'Capturing Institutional Memory and Knowledge' Proposal (12th Oct 2014)

Introduction

Knowledge lives within every employee in the company, and can come from what they learn at the company, what they learnt before they joined the company and what they are learning when they are not working at your company. Knowledge is not just about some new technology that will lead to new products or services; it is processes, procedures, techniques, skills and innovations that can also improve company performance. Knowledge is not just about the things the organisation conducted effectively/efficiently; it is what went wrong so you can learn from those mistakes. Very rarely are things created from scratch and work straight out of the box, so knowledge is required to move entities from a basic fundamental state to a more advanced state where they can have more value added potential for the company. As the old saying goes, risks and failures will easily find you, but opportunities and success need to be searched out. Knowledge needs to be sorted, cherished, looked after, nurtured and fed for it to be of value and effective. If you don't look after knowledge and value it, then knowledge will drift out of your organisation at an alarming speed, never to return.

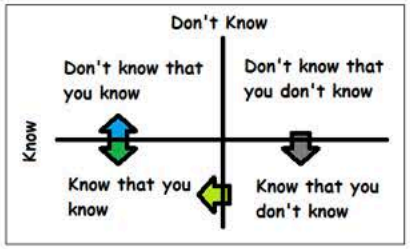

Figure 1: The Square of Knowledge

Everything in terms of knowledge starts with the square of knowledge (Figure 1). You start in the zone where you don't know that you don't know, and attempt to stay in the bottom two quadrants, below the 'know' line. If you know that you don't know, at least you can do something about it. The objectives of every activity that is undertaken within your organisation in line with knowledge management is, to move the knowledge that you *'know that you don't know'* into *'know that you know'* quadrant, and put in place actions that stop you migrating into the *'don't know that you know'* quadrant (forgetting knowledge that you gained in the past).

Organisations embarking on the journey of knowledge management often turn to IT tools thinking they will be the quick answer. The Knowledge Triangle (Figure 2) has been developed by this consortium to show the different depths, complexities and possible solutions for knowledge management. It is essential a scalable solution for all organisations. When you start at level 1 (red line), the hard thinking of Level 0 is not done, so when you find that the new tool is not working, and conduct some simple diagnostics at a Level 2 level, try and implement some 'quick wins' and there the initiative stalls (i.e. plateau of acceptance – where no further improvements can ever be made). Without appropriate Level 0 (green line) thinking (i.e. culture, organisational dynamics, objectives and strategy) and support, organisations will never get to level 4 and beyond (blue line). True knowledge management involves the combination of people, processes, products (tools), policy, performance and profit.

Figure 2: The typical route around the Knowledge Triangle

The following sections provide detailed description of the eight parts of the Knowledge Triangle, each containing five examples of knowledge management tools and techniques.

Figure 3: Level 1 Knowledge Management – Standard Company Approaches

Level 1 Knowledge Management – Standard Company Approaches

Most executives think that creating a collaborative framework is done through the procurement and introduction of new IT and tools. The classic Level 1 Knowledge Management framework is shown in Figure 3, which essentially follows the minimal effort and throw a bit of money at the problem management philosophy (Point of initial awareness that something needs to be done). Corporate Wiki's can be good, but need to be thought out properly. Informal briefings (Brown Bag Lunches) are good for ad-hoc learning and reinforcing issues, but are not a substitute for properly learning or memory capture, as slides often highlight areas and don't go into enough depth. Mentoring initiatives are started with all good intentions, but often focus is lost after a few months as other business priorities emerge. Management Information Systems are procured as out of the box solutions, and not enough effort is spent tailoring the packages to actual business processes or on the training required to really make them effective. New entrants to the business are told about the system, but rarely given enough training, so the system knowledge begins to get lost. The more proactive companies establish debating forums or get staff to write White Papers, but these tend to be very specialised, only get written by dedicated individuals, not peer reviewed or distributed appropriately. It can be seen that a lot of the Level 1 solutions tend to be quick fix solutions, often done cheaply with the naïve thinking that if we build it, people will use it. These solutions are done

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