

Knowledge management for future perceptions of library and information professionals

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ABSTRACT

Working with knowledge implies understanding the organization as a system. Effective work demands creation, sharing and distribution of information as the new material that individuals and organizations process into knowledge. Using knowledge requires individual and organizational learning and interaction. As actor in a system, human participants enable an organization to learn. Individuals share and improve, effectively recycle the existing knowledge. Knowledge management is seen as offering a substantial enhancement of the role of the information professional and an opportunity to rejuvenate the profession. Librarians and information professional have also responded to the knowledge management movement. This paper describe overview of knowledge management: definition, objective, trends in knowledge management, understanding of knowledge management and changes involved in knowledge management.

INTRODUCTION

The term knowledge management was first introduced in a 1986 keynote address to a European management conference. Knowledge management is emerging as a key concern of all organizations. Knowledge has always been the prime mover of prosperity. A knowledge society is one of the basic foundations of the development of any nation. In today's competitive environment, organizations realize that it is necessary to engage in a systematic approach to capture, store and share organization knowledge to become more competitive.

DEFINITION OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Knowledge management is defined as a set of processes directed at "creating - capturing storing - sharing - applying - reusing" knowledge.

NEED

The purpose of knowledge management is to improve the performance of organizations, institutions and professionals. In the case of documentation and information professionals, its purpose is to help researchers obtain their information needs in their field of interest.

OBJECTIVES

1. Ensure an effective and efficient development of new knowledge.
2. Ensure an effective securing of knowledge which is also easily accessible to the whole organization.
3. Distribution of new knowledge to new employees of the organization.

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4. Adapt the availability of knowledge to the time when knowledge is needed and apply knowledge when required.

TRENDS IN KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The educational training requirements in knowledge management for library and information professionals is prompted by three emerging trends.

Firstly, the substantive claims put forward by the knowledge management literature seem to indicate that the practical application of the concept of knowledge management is a powerful force in organisations which contribute to organisational performance, competitive advantage and positioning, economic success in the market place and economic sustainability (Stewart, 1997).

There is a pervasive and emotive rhetoric by knowledge management experts that signals the positive outcomes of effective knowledge management practices, and the deleterious consequences of ignoring it. Prusak (1997), for instance, asserts that "the firm that leaves knowledge to its own devices puts itself in severe jeopardy", and in order to avoid that fate, he states the importance of "working to build better environments for knowledge to be created and better methods of measuring and managing its outputs" (Nonaka, 1995). He links knowledge management to organisational success. He claims that companies are successful because of their skills and expertise at "organizational knowledge creation", that is, "the capability of a company as a whole to create new knowledge, disseminate it throughout the organization and embody it in products, services, and systems".

Secondly, in the published literature, there is a sense that knowledge management is not the same as information management, and while there are understandings and skills that appear to overlap, the implication is that the formal education and

training programs for knowledge management need to be responsive to this. This variation in perception suggests the need to develop a strong, shared understanding of the nature of knowledge management, its underpinning assumptions and values, and its multi-faceted relationship to existing information work.

Thirdly, there is an increasing number of job opportunities focusing on knowledge management. Job titles such as chief knowledge officer, knowledge manager, knowledge and training co-ordinator, knowledge analyst, knowledge operations manager and director of knowledge systems are emerging, as evident by the work of Abell and Oxbrow (2001:102,3). These positions in the main focus on information and knowledge use in the corporate sector, tend to specify responsibilities associated with information management as well as an understanding of human dimensions of how people generate and use knowledge, and how this might be effectively managed.

UNDERSTANDING TRENDS IN KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

"Understanding" is defined as the "knowing about", "knowing what", that is, the broader theoretical and conceptual foundations and underpinning ideas central to knowledge management. Skills are defined as "knowing how", the procedural and technical competencies required for the practice of knowledge management.

The table below summarizes the range of understandings perceived to be central for effective knowledge management. Five categories of understandings are identified, clearly emphasising people and organisational factors over technology. However, also identified are other dimensions such as user needs and uses, knowledge dynamics and critical thinking and analysis.

<p><u>Knowledge about knowledge</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nature of knowledge Creation of human knowing How people acquire knowledge Typologies of knowledge Knowledge dissemination Knowledge utilisation Knowledge trends: globalisation, convergence 	<p><u>People</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs analysis Group and organisational dynamics Psychology of people in groups Strategies for creating a knowledge sharing culture Ways people learn, think, absorb ideas Learning styles Cognitive science understanding Understanding how people share information
<p><u>Organisation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding of organisational culture Structure, politics and needs of organisation Business products and services Role of knowledge in the organisation The external market and competitive advantage Understanding how organisations work: purpose, function, vision and mission Cost benefits of knowledge management Value of knowledge to the organisation Understanding customer requirements 	<p><u>Information</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information management principles Information management systems Indexes and catalogues Understanding how information is utilised Synthesis of information Holistic view of information theory How to integrate knowledge and information into management systems
<p><u>Technology</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> System specifications and applications Understanding the internet as a global, networked information infrastructure Search engine algorithms Understanding impact of technology on the organisation Data mining 	

As shown in the table emphasis is given to understanding the nature of human knowing: how our knowing grows, is constructed, is structured, and is integrated into the already existing knowing as well as to understanding how it can be acquired, documented and integrated with the other existing knowing. Complementing this emphasis is also an emphasis on understanding the knowledge dynamics of people how people learn, think, and share ideas, how they consume information and impart their knowing and understanding group dynamics that foster or limit the sharing of personal knowing. Also perceived to be important is an understanding the

organisation as a knowledge generating and using entity organisational structures, cultures, dynamics, politics and values, and how knowledge creation and flow shape and are shaped by the organisation and its stakeholders.

Understanding of the different perspectives of knowledge management, together with their underpinning assumptions and epistemological stances and implications for professional practice would seem essential. While knowledge management consultants, trainers and educators might each choose to take different perspectives, situating a

preferred perspective within an understanding of multiple perspectives (Southon g and todd, 1999), may alleviate the uncertainty about the nature of the field and its practices, and the confusion surrounding its status as a fad or legitimate area of practice and inquiry, and may contribute to more effective implementation strategies within an organisation.

CHANGES INVOLVED IN KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

It is important that information professionals understand the complexities of change processes involved in knowledge management initiatives. While there are many pressures promoting relatively short-term technology-based knowledge management "solutions", these have poor records of effectiveness, and there is a need for longer term, culturally based initiatives (malholtra, 2000). These, are much more difficult to conceptualise and develop, especially when short-term fixes are expected. It is important for the information professional to recognise the breadth of factors involved, and to work with others within the organisation to develop a common understanding of what might be involved (nadler and shaw, 1995). This will require a long-term commitment and considerable education effort. They will also need to appreciate that knowledge management is probably much greater than any of them, and it is necessary to establish and recognise the relative contributions. (davenport and prusak, 1998)

CONCLUSION

Knowledge management has become a powerful tool for promoting innovation and realizing re-engineering the various walks of life. It occupies very outstanding position in the creation of knowledge innovation the systems of a country. Information professionals should understand the importance of knowledge management environment and apply it effectively to the fast development of their organization.

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