

Knowledge capsule

MANAGING KNOWLEDGE IN ORGANISATIONS

Context

In the Knowledge Society, information is one of the main resources of organisations; managing knowledge correctly has a direct repercussion on business competitiveness. Hence organisations' need and interest to implement structures and mechanisms for capturing, handling and disseminating information - a process in which new technology plays a key role.

Knowledge management

What is knowledge management? Knowledge management consists of implementing processes and mechanisms, which aim to make the knowledge of individual professionals part of the company's collective knowledge.

In order for individual, implicit knowledge - which forms part of professionals' capabilities, skills and experience - to be converted into the organisation's explicit intellectual capital, formal procedures need to be established that help identify, capture, organise, share and disseminate this knowledge and information.

It is during this process that knowledge becomes a resource and added value for the organisation: it makes it easier for professionals to adapt and learn, and it encourages their involvement in the organisation which in turn translates into increased productivity and competitiveness for the company.

Who is involved in knowledge management? All members of an organisation are involved in knowledge management. They provide relevant information and share useful data, based on their own perspective, depending on their role within the company. Clearly, in order to encourage participation, a climate of trust needs to be established within the organisation to encourage professionals to share their accumulated knowledge. External experts who regularly work with the organisation might also be involved.

How is knowledge managed? There are four aspects to managing knowledge: corporate culture, professionals, processes and new technologies.

- Corporate culture: In order to encourage the involvement of professionals in managing knowledge, a structure that ensures the flow of information is needed.
- Professionals: Contributing knowledge for sharing with other colleagues can be viewed by professionals as extra effort unless the benefits of sharing information are highly visible.

- **Procedures:** From this, the need arises for processes for contributing and sharing information to be intuitive and easy to use. This ensures that the information can be found quickly, without wasting time, thereby increasing confidence in the system.
- **Technology:** The role of new technologies is fundamental in facilitating procedures and increasing the effectiveness of managing knowledge. Information technology can make it easy to update and structure information. Similarly, it enables information to be shared without the need for a physical meeting between the person that needs the information and the person that has it; it also enables them to access the information at the precise time they need it.

There are a range of mechanisms and tools for managing information. The most common are e-mail, databases, blogs and virtual communities.

Databases: Databases enable information and data to be stored in a clearly structured manner in different sections or categories - such as: "business objectives", "best practice", "results from projects" and so on.

Virtual communities: Intranets enable virtual communities to be created or practical communities that virtually bring together professionals with shared interests.

When is an organisation ready to implement knowledge management? For an organisation to implement knowledge management successfully, there are a series of requirements that are closely related to corporate culture:

- The transfer of knowledge is not fluid in vertical organisations and rigid structures. Knowledge management works across horizontal structures, where communication and exchange takes place in a fluid manner.
- For people to be willing to share, an atmosphere of trust must be created where there is no distrust in sharing data and information and where contributions are recognised.
- The organisational culture needs to promote ongoing learning and professional development in order to encourage professionals to expand their knowledge and skills.

What are the advantages of knowledge management for organisations? Implementing an optimum knowledge management system has a positive impact in terms of professionals' effectiveness and, consequently, on the organisation's competitiveness.

- It encourages ongoing learning and professional development.
- Among professionals, it promotes involvement and a sense of belonging to the company.
- It reduces the time needed to resolve everyday queries.
- It increases the company's intellectual capital.
- It promotes flow of communication between the organisation's departments and professionals.
- It helps identify leaders and experts within the organisation.
- It encourages collaboration with professionals outside the organisation.
- It maximises return on knowledge acquisition processes.
- It contributes to better decision making.

Conclusions

- Organisational competitiveness in the Knowledge Economy depends increasingly on the intelligent use of information and the competitive application of technology.
- For knowledge management to be successful in organisations, the following are key: a clear and simple system to record information; a corporate philosophy that promotes ongoing learning as a central core value of the organisation; and professionals being able to see the competitive advantages of contributing and sharing information.
- New technologies play a key role in simplifying processes of storing and disseminating knowledge.

Key concepts

Knowledge management: A process consisting of all the activities that enable an organisation's knowledge, information, experience and expertise to be generated, searched, disseminated, shared, used and maintained for the purposes of increasing the organisation's intellectual capital and increase its value. UNE Standard 166,000 "Managing R&D&I; Terminology"

A set of procedures aimed at capturing, handling and transferring information generated in a company or organisation and the intellectual capital of its members in order to create an ongoing system of training and improvement that has a positive impact on the quality of products and services offered.

Systematic process of researching, identifying, selecting, structuring, storing, transferring and reusing an organisation's tacit and explicit knowledge with the aim of converting it into an asset that generates value for the organisation.

Intellectual capital: Set of personal, organisational, technological and relational competencies of an organisation upon which its competitive advantages depend.

Set of intellectual skills and the tacit and explicit knowledge of the people that make up an organisation, and which can generate value for the organisation.

Explicit knowledge: The information, data or experiences (the knowledge) that can be conveyed in formal language and in a systematic way.

Implicit or tacit knowledge: Personal knowledge that is context dependent and is, therefore, difficult to communicate.

Bibliography

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Equipo FeedBackGround, SL (2003). Guide to Knowledge Management. Barcelona: Centre for Business Innovation and Development. Department of Work, Industry, Trade and Tourism. Generalitat de Catalunya.

Webography

Infonomía. Innovators Network

www.infonomia.com

rrhh Magazine. Human Resources and Business Management

www.rrhmagazine.com

Foundation for Human Resource Motivation

www.factorhuma.org

Managing Knowledge

<http://www.gestion-conocimiento.com/>

Webography for Human Capital

We offer a number of ways within the Human Capital website for you to expand the information relating to your self-understanding.

[Market > New Working Cultures > IT and 2.0 tools](#)

[Market > New Working Cultures > Organisational Models/Business Management](#)

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