

Knowledge Management - Contemplating the Link between Knowledge Sharing, Technology, and Employee Motivation

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to examine the link between knowledge sharing, technology and employee motivation. The other objectives of the study include clarifying the concept and ideas of Knowledge Management; analyze the relationship between employee motivation and knowledge management; examine the role of ICT in knowledge management and motivating employees to identify and analyze various knowledge management practices and challenges. The paper found that knowledge shared equally among the employees as a part of organizational culture will eventually motivate the employees.

Key words: Knowledge management, Knowledge sharing, organizational culture, employee motivation

1. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge Management is the process of developing, storing, retrieving and disseminating information within the organization to improve the business (Omotayo, 2015). Knowledge acts as a base for any formal organization. An organization dwells upon the individuals and groups where interaction takes place among the groups. Here, knowledge is an essential factor that marks us different from other members of the group in an organization with regard to appropriate knowledge base and possession of qualities like creativity and innovativeness (Ting Si Xue, 2017). From the earlier studies it is observed that to be creative and innovative organizations stress on achieving knowledge (Ghani, 2009). To improve the effectiveness of knowledgeable experts, information systems groups at several organizations started creating databases for knowledge, information maps and custom-made applications (Gupta et.al, 2000). Previously, organizations have improved their efficiency and effectiveness with the knowledge by reducing redundancy (Omotayo, 2015) whereas recently, the aim of the organization has been shifted to replace redundant workers with conscised workers. This competitive spirit demanded the companies to stay competitive resulting in streamlining the working process. Within the minimum time organizations realized and identified a loophole in the process of passing knowledge within the organizations. Thus a new term Knowledge Management (KM) enriched the value of organizations slowly in the field of management. Very soon Knowledge Management exhibited a positive impact in the organization, within the employees. It was found that employees felt motivated to work in a new care-free atmosphere created by Knowledge Management system.

Bouthillier and Shearer (2002) observed that knowledge is the application of information derived from the processed data and it is nothing but inference gained from the data. Knowledge Management effectively utilizes or restrains knowledge providing insights and solutions based on existing knowledge. It is the process of utilizing both past and current knowledge for the better understanding of the concepts of Knowledge Management (Kianto et al., 2016). Therefore, Knowledge Management covers a wide range of strategies and practices applied inside organizations to identify, create, share, retain, distribute, and enable adoption of insights and experiences. Consequently, it embodied in individuals and embedded in organizational processes or practices (Jennx, 2008). According to Jennex (2008) Knowledge Management is "the practice of selectively applying knowledge from previous experiences of decision making to current and future decision making activities with the express purpose of improving the organization's effectiveness".

Knowledge Management has several advantages catering to the effective functioning of the organization (Mertins, 2001). The first and most important factor that adds value to the organization is rapid and swift decision making skills. Application of Knowledge Management aids, supports and assists organizations to take quick decisions. Abualoush et al. (2018) claimed that Knowledge Management improves the effectiveness of an organization by reducing decision making time and improving the quality of decisions made. It provides a medium for storing knowledge resources, thus investing only a little time in gathering knowledge serves the purpose.

Competitive advantage is the second benefit concerning the Knowledge Management stating that organizations provide better quality service to the customers by capturing, analyzing, disseminating

knowledge resources to guide their decision making process (Wen, 2009). Innovation is the next key factor which will determine the quality of Knowledge Management. It is generally remarked that there is a unique organizational knowledge derived from managing and analyzing knowledge resources (Donate, 2017). These resources typically deliver innovative products and services to the customers within the organizations. Moreover, the innovative factor provides quality decision making, better customer satisfaction, and improve the sales generated from the goods and services (Gupta et.al, 2000).

1.1 Knowledge Management practices

Four different types of Knowledge Management practices are identified in a research study conducted by Rechberg and Syed (2014). Information Technology process is one of the practices focusing on processing explicit forms of knowledge. The other practices include Organizational Culture & Structure and Communities of Practices, where the main explicit and tacit forms of knowledge meant to be processed, and lastly Human Resource practice, where the emphasis is on processing tacit forms of knowledge (Rechberg & Syed, 2014).

Masa'deh et al. (2017) stated that IT practice, focuses on explicit forms of knowledge, information, and data with an expected value. Through technology based systems, information is identified, extracted, codified, collected and then transferred for further organizational use. For a better understanding of the technology based system individuals should have access to the stored information. Organizations cultivate and utilize explicit knowledge seeking help from Information Technology. The use of video, telephonic conferences, and emails allow individuals to transfer and share knowledge (Inkinen, 2016). Additionally, corporate intranets, yellow pages, data warehouses, databases for data storage and e-learning may ease access to learning. It will also improve the standards of organizations. Henceforth, the use of ICT will enable the knowledge seekers to collect and withdraw the information as it is the best way to produce and share knowledge. In other words, they are some of the best IT practices applicable in organizations. Knowledge storing can therefore be argued as a best practice of Knowledge Management.

Organizational structure and knowledge sharing is another area focused in determining the effective functioning of the organizations. Changes in an organization's structure and operations pertaining to individual needs and circumstances, such as job allocation, management hierarchy and team working enhances Knowledge Management (Ali, 2017). Organizational culture is the product of day-to-day operations and is considered as normal, desirable carrying common standards. It is believed that individuals learn quickly from the environment they live Consequently culture is an ecosystem balancing self-interest, team spirit, and tradeoffs amidst the individuals navigating rules, beliefs, behavior & communication styles, and undoubtedly one's own aspirations.

According Taylor and Wright, (2004) they identified four processes commonly used by organizations for knowledge conversion: socialization, capture, dissemination, and internalization. The first process is socialization where sharing of experiences via observation, imitation and practice is employed for effective results. It is generally carried out through workshops, seminars, apprenticeships, and conferences. In the second process the conversion of tacit knowledge (the knowledge learned at a workshop) into explicit form (e.g., written report) is observed. The next process is dissemination of the information where the copying and distribution of the explicit knowledge occurs. In the last process of experiencing knowledge an explicit source combines the experience of reading the workshop report with the previous experiences. From this above process it can be understood that modern companies moving towards new organizational models, emphasize on radical decentralization, coupled with advanced IT skills.

Organizational commitment as a practice aims at building a trust culture, encourage knowledge production and enable knowledge sharing (Chow & Chan, 2008). A trust culture strengthens the relationship among staff members. In this scenario, knowledge sharing best occurs through face-to-face interaction ultimately enabling a trust culture in the organizations (Ismail, 2012). It is basically understood that Knowledge Management practices are complex and challenging as it lies in shaping an organizational culture which will indirectly strengthen commitment of all members of staff. Moreover, employees who come from different cultures bring together divergent bodies of knowledge. Therefore, the employees recognize both the existence and value of the individual differences treated with respect (Alkhalidi, 2018).

Another important factor enhancing the Knowledge Management practices is team-based work. This will influence the individual's willingness to work as a team (Cao and Xiang, 2012). In this process team members trust each other and hence the knowledge is shared. Eventually, employees feel motivated to work in the organization if they adopt the best Knowledge Management practices.

Employees play a vital role in the organization and it is their prime responsibility to run the organization in an optimal efficiency and effectiveness. Additionally the employees with well-equipped training and education provide organization a better competitive advantage than its competitors (Han and Anantatmula, 2007). Thus, it can be said that there is a relationship between employee motivation and Knowledge Management.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main aim of this paper is to examine the link between knowledge sharing, technology, and employee motivation. In order to fulfil the aim, the following objectives should be addressed initially:

1. To explain the concept and ideas of Knowledge Management.
2. To analyze the relationship between employee motivation and knowledge management.
3. To examine the role of ICT in knowledge management and in motivating employees
4. To identify and analyze the knowledge management practices and challenges.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Knowledge Management

Knowledge can be defined as the practical, cognitive, experiential, rational, technical, subjective and objective knowledge of any subject (Girard, 2015). Knowledge Management is the management of corporate knowledge which improves the performance of the individuals within the organization. It is the habit of well-equipped managers with leadership skills to hire the people with enough knowledge, skills and experience for the effective management. Most of the organizations already have a vast resource of knowledge in terms of organizational processes, practices, customer trust, culture and norms. At times organizational culture prevents people from sharing and disseminating information (Ahmmad, 2018). Hence the importance of Knowledge Management practices.

According to Ahmad (2018) Knowledge Management is the discipline or faculty of organizations enabling the individuals, the entire workers or employees to systematically create, share and apply knowledge.

According to Obeidat et al. (2016) the process of Knowledge Management generates value from their intellectual and knowledge-based assets. It is a kind of harnessing and exploiting intellectual capital to gain competitive advantage and customer commitment through efficiency, innovation and a rapid effective decision-making system. It is widely believed that Knowledge management is necessary for the company to innovate on products, processes, services of the organization. It allows to reduce the design costs, production, and distribution equally. Thus the need for Knowledge Management seems rapidly increasing depending upon the environment (Khodja & Bernard, 2008).

Bixler and Stankosky (2005) defines Knowledge Management as “a systematic, explicit and deliberate building processes required to manage knowledge, the purpose of which is to maximize an enterprise’s knowledge-related effectiveness and create values” This process of Knowledge Management involves collecting, organizing, clarifying, transmitting and propagating the knowledge throughout the organization

According to Bixler and Stankosky (2005), they concluded that Knowledge Management deals with explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge which possesses maturity attribute, dynamic attribute and self-growth attribute. Successful Knowledge Management needs a trust-based organizational culture to facilitate knowledge sharing. Moreover, it should support the organization structure which results in organization learning. Further it will fit in the trust and open cultural environment (Bixler & Stankosky, 2005). Trust is the main channel of communication where in the knowledge is exchanged smoothly. High level of trust in organizational culture facilitates knowledge sharing, particularly tacit knowledge (Lunden et al., 2017).

Ford (2001) identifies four different types of trust namely individual trust, group trust, organizational trust and institutional trust. Interpersonal trust is the willingness of the person to raise his standards to the actions of another person. While the willingness of a person to increase their vulnerability towards the actions of people in group is noteworthy. Organizational trust instills a feeling of confidence and support in an employer. In other words, organizational trust refers to employee faith in corporate goal attainment and organizational leaders. Also, they prove that organizational action will turn out beneficial for employees. Also, institutional trust is a feeling of confidence and security in institutions. They believe that the laws, rules, norms and ethics save and protect the individual’s rights. These norms assure that they will not harm any individual (Ford, 2001).

Alavi and Leidner (2001) explains the purpose of Knowledge Management which is to create and manage an environment that facilitates and encourages knowledge creation, sharing, dissemination, enhancement, organized and utilized for the advantage of the organizations. Hence the organizations opt for Knowledge Management initiatives which eventually raises the standards of competition in the private field. As a result, organizations need to adapt, anticipate and promote changes. These initiatives allow both the employees and team members to get in a flow with the knowledge thereby providing practical knowledge.

Pruzinsky et al. (2017) defined Knowledge Management is all about the outgrowth of the individuals and empower them by sharing the knowledge with other individuals. The knowledge management practices promote employee job satisfaction, sustain job satisfaction among the employees and simultaneously encourage high organizational performance. Another research conducted by Moffet and Hinds (2010) stated that workers who have adaptability and flexibility to manage the workers, direct others in the proper direction.

In other words, employees with great knowledge carry the potential to influence, motivate and inspire the co-workers.

Bim pitsos and Petridou, (2012) in their research stated, Knowledge Management is considered as the basic element responsible for organizational satisfaction. It is the best way to confront all the problems within the organization. While to Tiwari and Saxena (2012) the behavioral culture within the organization such as staff duty, competency, and adaptability influence Knowledge Management practices. And these Knowledge Management practices influence employee responsibility, performance evaluation, cooperation, remuneration and reward.

3.2.1 Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge Sharing is defined as “the process of transferring knowledge from a person to another in organization. It is a process to accumulate shared knowledge among members” (Sufi & Tasmin, 2010). In short knowledge sharing is the collaboration and integration of technology. It is also stated that sharing knowledge is not easy and natural. It is the habit of the employees or individuals not to share the knowledge with each other as they consider knowledge to be important. It is recommended that even in the absence of strong organizational norms of knowledge sharing, employees tend to share knowledge according to their personal benefits and profits. It is also concluded that knowledge sharing practices will improve the proficiency and efficiency of the organizations (Rutten et.al, 2016).

Sufi and Tasnim (2010) analyzed the importance of knowledge sharing among their employees in different parts of the world. In places like Singapore and Malaysia, knowledge sharing practices are not very well implemented due to hostile working environment. According to Obeidat et al. (2016) knowledge sharing practice is regarded as good because people who do not pay or contribute to the organization or community also share knowledge they claimed that when knowledge sharing among people or employees in organization becomes stronger, knowledge also becomes more powerful in the organization. Individual or person who shares their tacit knowledge through conversation becomes more innovative and creative in their work.

3.2.2 Knowledge Retention

The existing literature on knowledge retention in organizations is extensive and focuses mainly on knowledge management systems, preserving knowledge and how the collected knowledge may be lost. One of the recent studies observed that employee departures, outsourcing, resistance to learning, information technology (IT) breakdowns, or unexpected events, lead to loss of knowledge. In order to overcome the hurdles, continuous knowledge transfer should take place avoiding knowledge loss. According to Zawaideh et al., (2018) A number of ways have been identified to increase organizational knowledge retention, while minimizing unintentional knowledge learning. Human resources (HR) and knowledge management strategies, including job shadowing, storytelling, lessons learned and best practices have been proposed to assist with knowledge retention. organizational knowledge retention occurs when knowledge has been transferred from a knowledge owner to the organization and can be reused by a knowledge seeker.

Organizational Knowledge Retention has been closely associated with unintentional Knowledge loss, and retention strategies are often equated with an increase in Knowledge Retention, accompanied by a mitigation in Knowledge Learning (Levallet & Chan, 2018). Human Resource practices can aid Knowledge Management by acquiring and retaining knowledge by recruiting, selecting and managing skilled employees, and by enhancing employees' knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics. Any organization's performance depends on individual employees' experience, education and skills (Kanaan et al., 2013). The study also states that through HR practices, an organization's culture and values are reinforced and supported. In this way the knowledge shared can be retained.

3.2.3 Knowledge Creation

Masa'deh et.al, (2017) explains that knowledge can be created and transferred in the organizations. According to them knowledge can be created, shared, improved, and justified via collaborative, social processes and individual's cognitive processes such as reflection. There are mainly four steps that should be followed in the process of knowledge creation, which include socialization, externalization, combination and internalization. In the process of socialization tacit knowledge is transferred through social contact such as discussions, sharing experience, simulation, practice, observation and so on among organizational members. In the process of externalization tacit knowledge is converted into explicit knowledge in the shapes of concepts, metaphors, hypotheses, descriptions and models. In the process of combination explicit knowledge is created from explicit knowledge (Kucharska et.al, 2016). Here existing explicit knowledge is merged, categorized, reclassified, and synthesized to create new explicit knowledge. And in the process of internalization a change from explicit to implicit knowledge is made with the abstract ideas and insights.

According to Takeuchi and Nonaka (2004) mechanisms and strategies such as organizational structural styles, organizational strategies, communication, trust, motivation, learning and training are

considered as factors that influence creating and sharing knowledge culture. The factors such as intention, autonomy, fluctuation, and redundancy foster knowledge creation. Moreover, motivation from the managers enhance the knowledge creation. In addition, without effective communication, organization members fail to share their ideas and knowledge and consequently knowledge creation and transfer will be complex.

3.2.4 ICT's role in Knowledge management

Technology is considered as the important components of Knowledge Management. These technologies include product and services such as desktop computers, laptops, handheld devices, wired or wireless intranet, business productivity software such as an editor and spreadsheet, enterprise software, data storage and network security among others. The use of ICT turns out to be effective in facilitating the process of identification, storing, classification and selection of required knowledge. ICT plays a variety of roles and provide the way in which information is acquired through the use of networks and databases to support a Knowledge Management's organization. According to Chang and Lin, (2015) ICT has different uses like electronically capturing/storing, accessing, delivering and retrieving the organizational decision making. Additionally, it is stated that ICTs are effective tools to transfer and share the knowledge in collaboration with tools that allow people and teams geographically dispersed to communicate regardless of geographical limitations. Apart from this, ICTs are effective tools for improving outside communications, the excellence of services for established and new customers, faster response time and information access. Therefore, it is understood that ICT plays an important role in the Knowledge Management. The ICT is found to be a catalyst in promoting organizations to adapt, apply and integrate their business processes and operations (Kasemsap, 2016).

The role of ICT in the process of knowledge transfer is also analyzed and determined. It is suggested that ICTs are effective tools for /sharing the knowledge in collaboration with tools that allow people and teams who are geographically dispersed to communicate regardless of geographical limitations. Also they provide tools for improving outside communications, the excellence of services for established and new customers, faster response time and information access (Sajid, 2016). Therefore, the study's results show that ICTs impacted in all the processes of knowledge management in organizations. As a result, the integration of ICT into organizational knowledge management within the organization will turn drastic enabler of organizational changes.

3.3 Employee motivation and knowledge management

Several studies explained that knowledge sharing within an organization is a process affected by various factors, such as nature of knowledge, employee attribute, and nature of organization and employee attitude (Kanaan et al., 2013; Abualoush, 2018). It is believed that knowledge sharing within the employees creates a new knowledge for the organization to improve its product and services. Knowledge sharing gives employees the convenience feeling and motivation to interact and be free among their coworkers within the organization. In addition, it is also one of the effective means and essential content of knowledge management for an organization to be successful in a competitive environment with their opponents, the organization should be able to manage and utilize all kinds of knowledge effectively in order to come out with a new managerial concepts and method of managing.

Motivation can also be defined as the individual inner force that makes individual to put more effort toward personal achievement and professional goals. Employee motivation can be viewed based on internal and external dimension, it can also be viewed in positive and negative dimension as well. There are several types of motivation such as safety needs, social needs, esteem needs, self-actualization needs. This type of motivation is called an internal motivation. Above all, organization should share knowledge among their employees in a convenient, effective and emotional way which will in a way motivate the employees to work in an organization. Also, increasing the communication among the employees will improve the employee's knowledge, employee motivation and eventually productivity of organization. Therefore, motivating the employees to the core will be beneficial to the organizations. Furthermore, motivated employees will give increased productivity within the organization which ultimately places the organization at higher levels. It is concluded that employees put their best efforts at work when they feel motivated. Also employee satisfaction is equally important for the growth and development of the organization.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From the review paper it is found that Knowledge Management is a practice of dealing with how to store, utilize, retrieve, and disseminate the knowledge within the organization. The process of Knowledge Management will support the performance of both the employees and the organization. Even sharing the knowledge among the individuals is the crucial resource for the development of an organization. Creativity and innovation are the two important factors that determine the success of the organization. Additionally, employee motivation is traced as another factor responsible for the successful functioning of the organization.

It is also understood from the study that ICT is a tool used to support information gathering, processing/creating, distribution and usage. The use of IT in Organizations will make the employees be independent for themselves. The dependency levels of the employees on coworkers regarding knowledge management seems to be modified. Any organization with effective Knowledge Management can bring its entire organizational learning and knowledge to manage the problems and come up with different levels of solutions. Moreover, organizations should not only stay competitive but also innovative in the process of knowledge management. The study found out that organizations should realize the importance of trust between their co-workers, and in general, there is much to gain by increasing the levels of trust between co-workers, as this will also increase knowledge sharing between them.

At the same time organizational culture becomes equally important for facilitating sharing, learning, and knowledge creation. An open culture with incentives built around integrating individual skills and experiences into organizational knowledge will be more successful. Consequently, the knowledge management practices like knowledge creation, knowledge retention and knowledge sharing are found to be the best to increase the productivity of the organizations or companies. Employees play a vital role in the organization and it is their prime responsibility to run the organization in an optimal efficiency and effectiveness. Employee well-being is mandatory for good functioning of themselves at work. And at the same time employee performance is connected to individual performance and organizational performance. Trust as well becomes more and more important in digital and technology-interconnected knowledge economy where cultures of communication, and ways of sharing knowledge between individuals and groups undergo change.

5. CONCLUSION

The current paper discussed on knowledge management and its processing in the organizations. This paper has thus presented the brief overview of Knowledge Management while stressing on ways to improve the workings of the organizations. The issues faced by the employees due to lack of proper knowledge are briefly discussed in this study. The study also explored the various management practices implemented in the organizations for better results. This paper concludes that there is a link between knowledge sharing, organizational culture and employee motivation. When the knowledge is shared equally among the employees as a part of organizational culture this will eventually motivate the employees. From the study it is understood that each organization pays a large respect for employees. The reason stated is employee performance eventually result in the success of the organization. In other words, the performance of the organization in terms of efficiency and effectiveness is interrelated to employee performance. Equal importance is provided to the culture within the organization for appropriate learning of knowledge.

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