



NEW PERSPECTIVES OF MANAGEMENT IN LIBRARIES

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ABSTRACT :

The development of knowledge management in recent years has become the key concern for librarians and libraries. There has been a surge of interest in Knowledge Management (KM) worldwide. More and more organizations now recognize that Knowledge Management is critical to the survival and growth of their business and Library and Information Centres (LICs) are not an exception to this. The paper highlights the importance of knowledge management in the 21st century and emphasizes the need for Knowledge Management (KM), Knowledge Management implementation and other concepts.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, Knowledge Assets, Intellectual Capital, Intangible Assets, Tacit Knowledge, Explicit Knowledge and Knowledge Capital.

INTRODUCTION :

Managing knowledge is becoming a business imperative for those enterprises who want to protect their present market share, build future opportunity share and stay ahead of competition. Knowledge will also be the key driving force for those firms who are keen to innovate and change the values of the game.

The application of knowledge management has now spread to other organizations including government agencies, research and development organizations, Govt. departments, universities and other institutions. But, it was the business world that first recognized the importance of knowledge in the global economy. After the information, knowledge of an individual is considered to be pivotal in contributing to the literature. Experts opine that whatever the literature available for us is only 15 % and rest of the knowledge is not expressed.





The Evolution of Knowledge Management

Drucker (1965 and 1998) pointed out that “Knowledge” would replace land, labor, capital, machines, etc. and also claims that knowledge had become a part of productivity and was the most important key resource in the global economic environment. His foresight did not get much attention back then. It was until 1991 when Ikujiro Nonaka raised the concept of “tacit” knowledge and “explicit” knowledge as well as the theory of “spiral of knowledge” in the Harvard Business Review which indicated the emergence of knowledge based competition (Nonaka, 1991). In his latest book, Building Organizational Intelligence: a Knowledge Management Primer, Liebowitz (2000) stated: “In today’s movement towards knowledge management, organizations are trying to best leverage their knowledge internally in the organization and externally to their customers and stakeholders. They are trying to capitalize on their organizational intelligence to maintain their competitive edge”.

Why Knowledge Management?

Knowledge Management makes the organization more productive, more effective, and more successful. Knowledge Management is introduced to enhance collaboration, to improve productivity, to enable and encourage innovation, and to cope up with information overload and deliver only the essentials (Hibbard, 1997).

Earlier, libraries were regarded as non – profit organizations. If this is the notion in today’s environment, libraries will not sustain in this competitive world and the day may come where there will be no budget for libraries and they have to maintain themselves by generating funds or by marketing their products or services. The situation calls for the survival of the fittest among organizations / Library and Information Centres in all respect (including infrastructure, manpower, facilities services etc.). In this regard, libraries should be more proactive in





marketing their services and values to their user constituents. There is a greater need to change the mindset and tradition of just waiting for users to come to the library. One needs to reach out to the users and advertise / market the services. If they see the value of the services, they will support and oppose for such a valuable institutions as libraries to be closed or scale down.

On the other hand, budget crunch in most of the libraries is the prime factor responsible for the implementation of knowledge management. In recent years, budget in academic libraries are stagnant at best and declining in general (Ghosh and Jambekar, 2003). Kothari Commission (1964-66) recommended that 6.5 % of the total budget of the university should be spent on the libraries. But, in the university set up the library is the first to reduce the budget compared to other heads / departments. In other words, academic libraries have to play a pivotal role to satisfy the user's needs and requirements in spite of many hurdles. At the same time professionals have to be very cautious about the threat posed by the Internet based information services and also students and faculty's own information gathering efforts.

Knowledge Management Process

P. Galagan (1997) has proposed a set of knowledge management process as below:

- Generating / creating new knowledge within the organization;
- Accessing knowledge from external sources, i.e. outside the organization in terms of documentary sources;
- Representing knowledge in documents, databases, software and so forth;
- Embedding knowledge in processes, products, or services;





- Transferring existing knowledge around an organization and giving room for further knowledge generation;
- Using accessible knowledge in decision-making and policy formulation;
- Facilitating knowledge growth through culture, awarding system and incentives; and
- Measuring the value of knowledge assets and the impact of knowledge management.

Implementing Knowledge Management (KM)

The implementation process should normally have the following components.

Knowledge Assets

The process of KM implementation begins with clear understanding of what knowledge we intend to manage (Kamalavijayan, 2005). One cannot obviously attempt to manage something that is merely an idea, expression, insight, however good it might be. At this juncture, the knowledge assets of the organizations come into rescue. Knowledge assets are very useful and organizations need to identify what their knowledge assets are.

Knowledge assets are nothing but keeping track of knowledge about, markets (competitors), products (it is open secret that the automobile company's already have two or three future models ready even as they are introducing today's model into the marketplace), processes and technologies. Besides having these assets, it is important for an organization to know how to manage them to get maximum benefits out of minimum inputs. Hence, it is very much important that these knowledge assets contribute towards the smooth and successful functioning of any organization.





Knowledge Initiatives

It is prime concern for any organization to understand and identify its knowledge assets before any organization can start a knowledge initiative (in one sense, even knowing one's knowledge assets is itself the first step towards knowledge initiative). In a broader sense, knowledge can be divided into being tacit and explicit. Tacit knowledge (like skills, ideas, views, judgments etc.) is rests in the people's heads or minds of the individuals. Explicit knowledge (like letters, lectures, circulars, newsletters, minutes of the meetings, technical writings, etc.) on the other hand is available in some coded or documented form.

It is important to classify knowledge as the first step towards codification. Knowledge capture, as the name indicates, is the process of capturing the knowledge in one or the other form. Once, the knowledge is captured and stored them in the form of knowledge objects, it needs to be organized into knowledge bases (similar to data bases). These knowledge bases store both structured and unstructured knowledge content and also contains powerful retrieval facilities. A knowledge map as the next step, gives an idea about how to proceed further, which shows the direction or path. Knowledge utilization, therefore, can be achieved through knowledge dissemination and sharing within the organization so that employees can make use of this knowledge and further enriching the knowledge base. In the true sense, every organization works for their objectives. Organizations have to identify the knowledge requirements to meet these goals and the knowledge gap as well. Knowledge gap is the difference between what the organizations / enterprise currently has and what it requires. Identification of the knowledge gap is tedious job. Thus, the processes, if understood properly, can pave the way for successful knowledge management initiatives in the context of any organization.





Technological Perspective

With the advent of computers things have changed now. In knowledge management process different technologies are being used. These technologies are identified and selected based on the requirements and the type of knowledge that need to be managed. Two technological approaches are to be worth mention here, i.e. pull and push technologies, whenever we deal with KM and technology. These two technologies determine how the end-user or knowledge seeker gets / extracts his / her knowledge.

Pull technology includes the conventional information retrieval techniques, search strategy, search engines etc. where the user takes the initiative without anybody's help and seeks or extracts or pulls the information from the knowledge base or knowledge store. Push technology, on the other hand is, providing information services in anticipation. Here, the user is not directly involved in seeking information, but it is pushed from the knowledge store or knowledge repository from time to time. Alert services, news group services etc. are some of the examples of push technologies. Some of the technologies that get associated with KM are: Internet, Intranet, Extranet, Data Warehouses, Data Mining, Artificial Intelligence, Expert Systems, Knowledge Base Management System, Information Retrieval, etc. publishing technology and etc.

Library Objectives of KM

One of the objectives of KM in libraries is to promote the knowledge exchange among library staffs, strengthen innovation consciousness and abilities, arise the library staffs' enthusiasm and abilities for learning, making the knowledge most efficiently applied to business activities of the library, and rebuilding the library into a learning organization. Therefore, the main train of thought in realizing knowledge management of libraries is a rational design of





the organizational structure and business procedures of libraries, and cultural fostering, as well as modernized information support, thus creating an environment and incentive mechanism for innovation, exchange, study and application of the knowledge. As a learning organization, libraries should provide a strong leadership in knowledge management. Unlike those business organizations whose goal for knowledge management is for competitive advantage, most public, academic, and research libraries, with the exception of company libraries a different orientation and value. Instead of competition, internal use only, and little sharing of knowledge with others outside, the most important mission of public, academic, and research libraries is to expand the access of knowledge for their users. Keeping this mission in mind, libraries should aim their knowledge management goal high.

Below are seven objectives of what libraries KM and KS contain in all of the key areas of library services:

- ◆ **Knowledge** innovation is the central part of the KM and KS;
- ◆ **Libraries** by nature does collection, processing, storage and distribution of knowledge and information;
- ◆ **Libraries** represent an essential connection in the scientific and academic research which is an important link in the knowledge innovation;
- ◆ **The** entire library work is a component of knowledge innovation;
- ◆ **Libraries** must pay attention to diffusion and conversion of knowledge;
- ◆ **Knowledge** management in libraries is to promote relationship in and between libraries, between library and user, to strengthen knowledge internetworking and to speed up knowledge stream;





- ◆ **Protection** and preservation of intellectual property rights in the electronic era; and
- ◆ **Promote** Knowledge and founding the base for knowledge innovation.

CONCLUSION :

Knowledge Management is a new field drawing on several disciplines including Library and Information Science. For any library to succeed in implementing knowledge management will require a strong leadership and vision from the top administration, which can influence the organization's knowledge sharing efforts in a positive way.

Implementation of knowledge solutions are not as easy as they are generally considered to be. It is possible and more even desirable to adopt a clear implementation process, based on ground realities within the organization. There cannot be a single approach as far as knowledge management solutions are concerned. In spite of the availability of several tools organizations simply cannot buy a set of tools and hope that rest of it will fix in its place. And a bottom up approach to solutions will never be effective either in terms of costs or time. Therefore, it becomes inevitable that every organization would strive for a highly customized solution. In such a context it would be more feasible to look at frameworks or models that enable several processes that create a knowledge sharing environment. In fact, such models can be used as pivot around which the overall knowledge solution falls in place, and further enhance the processes in gaining the desired results.

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