



# A Study on Role of Knowledge Managers in the Digital Era

\*Dr. Alpa Prashant Upadhyay

## Introduction:

The history of business environment, in the early years was limited to the stable trading patterns, stable market and technology was also static, customers were passive, speed in getting to market was secondary, competition was limited to sectors and regions, and hierarchies were generally accepted in all walks of life. No more, since 1960's, America and much of the rest of the world has been almost continually buffeted by change. The twentieth century saw nations around the world become part of the global village, with trade barriers between them reduced or removed completely. Globalization of trade and economy are taking deep roots in India. The holistic paradigm shift to a single global company has opened up new economic opportunities. Events of the last five years of the previous century have focused our attention on knowledge industries. Quality human resources have therefore become an important base with which to respond to the emerging environment. The knowledge workforce in particular has a vital role to play in the emergence of the digital economy.

A look at the trends in managing people in this dynamic industry reflects that attracting, managing, nurturing talent and retaining people has emerged to be the single most critical issue in lieu of the enormous opportunities spun off by the market. The new avatar of talent is the knowledge professional who is innovative, business savvy, quick on the uptake, has an instinctive ability to network, and possessing unbridled ambition. They are propelled by an urge to experiment, scan new avenues that can spur their creativity. The knowledge professional will gravitate to an organization that is flexible, has strong values, a robust performance ethic and provides challenging work on latest technology. This has led to companies proactively taking measures on three fronts. First, companies create an organizational ambience where talent can bloom. Secondly, they put in place systems that help unleash their potential and third, they build a reward and recognition mechanism that provides value for people. To achieve these three fronts the concept of knowledge management has gained importance in today's competitive corporate environment.

## **Concept of Knowledge Management:**

Having access to information is useless unless that information is put to use to further the goals and success of the organization. In today's economy, the basic economic resource is no longer capital or labour or natural resources, but it is knowledge. Peter Drucker coined the term knowledge work in early 1960s but only in recent years have managers begun to recognize knowledge as an important resource that should be managed, just as they manage cash flow, human resources or raw materials. Particularly for companies that are striving to be learning organizations, knowledge management is a critical job for organization executives. Knowledge management is a new way to think about organizing and sharing an organization's intellectual and creative resources.

Knowledge Management refers to the efforts to systematically find, organize, and make available a company's intellectual capital and to foster a culture of continuous learning and knowledge sharing so that organizational activities build on what is already known. The company's intellectual capital is the sum of this information, experience, understanding, relationships, processes, innovations and discoveries. A complete knowledge management system includes not only processes for capturing and storing knowledge and organizing it for easy access, but also ways to generate new knowledge through learning and to share knowledge throughout the organization. According to Townley: "Knowledge Management is a set of organizational processes that create and transfer knowledge supporting the attainment of academic and organizational goals." It is the only irreplaceable capital that an organization possesses. The productivity of their capital depends on how effectively people share their experience with those that can use it.

The main drivers for Knowledge Management are globalization, technological advances and information explosion and knowledge. Moreover there is better access to expertise, better learning experiences, greater reuse of information and knowledge, greater focusing of resources on mission critical knowledge and competitive advantage.

## **Role of Knowledge Managers:**

Knowledge originates and is applied in the minds of the knower. In organizations, the knowledge managers play following role in knowledge management:

- 1) Recognizing our role and potential in the knowledge management agenda and taking the opportunities that it provides.
- 2) Fostering collaboration to achieve improved outcomes make the best use of our resources and learn from best practice.
- 3) Investing in people. Bringing people together in communities of practice to solve problems and be creative including re-imagining how we can add greater value to the information we manage using the skills of those around us wherever these can be found.
- 4) Making available the knowledge embedded in our own organizations by identifying and capturing the assets that already exist and providing access to this knowledge.
- 5) Ensuring that information is easily accessible and managed according to need and constantly re-imagining how to unlock information that is created both internally and externally.
- 6) Ensuring that all of our limited investment is well justified by outcomes in research learning and teaching by taking a business approach to selection.

- 7) Identifying barriers to access and developing plans to overcome impediments to information and knowledge creation wherever they exist.
- 8) Becoming collaborators and supporters of knowledge management, recognizing that this is what we do well and we have a significant role and responsibility for the knowledge management agenda in what we do now and what we can do in the future.

### **Approaches to Knowledge Management:**

Knowledge Management has gained importance recently and the executives have begun thinking about deliberate, systematic ways to create, capture, organize and transfer knowledge. There are three driving forces behind the surge of interest in knowledge management are as under:

- i. A large part of the momentum comes from the rapid advances in information technology that makes it possible to share explicit knowledge more quickly and easily as well as to connect people in networks for the sharing of tacit knowledge.
- ii. As the economic basis of organizations shifts from natural resources to intellectual capital, top executives have found it imperative to appraise their organizations' knowledge resources and how to leverage them.
- iii. The growing interest in knowledge management is closely related to companies effort to become learning organizations, in which managers strive to create a culture and a system for creating new knowledge and for capturing both explicit and tacit knowledge and getting it to the right place at the right time.

The two distinct approaches to knowledge management are outlined as under:

1. The first approach of knowledge management deals primarily with the collection and sharing of explicit knowledge, largely through the use of sophisticated information technology systems. Explicit knowledge may include intellectual properties such as patents and licenses, work process such as policies and procedures, specific information on customers, markets, suppliers or competitors, competitive intelligence reports, benchmark data, and so forth. When an organization uses this approach, the focus is on collecting and codifying knowledge and storing it in databases where it can easily be accessed and reused by anyone in the organization. Knowledge is gathered from the individuals who possess it and is organized into documents that others can access and reuse.
2. The second approach focuses on leveraging individual expertise and know-how-tacit knowledge-by connecting people face-to-face or through interactive media. Tacit knowledge includes professional know-how, individual insights and creativity, and personal experience and intuition. With this approach, managers concentrate on developing personal networks that link people together for the sharing of tacit knowledge.

Organizations usually use number of mechanisms to support the collection and sharing of knowledge resources. Some mechanisms that are particularly useful for explicit knowledge management are as follows:

- 1) Data warehousing and data mining: Data warehousing allows companies to combine all their data into huge databases for easy access, and data mining helps users make sense of the data by searching for patterns that can help solve organizational problems or take advantage of new opportunities. At Ernst & Young, each of the more than forty practice areas has a staff member who helps to codify employee's explicit knowledge and store it in databases, which are linked through a network.

- 2) Knowledge mapping: Some companies undertake knowledge mapping projects that help to identify where knowledge is located in the organization and how to access it. Although there are varied approaches, the purpose of knowledge mapping is to guide people to knowledge resources within the company. Hughes Space & Communications is building a knowledge expressway using Lotus notes, videoconferencing, employee home pages, and numerous other technologies. The map is used to transfer new management practices, track licenses and patents, gather competitive intelligence, and so forth.
- 3) Electronic libraries: Databases of specific types of information for specific uses provide another way to store knowledge and make it available throughout the organization. Users may be able to 'check out' and reuse specific pieces of knowledge. For example, Sun Microsystems, a multinational vendor of computers, headquartered in California has created a shared-code library, a central communication hub from which programmers can check out whole pieces of software code without having to recreate them every time. Intranets and other networks are critical tools to give people throughout the organization access to explicit knowledge that is stored in databases, electronic libraries and so forth.

A significant goal of knowledge management systems is to leverage professional knowledge and expertise. Rather than having separate pockets of expertise scattered about the organization, knowledge management systems aim to bring knowledge together and spread it throughout the company. The above mechanisms are excellent tools for the management and transfer of explicit knowledge that can be codified and written down.

### **Conclusion:**

The key ideas that influence the current global business scenario can be summed up as a radical continuous change. Ideas such as change management, learning and unlearning, adaptation and flexibility have been popular over past few years. However, in the post-1990s era, the rapidity and radical nature of change has made companies think beyond benchmarking and best practices and developing innovative business strategies in order to retain the quality of human resources. Cubicles, hierarchies and rigid organization structures of the past, have now given way to open work environment, flat structure with informality being a general rule and empowerment of individuals. Today work itself is centered around projects, which have virtual teams working on them. This work structure has led to a culture of flexi time, round the clock accessibility to the workplace. Also catching up fast is the trend of workstations at home, remote access, video-conferencing and reporting by exception. To stay one step ahead of the aspirations of their people, companies are continuously striving to provide an intellectually stimulating environment. Companies today are constantly striving towards enhancing the quality of work life and also the personal life of its employees and this does not stop with the employee but gets extended to his/her family as well. The focus of knowledge management is on the ever-changing environment in which societies, organizations and individuals live, work, learn, adapt and survive. To conclude, change is here to stay, and we need to understand that all the practices that are working today may not necessarily work tomorrow. Customers' expectations, market changes and strategic decisions will derive the tools to managing the human assets. Digital transformation of organizations becomes imperative due to changes and innovations that arise from development industry 4.0. Along with that and by increasing the complexity of organizational environment,

organizations are forced to adapt to new conditions. By adjusting to the new requirements, organizations acquire new knowledge based on which they can develop a competitive advantage on the market or differentiate themselves from the competition.

References:

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