

Knowledge and Information Management Skills for the Workplace

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Introduction:

Within this paper we will be exploring the significant attributes to knowledge management and the importance of it being effectively in place within an organisation. It is of extreme importance that an effective knowledge management system is in place within every organisation for knowledge is the only thing that one has which cannot be taken from him. (MCS ltd).

Within the discussion of how simple facts, data, are converted into information of which then combined with experience, human identity, logic and the contribution of society's views on fair and unfair, can provide one with the gift of knowledge. How too much information is as bad as too little information, the overflow of information is as the overflow of responsibility, one may only carry which he can handle.

We will finally identify how knowledge management is able to benefit an organisation directly, the steps which should be taken and the advice directly instructed upon it.

“Control: Not knowing where your information is is the first step to losing it.”

“Security: ‘You gotta keep the bait in the bucket, not in the pond.’”

“Access: When you need your information, you will get it faster.”

“Responsibility: With all the eggs in one basket, one is forced to carry the basket more carefully, meaning you provide better protection for your information.”

- Kevin D. Murray

(1)The relationship between data,
information, knowledge, and wisdom

"Wisdom is not a product of schooling but of the lifelong attempt to acquire it." Albert Einstein.

Firstly we will identify what the meanings behind these words are and then explore how they interrelate amongst each other and their effect on one another.

Data are the collection of facts or even observations which have been deemed to have almost no value until they are processed and turned into information. Data often comes in the form of figures or raw facts and after processed they will then be used as a basis to draw up important conclusions.

Information is the following step within the phase, after a fact being processed it is then laid out in a format which would consider it be information. Information involves including processed data within a meaningful context in which allows responses to be created and will always serve a specific purpose as it is created in regards to specific needs for that set of information.

Both of these work together, without the base of data there will be no information processed and we would lack the ability to create or study many things. An example of this can be seen within the workplace I work at, MCS Cleaning services; a company which provides cleaning/housekeeping services for establishments, when working within a hotel there are things we need to know to be able to service them efficiently and correctly. We need to know how many guests are staying the night, how many are leaving and how many rooms are being occupied. After we gather this data we must then process it via a computer system which will enable us to come out with the information of how many rooms need cleaning, how many of them will require the 'deep clean' and how many hours and staff are needed in total to complete the service. This is repeated daily.

There are different categories of information processing each being best suited for a specific occasion. **Classification** is the method where you would separate the data into categories and an example of this would be by categorizing an expense as either a fixed or variable value. **Rearranging** includes sorting data so that the items have either been placed into a specific order or have been grouped with one another, an example of this would be the customer data which may be arranged by location or last name.

Aggregating is the summarisation of data by reducing the information into one section for e.g.: an average number of a calculation. **Calculations** is one of the most important methods, this would be included in the finance side of the organisation, working out how much to invoice the customer by the amount of hours worked and how much to pay the employee by the amount of hours worked. We then have **selection** which is the basic ability of dividing the items of data based by a specific criteria, we would use this in the business within the sales sector where they would select ideal candidates (larger hotels) to offer the services.

It is critical to identify the different value of information which can either be tangible or intangible. Tangible means the cost of the resources required for the gathering of the information in regard to the value of the information whereas intangible would be the improvement within the decision behaviour such as a better customer service etc.

Information always comes with a source and this can be either formal or informal. Formal being something that has been presented over to you formally, where this has been researched, structured and planned whereas informal communication would be something more 'natural' where the information is gathered by causality, conversations etc.

Time	Content	Form	Additional characteristics
Timeliness	Accuracy	Clarity	Confidence in source
Currency	Relevance	Detail	Reliability
Frequency	Completeness	Order	Formatted correctly
Time period	Conciseness	Presentation	Appropriateness
	Scope	Media	Received by correct person
			Sent by correct channels

(2) Knowledge and Wisdom

We then arrive at the sector for knowledge, knowledge being the general awareness of facts, information, principles ideas and truth, it may therefore also be the explicit information of a situation or a fact occurring. In reality knowledge is the result of collecting all the things such as ideas, facts, information or even the experience from a situation that has happened through time. This, however, differs from wisdom for the simple fact: wisdom uses all the information, combines it with experience and knowledge and creates a 'judgement' of what would be the ideal thing to do. Many people have researched about the many definitions of these four terms therefore creating their own definitions of what they may signify which is why wisdom to come may not be wisdom to all.

"Information consists of data, but data is not necessarily information. Also, wisdom is knowledge, which in turn is information, which in turn is data, but, for example, knowledge is not necessarily wisdom. So, wisdom is a subset of knowledge, which is a subset of information, which is a subset of data." - Jacques Steyn

Some may even argue that computers are able to hold 'knowledge' or even 'wisdom' due to the fact that it generates enough information from facts that essentially it is able to provide you with a suitable solution for your problems. This is one of the reasons that technology and the services that technology provides is essential to one's business management, the computers receive data as input which they then process it in a manner that produces decisions and actions as output. When this is done by a human, we evaluate their level of knowledge, skill, and intelligence.

Information converts into individual knowledge when it is accepted and kept by an individual as being a definite comprehension of what is true (Lehrer, 1990) therefore being an interpretation of reality which is deemed valid. However, organisational knowledge is existent only when it has been accepted by a group of people although this does not have to be formed of a large quantity of people, a simple group's common knowledge is enough to convert it to organisational.

The importance of knowledge management is that it helps the employees save time therefore enhancing their abilities to work and provide better result, by ones sharing opinion with others about certain ideas may catch each other's attention, therefore sharing knowledge about the work and adhering mor value to what they work as. Knowledge management enables both organisations, managers and members to obtain competitive advantage through comprehending alongside the utility of intellectual asset therefore being created by employees alongside their clients. Therefore, obviously, when the knowledge is well maintained and managed, most, if not all, the issues that arise may be resolved in a timely manner.

Within the workplace, such as MCS, knowledge management can be efficiently used to a greater advantage being that tutoring, and training are benefitted by it. Explicit knowledge and wisdom can be transferred and taught to new or evolving employees, training sessions, group discussions etc. It is essential to obtain the right knowledge management system in order to document and process all the necessary information along the way. The benefits held is that employees may have a direct, fast, responses when queries arise. Clarification is easily achieved as the learning process is more thorough and personal instead of just 'processing data and information'. Despite this being in some situations more time-consuming of one's presence, in the long run, the benefits outrun the negatives also promising to be more effective and financially better.

(3) Knowledge Management

Knowledge Management is defined by Bergeron (2003) as: *“Knowledge Management (KM) is a deliberate, systematic business optimisation strategy that selects, distils, stores, organises, packages, and communicates information essential to the business of a company in a manner that improves employee performance and corporate competitiveness”*

There are also two types of knowledge that we need be aware of, them being **tacit knowledge**, which is more intuitive, personal, and therefore harder to share with your colleagues; for example body language and personal innovative thinking and **explicit knowledge** which is information that is easier to be shared, demonstrated and stored, things that are easily explained and taught therefore easier to learn making it the most effective type of knowledge for the workplace.

There are four processes of knowledge which must be comprehended to fully be able to apply knowledge management within the workplace. **Socialisation** is important as it presents the opportunity of one sharing their experiences via observation, practice and imitation, when one views they tend to hold on, and imitate what they believe is of value and that is why socialisation is one very important method of transference of knowledge.

Capture is known as the conversion that tacit knowledge goes through, as its initially learned visually, by expression of others and caught individually, it is therefore converted into the explicit form of knowledge known as something more formal, factual and able to be well presented. The best method for this is to create a system where all the provided knowledge is stored, mapped out and divided into categories, this will enhance the easy accessibility to knowledge and therefore the organisational structure of the business is increased. Examples of these may include scanning documents, using metadata and indexing.

The **Process** is the application of the knowledge within the workplace. This involves deep research and analysis of knowledge gathered within the two steps above. This is left for the organisation to organise and assess the obtained knowledge in order to see how it may benefit and be implemented to the structure of the organisation as a whole. This has a large impact on training, development and opportunities for the employees as this process permits knowledge to be distributed in a manner which those who desire will acquire. This promotes development within the workplace and innovation.

The **Integration of Knowledge** is the stage where it is established how the knowledge will be distributed, the accessibility of it within the workplace. There must be an easy manner of accessibility as this will provide the newer employees with desire to achieve more and result in better action of work. This is implemented by creating a system which can be understood by the individuals, therefore making it easy and straightforward. To support the system, training programs can be created, incentivise the individuals so that they learn that there is always more things to learn, more ways to grow within the company, whether it's a commercial business or a cleaning group. This will essentially result in better organisation and increased efficiency within the workforce

whilst also personally developing them to be better decision makers, innovative, certain and proud.

The ideal **knowledge management framework** includes to following **people** – they are the direct effected by the knowledge management process therefore they must be prioritized within the company. For this to happen effectively, the ethos of knowledge sharing must be incorporated into the company's DNA. The **process** must be a combination of clear easy steps for all programmed knowledge management systems whilst also encouraging innovation. **Technology** is able to support knowledge management in critical methods, systems are integrated whilst data is uploaded and combined for the formation of knowledge. All this whilst being easily accessible and adjustable leaving room for cultural changes, innovation etc. Communication is presented better through technology. Finally, the **governance** of the organisation must be able to understand and prioritise the gratification and reward of good knowledge management, share and income. Without the correct comprehension, this may all be in vain, as without recognition changes go back to being the old.

Organisations which obtain complete advantage of knowledge management are proven more able to react rapidly to altering market conditions, offer and provide more value within their services toward their customers therefore also increase their innovation and efficiency.

Knowledge systems used and included within the knowledge management of MCS ltd include **feedback database**; where every individual involved within a service, whether cleaners or managers, may have the liberty of contributing with feedback to the business. These feedbacks are accessible by all stakeholders within an organisation, therefore leading to more efficiency and effectiveness in how quickly adaptations are done.

(4) Information flow and information overload

The futurologist Alvin Toffler (1970) was the first recorded person to say the phrase “information overload” in regards to his prediction that rapidly increasing quantities of information being processed would at some point be the cause of problems. Heylighen (1999) noted, “People exposed to the rapid changes of modern life may develop a state of helplessness and inadequacy.”

The overload of information can be the result of many things varying from not comprehending the existing information, feeling overwhelmed by the compulsive need of absorbing large quantities of information due to evolution pressure, not having the knowledge of the information being required or not being necessary, having lack of sources to obtain information or knowing where the information is but having no access to it due to ‘privilege’.

Nelson (2001) defines information overload as “the incapability to obtain a form of knowledge from a massive amount of information for one reason or another.”

Organizations amass an enormous amount of information about its in-house operations and resources. Telephones, fax and post mails were the only methods for communication around fifteen years ago. There is a general consistent growth in business communication by voice mail, e-mail, the Internet and online conferencing in addition to the above-mentioned traditional methods which result in information overload.

The amount of information that an organisation intakes can be damaging to the results, whether being too little or too much. Too much information disperses the important, main message that an organisation should pass through, it's the same thing of attempting to learn all the different methods of cleaning whereas at MCS you will only be using three or four of those hundreds of methods. Too much intake makes one never know enough of one thing and too little about many things. Individuals facing information overload try to work coping through ignoring messages they deem of less importance or even too much importance, by responding to fractions of defined messages, by providing inaccurate responses other messages, by having less time directed toward each message/issue, or even by providing a superficial reaction to all messages.

Information overload can and does affect alongside afflict individual knowledge employees which end up struggling to provide the expected service to their job as they are overwhelmed in data and facts, workplace organizations, to which extent their

productivity, produce, service and value and customer care suffer as an expected consequence.

(5) Knowledge Assets

The knowledge assets of an organisation has the power to represent as a font of the capabilities and competence of an organisation; these which are deemed to be necessary for the growth and empowerment of the individuals and the organisation as a whole.

Knowledge assets may in most occasions be regarded as the basis of knowledge management and process and may be defined as “firm-specific resources that are indispensable to create values for the firm”. Many other definitions are existent and debated in regards to knowledge assets furthermore among them Boisot (1999) which identified the knowledge assets as, “stocks of knowledge from which services are expected to flow for a period of time that may be hard to specify in advance, with an economic life viable within industry and market context”. Among these knowledge assets are an organisations abilities, competences, alongside the capabilities and competencies and the manner in which that they are utilized to form a result (Reed & De Fillippi 1990). Many assets are existent and may be listed, but it is a fact that for organisational purposes they would need to be categorised. MCS Ltd developed and created a taxonomy based of knowledge assets an example being:

Experiential knowledge assets essentially are ones that have been created via knowledge, facts, experience and opinions of all stakeholders of an organisation. These assets tend to be tacit therefore making it more difficult to provide a set experience, contribute in regards to knowledge and give opinions. these can however be converted to explicit knowledge therefore providing more use to the company.

(6) Organisational Knowledge Requirements

An example as to why knowledge is an important requirement is that the largest recognised managing system, ISO 9001, recognises it as significantly important on an organisation and its ability to highly cause influence upon the future of an organisation. Knowledge must always be identified whether it being through mentoring, formal meetings, informal conversation. The sharing of knowledge enables the company to grow and to have an insight on different views from different cultures.

The knowledge one holds and shares will have a huge impact and for that is must be guaranteed that the knowledge has been efficiently processed via viable information, trusted facts and has been formerly reviewed before developing further and implementing. There must be the sense of wisdom, the person behind the implementation of knowledge must have obtained previous experience within that sector, being it positive or negative but definitely providing a response that they can learn from and act upon.

(7) MCS – Framework

MCS Group Ltd is an organisation that provides cleaning services for many establishments within London, with over eighteen years in the market and over three hundred employees, MCS has grown exponentially and with that new opportunities have risen but the amount of problems have multiplied. It has been identified that the lack of communication and lack of shared knowledge between the managers and the employees has caused a substantial loss in terms of tranquillity and a more troubled atmosphere. There is currently a Knowledge Management system in place but it has been identified that this system has been let out to provide support to those high on the hierarchy of the employment ladder, this has been the source of all our problems.

It has been identified that all employees that work within the field and are the housekeepers providing the service have only received the basic training of 'cleaning' yet have had no insight as to how to manage different scenarios, people and places.

There has been no insight as to what opportunities the company holds and how they can grow via the training system, no system of recognition is in place and it would be correct to say that they only work because they are obliged to, and no return is necessary.

This is an absurd notion and now as my position of management within MCS, there have been new plans and systems in place.

A new knowledge plan has been developed and below you will find the promises of this.:

- A complete notion of facts and information will be converted into knowledge, new guidance books will be distributed, and many private and group sessions have been arranged in order to the tacit knowledge to be converted into explicit knowledge.
- Managers and supervisor have strict orders to provide completely new training, providing all the specific knowledge required for their employment to be at its best level.
- A high level of understanding is to be guaranteed, via systems in place and accessibility being available to all those who are a part of the company.
- Stakeholders will have complete access.
- Feedback is essential and there will be weekly feedback sessions, these will all be taken into account, reviewed and appraised.
- There will be gratification systems in place, new opportunities and developments of employees providing them with the promise that there is more to the company than just 'cleaning'.

Conclusion

McElroy originally stated that for one team to have the essential result, each individual must comprehend their responsibilities.

I can conclude this paper by stating that by the lack of the efficient training, methods, research within knowledge management, there is no result acquired. Knowledge has been proven to be one of the most important results for the contribution of team work, no experience is gained solely and therefore no success shall be celebrated individually. One must always aspire to know more yet to hold wisdom in the knowledge that they carry. The acquisition of knowledge may be even more difficult to comprehend than anticipated but the goal of KM is to make it a little easier on each individual.

By following the steps accordingly, it is possible and highly proved that an organisation only benefits from the sharing of ones gathered knowledge, its all about the team work efficiency.

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