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Knowledge Sharing in a Millennial Social Era

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ABSTRACT

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Knowledge and its myriad forms have fascinated individual and organizations since time immemorial. The usage of knowledge is impacted by several factors and knowledge sharing is a key component. Doctoral-level research was undertaken to ascertain the perception of IT employees with regard to benefits, challenges and technologies of knowledge sharing in the organisation. The course of future research is also explored.

Introduction

Knowledge has always been seen as one of the key strategic resources that can produce sustained long-term competitive advantage. Knowledge is the ability of people and organizations to understand and act effectively. Having knowledge supports to cope with daily routine works and it can also set up everyone to deal with new situations and utilize when needed. Organizations that need to thrive, compete, and operate in an ever evolving environment, cannot leave the development of knowledge within the organization to chance. The exchange of information and knowledge among employees is a vital part of knowledge management.

Tacit knowledge is difficult to codify and express in words, and hence cannot be stored readily.

It can only be acquired through observation, imitation, and practice. Explicit knowledge, on the other hand, can be codified and expressed in words and other recognisable forms. Knowledge sharing can therefore serve to bridge the gap between tacit and explicit knowledge.

Knowledge Sharing (KS) "ensures that the right knowledge is available to the right processors, in the right representations and at the right times, for performing their knowledge activities (and to accomplish this for the right cost)" [1]. Sharing is a common activity for everyone, but knowledge sharing within an organization is a complex and complicated issue. Knowledge sharing is the process by which knowledge of individuals is converted into

a form that can be understood and used by other individuals. Knowledge sharing refers to the task to help others with information and knowledge, and to collaborate with others to solve problems, develop new ideas, or implement processes.

Social media has a variety of definitions, such as “collaborative online applications and technologies which enable and encourage participation, conversation, openness, creation and socialization amongst a community of users” [2], “web-based tools and practices enabling participation and collaboration based on individuals’ activities [3].

Six major characteristics have been identified that provide value to social media [4]:

- a. Authenticity: possibility to let the real voices of real people come through.
- b. Transparency: ability for shareholders to see the financial performance; through blogs, communities and others information can also be made visible to the public.
- c. Immediacy: ability of companies, members of the public to communicate, and to engage in online conversations.
- d. Participation: possibility for anyone to participate in corporate conversation, on the company’s blog, independent forums, personal blogs, etc. online.
- e. Connectedness: ability to connect and share in thousands of places.
- f. Accountability: ability to detect users (they leave a trail of IP addresses and other clues).

2. Review and Literature

Shahidi and his associates attempted to observe whether the sentimental factors on the evaluation of the readiness for execution of the knowledge management system in all organizations are equal. Hence, first by a widespread study of literature, readiness issues of the knowledge management system execution including six factors of organizational traditions, individuals, information technology communications, knowledge procedure, senior management promise, and strategy were

removed and have been tested in three different organizations of IT services, education and business. Based on the beginning, different factors influence various organizations and using a universal model should not be informed. It was concluded that organizations should appoint specialist employees and make the appropriate basis for continuous learning, make the appropriate atmosphere for participation, and present the mutual trust between the workers to make them prepared for knowledge management implementation [5].

Jumeri and Ali proposed a research model by considering significant culture factors in aspects of organizational and individual customs for knowledge sharing. The success of the knowledge management initiatives depends on the readiness of the business enterprises and its affiliates to share knowledge. The culture constituents that were recognized were leadership, faith, teamwork and collaboration, communication, learning and outlook. The result of the evaluation can be mapped to culture change management plan for inculcating knowledge sharing culture in association. Consequently, it is necessary for the organization to demeanour culture readiness evaluation to assess whether the organization is prepared to face cultural change for knowledge management initiatives [6].

Olowodunoye studied the organizational fairness and educational position as associates of knowledge sharing behaviour among employees. The result showed that organizational fairness and educational position had significant positive relationship with knowledge sharing. Also, organizational fairness and educational position considerably separately and mutually influenced knowledge sharing and finally, significant distinction existed among the educational position on knowledge sharing. This study suggested that when workers perceived high level of all-round justice in the way they are being treated, they tend to be more concerned in knowledge sharing than when their discernment is low. The study suggested that higher level of educational position also led to higher promise to knowledge sharing behaviour. It could be suggested that organizations should do everything

within their power to endorse organizational fairness if they want to improve and maintain knowledge sharing behaviour amongst employees [7].

Obermayer-Kovacs and Wensley stressed that knowledge was gradually more perceived as the most significant tactical asset and individual knowledge workers participate central role in the formation of value by organizations and the expansion of their strategies. It was found that organizations have an imperative need to spotlight on innovation regarding new products and services. Although individuals might distinguish the significance of knowledge management exercises for the achievement of their daily business life, it might be assumed that their tendency to share knowledge depends on their individual demographic features such as their age. Social media has permitted individuals to contribute to number of issues and produced new chances and challenges to assist collaboration. Thus, the possible advantage of embracing and executing social media by organizations is very important. However, individuals may be reserved to make use of social media since they may not welcome the influence of social media [8].

Kokanuch and Tuntrabundit disclosed that knowledge sharing facet can be illustrated by which organizational workers exchange, collaboratively create their knowledge, and amalgamate it into organizational knowledge. The study focused on three areas of knowledge sharing ability: dimensions of knowledge sharing competency, the antecedents of knowledge sharing in an organizational background, and their results that were built upon the review of earlier empirical studies. It was found that knowledge sharing is become more challenged for management to attain the competitive advantage by expand and hearten employee's readiness to share their knowledge, assimilated, and created the new one. It was concluded that knowledge sharing effects were analysed by richness in knowledge sharing success and organizational performances [9].

Qi and Chau investigates the causal liaisons among Enterprise Social Networking Systems usage, knowledge management processes and organizational learning. The hypothetical contribution lies in the usage of manifold theories to appreciate the effects of enterprise social media usage; the observed test of Enterprise Social Networking Systems usage on organizational level of results; and the confirmation of the mediating role of knowledge management procedure in the organizational learning. This study someway eradicated the management's distress on the repeated usage of enterprise social networking systems, since the usage could motivate knowledge creation and knowledge sharing, and finally help organizations to learn in the long run. Results showed that Enterprise Social Networking Systems usage frankly and indirectly influence organizational learning; and knowledge management processes arbitrate the path between Enterprise Social Networking Systems practice and organizational education [10].

Pugna and Boldeanu examined a range of approaches in the direction of developing a knowledge management plan consistent with the organizational vision of the companies. It was found that explicit knowledge is well managed and the supposition that a knowledge management course approach can be effortlessly implemented seems sensible. At the same time, the possible usefulness of tacit knowledge is mainly documented and there are some attempts focussed to a better sharing of knowledge at the organizational level. Additionally, the learning procedure is extremely valued, both at the individual and managerial level. Thus, practices linked to the management of tacit knowledge might be obviously adopted. It was concluded that numerous precious insights provided through managers' attitudes and behaviours connected to knowledge and knowledge management [11].

3. Methodology

A qualitative study was employed wherein employees working in Information Technology companies were targeted. Structured face-to-face

interviews were undertaken and respondents were posed three questions, namely,

- I. What is your perception about the benefits (pros) of knowledge sharing in the organisation?
- II. What is your perception about the challenges (cons) of knowledge sharing in the organisation?
- III. What technologies (tools) / practices do you use to share knowledge with associates in the organisation?

The attempted sample size was 250 employees serving in 8 IT organisations and the actual sample size was 183 respondents after accounting for refusals thus yielding a response rate of 73.2%.

4. Findings and Discussion

The responses for the three questions posed to the IT employees is summarised in the following sections.

4.1. Benefits of Knowledge Sharing

- a. Knowledge Sharing is concerned with and a tool for breaking down barriers within the organization.
- b. Raised competitiveness and responsiveness for research grants, contracts, and commercial opportunities.
- c. Decreased circle time for research.
- d. Reduced attachment of research resources to administrative tasks.
- e. Controlling of previous research and proposal efforts.
- f. Enhanced both of external and internal services and usefulness.
- g. Enhanced administrative services related to learning and teaching with technology.
- h. Interdisciplinary syllabus design and increase facilitated by navigating across departmental boundaries.
- i. Enhanced effectiveness and efficiency of advising efforts (to integrate fragmented efforts currently undertaken by faculty, academic support staff, student services staff, and student affairs staff.

- j. Enhanced ability to support the trend toward decentralized strategic planning and decision making. Better information leads to better decisions.
- k. Improved sharing of external and internal information to reduce superfluous efforts and lessen the reporting load plaguing many institutions today.
- l. Improved ability to develop new and market-focused strategic plans.
- m. Shared knowledge from a diversity of elements to begin to create a “learning organization” which is open to market trends.

4.2. Challenges in Knowledge Sharing

- a. Technology barriers: an existing resource, a lack of hardware, its cost), a localization (use programs, technology tools in order stay in contact.
- b. Content barriers: clear understand a meaning of delivered knowledge, understand a context of knowledge.
- c. Barriers in routines and procedures: employees do not recognise and understand some procedures.
- d. Barriers in organization: managers should show the trust and share knowledge among with employees, a weak culture of sharing.
- e. Personal barriers: the trust, the motivation, a lack of rewards, feel comfortable and free to share and transfer knowledge, a lack of time, a self-interested.
- f. Stickiness on knowledge: tacit knowledge may be considered stickier than explicit knowledge, hence, requires more effort for an activity.
- g. Lack of an identity: a common identity provides knowledge sharing in an easy way, as people from a same group use a same technical language, use common data and are interesting to reach same aims.
- h. Weak relationship between a receiver and a sender of knowledge: a sender and a receiver should have a strong relationship between each other to be able to share knowledge. A receiver

and a sender should trust to each other in order to trust knowledge, which he or she obtains.

- i. Lack of a willingness to share knowledge: both sender and receiver should have a wish to share knowledge.
- j. No knowledge about knowledge: If employees have no knowledge of what knowledge they are going to share, then it would make knowledge sharing impossible.

4.3. Technologies / Practices for Knowledge Sharing

The popular internal knowledge sharing technologies / practices were:

- a. Internal training: A method of preparing an employee to perform a task.
- b. Document management system and knowledge repository: Providing a comprehensive solution for managing capture, index, storage, retrieve of any information.
- c. Participation in the life of communities of practices: Groups of people who are formed to share and create skills, knowledge, and expertise among employees.
- d. Internal instant messaging service: Facilitating near real-time text based communication between two or more participants.
- e. Presentation sharing: Offering the ability to publish any kind of organizational presentations to a specific audience or the entire world.
- f. Groupware: Enabling group collaboration over a network, providing flexible communication structures.
- g. Internal social networking services: Providing the network's members access to information and knowledge.
- h. Internal blogs: Offering individuals/groups to capture and publish information about specific topics.
- i. Knowledge map: Presenting what knowledge resides where (people) and for demonstrating the patterns of knowledge flow (distribution).

- j. Competence centre / centre of excellence: Consultants with specific areas of knowledge and experience.
- k. Internal video sharing: Offering the ability to publish video content to a specific audience or the entire world

The popular external knowledge sharing technologies / practices were:

- (i) possibilities to take part in external communities of practices ("Meetup").
- (ii) Professional blogs.
- (iii) External instant messaging (Skype, MSN).
- (iv) External groupware (Google docs).
- (v) External video sharing (YouTube).
- (vi) External presentation sharing (SlideShare).
- (vii) External social networking services (Facebook, LinkedIn).

5. Gaps, Scope for Further Research and Conclusion

Knowledge sharing through social media has gained tremendous importance albeit with hitches. However, considering the advantages of such practices, it remains to be seen how successful this concept would prove to be in the long run. It is prudent to not just study the organisational influences but also the impact of individual behavioural factors as well as technological factors on knowledge sharing. It is also critical to study the impact of such knowledge sharing on two phenomena. The first relates to the impact of knowledge sharing on the knowledge creation process. The second is concerned with impact on the performance of individuals (ultimate beneficiaries).

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