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KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN CORPORATE ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge creation and sharing is strategically important for any business organization. K M is defined as organizing knowledge for business. Knowledge is of two types: (1) Explicit, which is recorded in documents, (2) Implicit which is in the minds and experience of workers, work culture, procedures, values and feelings. K M is concerned with converting the implicit knowledge into explicit one. The process is through socialization, codification, combination and sharing through formal and informal means. Unfortunately Role of librarians in K M is mostly unrecognized. States the tools librarians can use for K M and enhance their value and status in an organization

Key words: Knowledge, knowledge Management (K.M.), Corporate, and Organization.

1. INTRODUCTION

Any system be it bio, mechanical or social runs on information. Information is a vital input in the management of any organization be if governmental, commercial or defence. But proper use of information lies in the manpower of any organization. Only experts and staff can give any context or meaning to the information grained or communicated. What lies in a man's head in knowledge? Knowledge is not only superior to information; it also gives contact to it. Information being objective can be communicated, but knowledge is personal and hard to communicate. Knowledge creation and sharing is widely recognized as strategically important for organization to gain competitive advantage. It is also recognized to be important for and organizational learning and innovation. More and more organizations are attempting to embrace Knowledge Management (KM) tools for saving costs and propelling growth. The world is witnessing unprecedented change in application of knowledge in every dimension of development, growth, revitalization, and organization. The concept of KM is not about technology management, but rather about deciding what information and knowledge is critical to the success of the organization. The emergence of ICT and its offshoots technologies such as Internet, Intranet, WWW, Web-portals, Groupware, etc. have made a significant impact on the work culture of organizations. It makes knowledge managers more responsive, focal-centered towards imparting the critical knowledge to the concerned organization. It has been widely accepted through various research studies that future will be knowledge based. The future wealth shall be knowledge and the KM tools certainly will play a catalytic role in changing environment. Therefore, information professionals must redesign, reshape their tools and techniques and give serious attention towards the newly emerged technologies and tools for effective implementation in their work. The Knowledge Management that is a core study area of management science today is the discovery of library science.

2. EVOLUTION OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Knowledge has become a greater factor of production than land, labour, and capital. The evolution of knowledge management is perhaps the most straightforward mechanism for delineating its components. The use of term ' **Knowledge Management'** is a recent phenomena

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fully matured in mid 1990 and the term appeared first in the context of Library and Information work, (Marchand, 1985), then the Dean, of the School of Information Studies at Syracuse University, coined it in the 1980 (Haravu, 2002). In the initial stage of evolution of concept knowledge management had only two basic components i.e. Information and knowledge capital, and structural capital (Koenig,2001). Later due to advent of the Internet, and intranet technologies a Trinity component emerged in Knowledge Management known as Information and Knowledge capital, structural capital, and customer capital (Kaplan and Norton, 1992).

In Indian context the term **'Knowledge Management'** appeared first time and applied in a commercial enterprise known as **Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)** in 1995. The management initiated the process of refinancing the framework in 1996. A dedicated Knowledge Management team called **"Corporate Groupware"** was formed in 1998 after a preliminary study. This group launched the Knowledge Management pilot project in 1999. The project is now being successfully implemented in TCS which consists a matrix of several groups: the Steering Committee, Corporate Groupware, Implementers, Branch Champions, Application Awareness, and the Infrastructure support Group (Javeri, 2001).

3. MEANING OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Today, the concept **Knowledge Management** is well established and applied almost in all facets of management science and well defined by various management experts as well as information experts. There are numerous definitions of Knowledge Management to be found in various publications printed as well as Web. The following definitions are the most commonly used and cited.

The one of the earliest is by Davenport, (1998) that: 'Knowledge Management is the process of capturing, distributing, and effectively using Knowledge'. It is simple and stark. The second definition more comprehensive is given by **Gartner Group** (Duhon, 1998) that 'Knowledge Management is a discipline that promotes an integrated approach to identifying, capturing, evaluating, retrieving, and sharing all of an enterprise's information assets. These assets may include databases, documents, policies, procedures, and previously uncaptured expertise, and experience of individual workers' is illuminating because it makes very implicit that aspect of Knowledge Management of including not just conventional information and knowledge units, but also 'tacit knowledge' that which is known but not captured in any formal or explicit fashion' . The third definition as given by Ruggles (1998) reads 'Knowledge Management is newly emerging, interdisciplinary business model dealing with all aspects of knowledge within the context of firm, including knowledge creation, codification, sharing, learning, and innovation. Davenport and Prusak(1998) have given another pragmatic description of Knowledge Management, which says 'A fluid mix of contextual information, framed experience, values and expert insight that provides framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information'. Technology in important to make communication easier through at the organization.

It is revealed from the above definitions that **Knowledge Management** is not about technology management. KM solely based on information and IT cannot work. Technology is important to make communication easier throughout an organization. But the people matter much more than it. It is rather about deciding what information and knowledge is critical to the success of the organization, and to ensure that Knowledge Management activists get prioritized within the organization. In very simple words, Knowledge Management is a considered 'techno-cultural solution.' It is a collaborative endeavour, which dwells on the interconnected nature of people and

their knowledge gained with experience over time, and processes. Essential lynchpin of KM is people, the human ware they form. It is organizing knowledge for business.

4. WHY KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT?

Knowledge has become a much greater factor of production than land, labour, and capital. Knowledge is a strategic resource and a commodity. The increasing power of knowledge has placed emphasis on promoting and pooling together of knowledge resources (i.e., documents, experiences, expertise, etc.). The under mentioned reasons justify the need for Knowledge Management.

- Knowledge is the basic input to all kind of services and similarly considered as the prime mover of the society.
- Knowledge is new, expandable source of economic wealth and there is an emerging recognition that the most valuable resource of any country is its inherent intellectual assets/effectively exploited through innovation (Entovation, 2005) .
- Knowledge helps to cope up with changes and re-designs, re-expanding, and re-casting the production and services.
- Knowledge Management combines dissimilar resources to provide innovative products in multiple markets (Bhunia, 2000) .
- Knowledge helps in streamlining operations and reduces costs by eliminating redundant processes.
- Knowledge sharing is the natural next step to information sharing for the maximum utilization of resources.

Knowledge is of two types:

(1) Tacit or private Knowledge: It is personal expertise of a worker gained with experience.

(2) Explicit or documented knowledge: In context of a company it consists of databases, market forecasts, framed experience, formulated procedures, product specifications, software, standards and patents. It can be expressed in verbal or graphic from. It is a tip of the iceberg of the knowledge that exists outside the organization.

5. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT VERSUS TRADITIONAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The view is often expressed in traditional library and information science discipline that Knowledge Management is just old wine in new bottle, just the new name for information resource management, which in turn was just a new name for Documentation, which in turn was just a new name for Librarianship. The major differences between Knowledge Management and Traditional Information Management is given as Broadbent, (1998); Srikantaian and Koenig, (2000).

Features of Knowledge Management

1. Emphasis upon unstructured and informal information and knowledge .
2. KM plays an active role in corporate culture transformation, and acts as metamorphosis.
3. Knowledge context, organization sectoral, and supplier customer .

4. An awareness of knowledge as text but coming from a background in non-textual information.
5. KM links knowledge sharing with compensation policy.
6. KM is traditionally poorly organized.
7. Earlier emphasis was on internal information, but now it is increasingly on external information that is competitive in nature.
8. Information and knowledge sharing is facilitated by the web and networks.

6. PROCESS OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Any company has to create knowledge to be successful and competitive. KM is the process of converting tacit knowledge of workers into explicit knowledge to be shared with other workers. This is a way to increase the knowledge stock and network of the company. It is also to same a company from any deprivation or loss of expertise when an employee leaves the company. If his/her knowledge is already shared then somebody else can carry on the job without much effect. It consists of two levels of activities:

1. Converting private knowledge into expressed knowledge.
2. Thus shifting individual knowledge to the group or organizational knowledge.

It may be noted that it is not one-way process. Three is always an interaction between the private and public knowledge. Human knowledge keeps on shifting between tacit and explicit knowledge through process of social interaction. In this way new knowledge is produced.

7. METHOD OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Davenport and Prusak (1998) have summarized four steps suggested by Nonaka and Ikujiro by which corporate knowledge is created in a company through interaction and conversion between private and public knowledge. These are: (1) Socialization (2) Externalization (3) Combination (4) Internalization (Choo,2003 , Nonaka and Takeuchi,1995):

7.1 Socialization: It is a process of acquiring tacit knowledge through sharing of experience. It may be through apprenticeships, observing seniors and other colleagues, and getting adjusted to the culture and procedures of an organization. One learns new skill through hand-on experience or on-job training. Wide reading should be encouraged even during office times.

7.2 Externalization: It is the most important step in knowledge creation. It is the process of making explicit the tacit knowledge through the use of metaphor, analogies, models or writing. It can be made more objective through dialogue or collective thinking. It is teamwork.

7.3 Combination: It is combination of the earlier steps of externalization. It is interdisciplinary in nature as it involves working with colleagues or project-team mate across discipline or varied expertise. It is to combine externalized knowledge through conversation, telephones, emails and memos, etc. in essence it is combination of objective knowledge with the nascent ideas. It means management should encourage informal interaction between employees. Informal talking between colleagues should not be taken as unproductive and undesirable. It should also enhance occasions of formal meetings with colleagues in and outside organization.

7.4 Internalization: It is the final steps of digesting and integrating the experiences gained through other modes of knowledge creation. It adds to individuals tacit knowledge in the form of shared work practices. The final steps are to record captured knowledge in documents or conveyed in form of stories base of the company for use by the other employees.

8. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT TOOLS

The present era is the age of digital systems, which aims at leveraging the two-core revolutions – PC and the Internet. Therefore, the Knowledge Management became imperative as the world moved from industrial economy to knowledge economy. The role of effective Knowledge Management tools in integrating the resources of an organization has become necessary. The Knowledge Management tools run the range from standard tools packages to sophisticated collaborations tools designed specially to support community building. Generally, tools fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Knowledge repositories (Libraries)
- Expertise access tools
- E-learning applications
- Discussion and chat technologies
- Search and data mining tools
- E-portals
- Enterprises knowledge portals
- Groupware's, etc.

These are available to manage the knowledge resources. The following are most popular Knowledge Management tools (Gaur, 2000).

1. **Intranet:** Most popular and effective Knowledge Management tool is organizational network based on Internet and WWW technology. With the help of this tool organizations can easily communicate, distribute information and products, facilitate project collaborations, projects etc, and also check-unauthorized access.

2. **Text Retrieval and Document Management Software:** These are the of application software designed especially for library point of view that enable to create databases of documents for automate library routine activities (i.e. acquisition, cataloguing, circulation, article indexing, OPAC, etc.) and search documents. Several library management software options are available for example, PC/DOCS, CDS/ISIS, WINISIS, LYBSIS, SOUL, PROCITE, SLIM++, and Granathalaya.

3. **Groupware:** It is a kind of application software with built-in calendars, scheduling, e-mail, navigational tools that support the collaborative activities of work groups and experts team. The Lotus Notes Domino and Microsoft's MS Exchange server are the popular Groupware software and widely used as Knowledge Management tools (Thuraisingham, 2000).

4. **Data Warehousing:** Data warehousing is the key component of Knowledge Management tool. It facilitates the data search from the heterogeneous databases and also serves functions of various query formulation for the intensive search.

5. **Workflow Management:** It includes dynamic work management solutions such as document Management, workflow, imaging, Computer Output to Laser Disk (COLD), and network storage management.

In addition, Knowledge Management tools receive a boost from network computing technology such as the Internet, and the World Wide Web for effective access to information that in turn promotes " information productivity" of course, one of the wonderful and superb service which became a core part of work culture of any enterprises known is e-mail. E-mail is the most fundamental building block of Knowledge Management tool. It not only makes the communication faster and more efficient, but also makes the organization more flatter (Palme, 1995).

9. BARRIERS IN KNOWLEDGE SHARING

These are many cultural, psychological even administrative barriers in knowledge sharing , which may hinder K.M.

1. Sense of individualism hinders the sharing of knowledge.
2. Knowledge is considered individual's power and privilege. Few are ready to lose this power unless highly motivated or threatened. For example in medieval India the art of fine and film thin muslin was well known. The art died because the weavers were reluctant to share this art with the others. To avoid this companies shared motivate and plan formal and informal interaction between employees at every level .

10. ROLE OF LIBRARIANS

The human action and the information flow are the two most dominant inputs to any sound development strategy in any organization. For them the right information needs to be in the hands of the right people at the right time. The success does not rely on an individual's Knowledge but the knowledge of the organization as a whole. Libraries and Information centers since inception are more or less the part and parcel of their attached organization and nerve center for delivering the strategic knowledge to the users of their organization. In changing perspective the work culture of libraries and their tools and techniques have undergone several changes. The terms such as knowledge manager, resource manager, information specialists, technology gatekeeper, web navigator cybrarian, are some of the example that are common names applicable to library professionals. The new generation of LIS professionals is more advanced and IT savvy and engages not only in LIS activities of libraries but also in other important activities of the organization they serve.

In 1990, Prusak and Matarazzo (1990) conducted a study to determine the value of LIS professionals in a corporate sector in growth and development of company. They found the role of library manager as:

- The online search performed by librarians was the most valuable service offered.
- They also found that most companies surveyed had no methods or processes in place to evaluate the effectiveness, efficiency or productivity of what librarians do.
- While every one appeared to 'like' libraries and librarians, few firms thought of them as 'mission critical'.
- They concluded that with no methods to evaluate library contributions to productivity and profits, the status of librarians within the firm was likely to sink further in terms of compensation, status, value and impact.

Another study conducted by Flectk and Bawpen (1998) in the professional fields of Law and Medicine revealed the findings of study as:

- The working librarians in their associated institutions were highly regarded by their clients but they fulfilled very much a service oriented and reactive function, serving clients by responding to their needs, rather anything more dynamic and proactive.
- Their clients perceived the librarians as efficient, intelligent, helpful, and processing specialized knowledge.
- They were also seen as un-ambitious people whose job satisfaction was in helping others to achieve their ends.

Today, the top executives of corporate organizations well recognize the value of managing knowledge for their effective and timely consumption. For this they show their interest to appoint Chief Knowledge Officer (CKO) who will help the enterprise as a whole. The responsibility of CKO is a kind of extension of library affairs. Therefore, this is the right time that library professionals re-think their ethics, responsibilities, participations, services, status, and the more important the needs of their institution so that LIS professionals may play their role as model in the sustainable growth and development of their institutions.

11. FUTURE OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

In coming days, the web-portal technologies, such as e-journal portals, e-gateways consortia etc., will certainly improve the creation and delivering of the content to users more effectively and efficiently. According to some experts Knowledge Management technologies such as **Enterprise Knowledge Portals** (EKPs), which connect people, information centres, and processing capabilities in same environment will be the technology of future. Further, there are three levels of web portal technologies for knowledge management such as:

- **Enterprises Information Portals** (EIP) which provide personalized information to users on a subscription and query basis,
- **Enterprises Expertise Portal** (EEP) which provides connection between people based on their abilities,
- **Enterprises Collaboration Portals** (ECP), which provide, virtual places for people to work together. Undisputedly, Knowledge Management certainly will play a significant role in the 21st century to harness knowledge for development and to gain a competitive edge .

12. CONCLUSION

Knowledge Management has been identified as the major and important management initiative that will help organizations, institutions, governments and all corporations to create knowledge by utilizing the every fruit of information technology in fulfilling the objectives of the parent organization. The availability of new IT, offshoot technologies, particularly Internet, intranets and World Wide Web, have been instrumental in catalyzing the Knowledge Management. It is equally important that if, the ICT tools and techniques are well resourced and effectively implemented they will certainly provide a comprehensive knowledge platform for speedy, pinpointed, exhaustively organizing knowledge.

Internet, a wonderful invention of modern society, has revolutionized the entire work culture and managerial aspects of professionals by playing a key role in building the true image of Knowledge Management in the shape of electronic storage of information and retrieval, content delivery, content management, accessing of information through online databases, transfer of files, etc. Most of the technological tools now available in library segment tend to help to

isseminate information, but offer less assistance for how to use Knowledge. Tools that assist in nowledge creation are even less and not well developed. However, some of the more user riendly technologies such as face-to-face discussions, the telephone, electronic mail and paper ased tools such as books, periodicals, film charts, etc. are traditional tool and are not much ffective in knowledge management in changing perspectives and emergence of new-ophisticated technologies.

Knowledge creation, and sharing is widely recognized as strategically important asset of ny organization. For effective and efficient knowledge management professionals must redesign nd re-shape the traditional management tools and techniques for capturing, processing, reserving, and disseminating the contents to the user in a real time. Employees must be allowed lack time for learning and thinking during office hours. Knowledge Management and its facets uch as content management, content engineering, web content management, etc., require a olistic and multi disciplinary approach to management processes understanding of the imensions of knowledge work. KM is harmonizing human expertise and technology power.

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