions

4.6 Web logs

Web logs have exploded in popularity over the last year. At their most simple form, a web log (also commonly known as ('blog'), is an online dairy created by one or more writers. They typify the new class of 'personal publishing' tools that some see as a 'disruptive' threat to existing publishing tools. A web log provides a simple interface for writing a new entry, typically via an online form.

4.7 K-logs

Web logs become particularly interesting when they are used within an organization. Where they are known as 'knowledge logs' or 'k-logs'. This has been an approach evangelized primarily by John Robb. The proponents of this approach see k-logs as a way of breaking down the barriers within the organization and facilitating a more efficient flow of information and knowledge for Ex:- Key individuals with a knowledge and respect can use web logs to record progress on strategic projects or issues. By building on the reputation of the writer, web logs harness recognized benefits of story telling techniques.

Web logs can also be used by project teams to both communicate to the wider organization and to keep track of who is doing what within the team. In this way, the web log acts as wise for the projects and an archive of the past decisions.

4.8 Wikis

Wikis are a surprising new approach to publishing on line information. They are essential an ultra light weight content management system., developed primarily in the open source world. A wikis impose no controls over who can create or edit pages. Making it very simple to update content supports the ongoing growth of content and not imposing any restrictions

encourages multiple people to add content to a single page. It is this easy of editing and natural support for collaborative work which makes wikis an ideal tool for communities of practice or team level knowledge sharing.

5. Barriers to KS

5.1 Belief in the Concept " Knowledge is Power

Of course "Knowledge is Power" forever, but today's enterprise, which believes and encourages much teamwork, collective knowledge and relay research rather than individual, solo researches. It is only a handful of people who have knowledge for which they can hold their peers for rewards. It might be the owner manager of a company not wanting to have trade secrets, it may be a particular specialist who has been in the organization many years and built up his/her own way of achieving success.

5.2 Don't Advice Me Attitude

This is more common in people. People think that they know everything and feel pride in not having to seek advice from others and in wanting to discover new ways for themselves.

5.3 Non-Awareness of Importance of Knowledge

An individual may have knowledge used in one situation but be unaware that other people at other times and places might face similar situations and problems.

5.4 I can't trust you

Sometimes lack of faith in others also becomes a barrier to share the knowledge. Some people feel that if they share some of their knowledge others may use it out of context, may mis-apply or pass it off as their own without giving acknowledgement or recognition to them as the source.

5.5 I don't have time

This is the major reason given by most of the organizations, as time is barrier to knowledge sharing. There is lot of competition, there is pressure on productivity on deadlines, and it's a general rule to collar you for the next task. Under such circumstances how can you possibly find time to add your lessons learnt to the knowledge database or have a knowledge sharing session with your colleagues

6. How to overcome the Barriers

6.1 Change Organizational Culture

Changing culture is not easy as we say. Culture can be changed over the time. Culture of an organization has commonly held beliefs, attitudes, and values. The culture has the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes one group from another. And in other ways that also encompasses rituals, artifacts, and other trappings of the work environment. Using some of the activities can change such kind of culture

6.2   A Cultural Audit

A culture audit is helpful in tracing out the distinguish between what is articulated as the desired culture and what is done by providing questionnaires, interviewing the people and team sessions a cross section will definitely help in understanding the culture of an organization.

6.3   Total Involvement

Some of the best knowledge sharing cultures are where everybody (even novices & newcomers) believes that their knowledge is respected, valued and used to inform decision.

6.4   Use Role Models

Identify those people who are willing to share, whose behaviors are an example to others. Involve them with other groups.

6.5   Team Building

Conduct organizational development sessions in that sessions allocate time to understand and improve internal processes, give behavioral training, the team building sessions should address the means of achieving successful or individual expertise.

6.6   Reward System

Align rewards and recognition to support appropriate behaviors. There should be reward system on team effectiveness rather only on seniority or individual expertise.

6.6   Change People

By consulting, by adopting knowledge shares, industrial psychologists and behavioral experts on board and develop a quality leadership in people that will enable all the other culture change techniques to achieve their aims.

6.7   Bench Marking

Continuous comparison of internal processes, methodologies and functions with other organizations and potential companies. Encourage the people to strive for improvements through learning from each other.

6.8   Healthy Competition

There should be a continuous healthy competitions as competitions should not be against other people or teams, but setting and reaching goals, challenging targets or competition against external competitors.

7. Benefits of KS

- Expertise can be shared
- Turnover and job changes don't cripple the system
- Reduces Cycle time
- Reduces Costs
- More Efficient use and reuse of Knowledge assets
- Enhances functional effectiveness
- Increases value of existing products and services

8. Conclusion

One of the greatest challenges of the KM Practitioner is to find the ways of organizing the vast KM resources out there and deriving value form each resource. The findings of this paper demonstrate that there are various set of platforms to encourage people to share their insights, thoughts, which are valuable assets for companies. What draws people to share their knowledge in various organizations would be different, but ultimately matches the company's core values as well as the look and feel of the other organizational processes. All organization should focus on supporting the knowledge sharing (KS) between individuals The KS tools can therefore seen as providing a foundation for knowledge management initiatives. Besides this different kind of valuable technologies like weblogs, wikis etc. can be used to support the KM goals.

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