

BA (Hons) Leadership and Management Skills in the Workplace

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KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS IN EASYJET.

Executive summary

This academic report provides a detailed examination of EasyJet's Knowledge Management (KM) systems, focusing on their historical background, participant roles, approaches to KM, incentives for participation, challenges, opportunities, knowledge distribution, cost management, and promotion strategies. The report aims to shed light on how EasyJet's KM initiatives contribute to its overall success and competitiveness in the airline industry.

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1.Introduction

KMS is referred to as a centralized platform used to store, organize, and retrieve critical information, documents, as well as best practices. KMS facilitates knowledge sharing and collaboration between employees (Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Dalkir, 2005). For easyJet, a combination of KMS tools & technologies can make a huge difference in the company performance.

1.1 Overview of EasyJet and Historical Background of KM Activities

The company EasyJet was started in 1995, the focus was to setup a popular low-cost airline company which operates in Europe. The company is known for being budget friendly. It has kept evolving to in order to remain competitive. This section briefly outlines EasyJet's history and highlights its KM-related activities over the years. Over the years, EasyJet has been engaging in several Knowledge Management activities as means of supporting the company's operations which has in turn enhanced their customer services. Below are a few highlights indicating in EasyJet's history and its relationship with KM (Goodson, 2012).

In 1995, the company EasyJet was started and established by a British called Sir Stelios Haji-Ioannou. In the first years of establishment, the EasyJet was focusing mainly on providing no-frills as well as low-cost air travel services. At this time, Knowledge Management was largely focused on the establishment of basic operational procedures for the company as well as systems that facilitated consistency with in the concept of service delivery (Goodson, 2012).

Expansion of services

In the Early 2000s EasyJet started expanding its flight fleet and network of flight routes, Knowledge Management gained more prominence. The easyJet started implementing systems as well as processes applicable during crew training, planning of flight routes, and maintenance so as to facilitate their operational efficiency and customer safety.

Moving with the digital revolution

The mid2000s saw EasyJet investing heavily in digital technologies which could then enhance their customers' experience as well as streamline company operations. This decision largely rotated around the idea of developing digital platforms that would enable customers to book flights, conduct check-ins, as well as get quick access to customer support. Knowledge management at this time rotated around management of the required knowledge in order to maintain as well as improve their existing systems.

Cost reduction

As time went on in the late 2000s establishing a low-cost carrier was essential in order to lead the competition in the airline industry, EasyJet would then seek for ways of reducing their costs and at the same time improving their efficiency. Knowledge Management had a vital role to play when it comes to the identification as well as sharing best practices principals with the company departments leading to optimization of operations and expenses reduction.

Customer service improvement

The early 2010s saw EasyJet placing their strongest emphasis on customer services and experience improvement. Knowledge Management activities within easyJet would have to focus on employee training in the area of best practices in customer service as well as recording and retaining customer feedback to which would later facilitate top management in making data-driven decision Aswell as improvements.

Data driven decision making.

Around the same time Data analytics become a known phenomenon which EasyJet leveraged in order to gain more insights into their customer preferences as well as behaviours. The acquired knowledge would be applied in the process of personalization of their marketing, their pricing strategies, as well as in-flight services. Knowledge management applications within easyjet at this stage rotated around effective management of data as well as insights.

Sustainability

EasyJet, at a certain point was caught up in the fight for environmental sustainability, a practice that several airlines in the later 2010s were strategically committed to. This meant that EasyJet would have to focus on finding ways to reduce its impact on the environmental. Knowledge management in Easy jet meant participating in activities that enabled sharing knowledge and technologies regarding the sustainable practices in the day to day running of the company.

Management of COVID crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic presented several challenges with in the airline industry regardless of the size of how long the airline had existed. Companies such as EasyJet, had to be able to quickly adapt or risk the being overrun by the competition. Knowledge management would have to play a significant role when it comes to the spread of information reading the safety protocols, changes in regulations, and Crisis management suggestion and strategies.

In the future EasyJet's participation in Knowledge management activities will most definitely continue and a change is expected in focus is expected leaning more towards emerging technologies, decision-making that is data-driven in order maintain their place in the airline industry with in Europe and beyond (Goodson, 2012).

Therefore, EasyJet 's history projects the company as one that is capable of adapting as well as evolving in terms of Knowledge Management practices with the intention of supporting growth as well as industry competitiveness. Such activities would require the involvement of several aspects of the operations the company, ranging from customer service all the way to sustainability as well as the digital transformation, which shows a major change in the competitive landscape of the European aviation throughout the recent years.

2.Participants in Knowledge Management

For Knowledge Management to be a success in the organisation, the organisation must have key participants in the knowledge management activities. Such participants could be individuals, teams, as well as other entities contributing to the sharing, creation, organization, as well as those utilizing the knowledge within the company. In the case of EasyJet, some of the key participants in their knowledge management practices include the following below as suggested by Dakir (2005).

Knowledge Managers

These would be the individuals or teams of employees responsible for the overall oversight of the Knowledge Management strategy within the company. Such people help in the development of policies, processes, as well as the systems used in the creation of knowledge, storing, and retrieving, as well as sharing.

Airline Maintenance and Engineering Teams

People concerned with maintaining the knowledge regarding the maintenance of the aircraft, repairing, and making technical specifications that are vital in implementing the safety and operational efficiency of the airline. Such teams are essential in playing a significant role when it comes to the documentation as well as the sharing of such knowledge.

Customer Service Representatives

Customer Service Representatives directly interact with airline passengers which allows direct access to insights about the customers' choices and preferences as well as feedback. Knowledge Management in area in Easyjet enables management to capture and share information for purposes of customer service improvement.

Easyjet Crew Members

Crew members such as pilots, flight attendants, and other crew members possess critical knowledge about safety procedures, in-flight services, and aircraft operations. They contribute to Knowledge management by sharing their expertise and participating in training programs.

IT and Technology Teams

In most cases, knowledge management hugely depends on the type of technology or software solutions when it comes to management of documents, databases, as well as tools for collaboration. IT teams at EasyJet play a significant role in the implementation as well as maintaining Knowledge management systems.

Safety and Compliance Teams

Safety and regulatory compliance very important in the airline industry. EasyJet has teams that are responsible for safety protocols and enforcing regulatory adherence which to a great extent contributes to knowledge management by way of making sure that the required safety knowledge is kept up-to-date and available for the required people to access.

Training and Development Specialists

At EasyJet management designs and delivers training programs for employees have all the skills necessary for their roles and knowledge particular regarding customer safety and service.

Cross-Functional Teams

The different departments at EasyJet have to collaborate with one another to be able to solve complex problems and sometimes it's just about implementation of new initiatives. Therefore, cross-functional teams enable the sharing of knowledge across several departments within the company.

Knowledge Contributors

Knowledge contributors can be found at every level within the company. Often knowledge contributors are merely employees at all levels of the company. They actively share knowledge, insights as well as experiences using company document, written reports, staff meetings, and other collaboration tools at EasyJet.

Communities of Practice

CoPs are mainly informal groups of employees within the company that share interests or kind of have the same level of expertise. CoPs at EasyJet can facilitate sharing of knowledge as well as collaboration among EasyJet employee with similar interests or roles.

Management and Leadership

In many organisations, the senior management is principal in deciding how organization's take on the idea of Knowledge Management. At EasyJet, senior management allocates the resources, create the necessary support initiatives, that are key in fostering the culture of sharing knowledge.

Quality Assurance Teams

It is often the role of the *quality assurance teams* to monitor as well as assess the service and work processes quality. At EasyJet feedback and the insights from the *Quality Assurance Teams* contribute to the improvement of knowledge and refinement of the work process.

Innovation Teams

Innovation teams at EasyJet teams allow for the exploration of new technologies as well as trends which can enhance business operations improve the EasyJet customer experience, and in a way contribute greatly to the company's knowledge base.

2.1 Contribution and Collection of Knowledge

Effective knowledge management requires one to be able to identify the key participants who are both consumers and contributors of knowledge. In the case of easyJet, one looks at those contributing as well as the ones collecting knowledge for use within the company. This section focuses on the roles as well as responsibilities of the staff or employees or even customers who are the key stakeholders in the Knowledge management process with in EasyJet (Malighetti, et al., 2015).

EasyJet has been able to leverage both top-down and bottom-up approaches when it comes to building the knowledge base it has attained over the past years. The company has made sure that their experienced employees as well as managers are contributing their know-how on the business operations, airline safety, customer experience and service as well as other areas of the business using platforms such as training programs, employee team meetings, coaching and mentoring, as well as documenting the internal procedures by writing policies and manuals. Intern, the junior staff are able to gain more competencies using on-the-job training guides and manuals, and e-learning sessions that cover processes, technology, and customer experience and service standards. They have internally developed systems which collect knowledge across the different business functions and integrate them into specific solutions (Malighetti, et al., 2015).

Using the bottom-up approach, knowledge is shared through collaboration tools such as Skype, Microsoft team sites and other enterprise social networks. This way EasyJet employees are able to contribute insights, ideas, and tips into platforms and forums as well as the knowledge repositories which are accessible to everyone in the company. Monthly newsletters as well as the airport team huddles enhance the horizontal knowledge exchange. EasyJet further collects knowledge from external sources through observation of the competitors, using industry benchmarking best practices, engaging consultants as per the need in case of specialized expertise, and customer research. EasyJet suppliers and partners contribute by offering operational insights which can be integrated into EasyJet schedules, for maintenance as well as other purposes (Malighetti, et al., 2015).

Knowledge capturing at EasyJet for example records procedures, is done through post-action reviews which are used to document the relevant case studies and codifying the on-the-job learning using the various training programs available. Departing employees' knowledge is retained using the succession planning as well as conducting exit interviews. EasyJet is able to analyse data regarding customer complaints, and incidents and there after conduct operations which identifies the necessary

improvement opportunities. The primary focus is on the management of both explicit and experiential Knowledge (employee know-how). EasyJet's combination of top-down, bottom-up, internal with the acquired external knowledge facilitate employee learning across the entire company (Ferneley and Heinze, 2009).

3. Evaluation of IM/KM Approaches

Leveraging of information management and KM practices at EasyJet have formed the basis for its efficiency-driven low-cost business model. EasyJet has been able to grow into one of the largest carriers and airline industry competitors in Europe. EasyJet uses an approach to knowledge management and information management that has been seen evolve significantly over a period of time. A simple evaluation of EasyJet's information management and knowledge management strategies over a period of time, starting with its early strategy of focusing on sharing of tacit knowledge to being able to adopt IT systems that are more advanced as suggested by Alavi and Leidner (2001).

3.1 IM/KM Approaches contributing to Success.

Information management and knowledge management strategies have been crucial in enabling EasyJet's growth as well as success as a low-cost airline. When the company started, they focused on the idea of sharing knowledge face-to-face knowledge which built cooperation the crew, across pilots, and other employees on the ground. The exchange of tacit knowledge in this way promoted efficient business operation practices which were able to spread quickly among other departments of the airline as it expanded. Being able to codify the employee experience (know-how) into practical policy and procedure manuals and implementing e-learning training programs has greatly enable EasyJet in maintaining consistency in the standards of their service as suggested by Alavi, M., and Leidner, D. E. (2001).

Development of custom-made in-house systems using the employee's employee feedback has armed EasyJet with significant number of proprietary capabilities which competitors are not able to duplicate. Being able to make travel booking and digitizing of the internal documents digital has led to a reduction in the overhead's costs. The use of data analytics from customer feedback to identify areas of improvements in the service. Being able to integrate the schedule plan along with the maintenance knowledge has led to increased aircraft utilization as well as improvement in the EasyJet's turnaround efficiency (Chaffey and Wood, 2005).

Ultimately, EasyJet's applies a knowledge management strategy which promotes connectivity and transfer of feedback across all the departments in the company. It continues to use Skype, Microsoft team sites, newsletters as well as other collaboration tools which has in a way broken down the withholding of information into small groups in spite of huge growth experienced by the company. This has led to increased agility with in EasyJet in terms of response to the market challenges and opportunities through the sharing of ideas across its entire business network. Their main focus when it comes to the flow of knowledge and learning, is strongly based on the employee supportive culture, which is fundamental if EasyJet is to maintain its competitiveness advantage in the industry (Chaffey and Wood, 2005).

4. Incentives for Participation in KM Activities

EasyJet provides incentives for its employees as a means of enticing them to participate in knowledge sharing and management activities by using both intrinsic as well as extrinsic motivators. The existence of recognition programs where top contributors is celebrated in the whole company. Also, some monetary rewards have been tied to exceptional operational efficiencies gained as a result of

knowledge exchange activities. This type of participation works at the acceleration of the prospects of employee promotion and hence leads to the development of staff capabilities as well as leadership skills (Rao, 2012).

4.1 Essentiality of Investment in Knowledge Projects

It is a well-known fact that incentives have a significant role when it comes to employee motivation as well as stakeholders who wish to actively participate in Knowledge management activities. Below is a list of several incentives that are used by EasyJet as well as an elaboration on the reasons for investing in Knowledge management projects as a critical contributor when it come to continued growth and overall competitiveness of the company (Wilson and Doz, 2011).

Below is a list of incentives used by EasyJet to encourage employees to participate in Knowledge Management.

- Recognition programs and celebration of the top contributors in the company.
- Exceptional efficiency gained monetary rewards.
- Accelerated employee promotion opportunities in the company.
- Points gamification as well as leaderboards.
- Training opportunities for senior leadership and mentorship.
- Knowledge sharing peer recognition.
- Performance reviews knowledge sharing.

5. Challenges and Opportunities

Just like any system, implementing a knowledge management system has its own challenges. Below is a number of potential obstacles likely to be faced by EasyJet when it comes to maximization of the application of a knowledge management system at the same time exploring the various opportunities that may arise as a result of applying an effective knowledge management system.

Despite the fact that EasyJet has built an extensive significantly large knowledge base, a number of challenges remain posing a risk to the effective application throughout the entire airline industry. In a large company having over 15,000 employees, it become difficult to spread information on a global scale especially if the there is insufficient knowledge curation as suggested by Alavi and Leidner, (1999).

EasyJet's operates as lean business model in which strict limits are applied on non-essential expenditures on the knowledge management. The different operational requirements specific to multiple routes make the company-wide integration very difficult. Moreover, the rapid growth attained through mergers and acquisitions also brings along integration problems due to the system and cultural differences. Besides, every jurisdiction has its own legal knowledge restrictions which is in itself a huge a challenge. Overall, the sharing and coordination of knowledge has many challenges as a result of the diversity, size, as well as continuous evolution of Easyjet airlines (Markides, 2015).

5.1 Maximizing KM System Use

Maximising a knowledge management system largely focuses on the opportunities that lay in the effective knowledge management system application. Technology advancements create new opportunities making knowledge management a more impactful activity. Artificial intelligence creates opportunities for uncovering insights inform of unstructured data as well as automated knowledge sharing. Recently chatbots along with other digital assistants have enhanced accessibility enabling the provision of answers as well as expertise. Several social collaboration platforms exist to enable EasyJet

to tap into the existing collective intelligence that can be widely distributed across the entire workforces according to Aagaard (2013).

Moreover, mobile knowledge apps have now embedded learning on-the-go facilities. Data analytics as well as personalization enable knowledge relevance optimization. Virtual reality has greatly promoted remote transfer of knowledge. In a nutshell, emergence of IT innovations and the shifts in the organisation cultural leaning more towards openness have created huge potential for driving greater adoption, knowledge contribution as well as value for businesses as a result of the creation of programs for knowledge management. Companies can now leverage technology whilst maintaining the human focus towards collaboration and learning (Markides, 2015).

6. Managing Operating Costs and Legal Requirements

Operating as a low-cost carrier, requires EasyJet to balance their knowledge management system costs to maintain the value. EasyJet leverages customization of open-source enterprise software when the opportunity comes. Analysis on the possible return on investment are carried out on every proposed knowledge management tool as well as technologies (Sull, 1999).

EasyJet also manages its costs by internally developing their systems to enhance their proprietary capabilities. As far as the legal side is concerned, EasyJet set up a series of thorough protocols to enable it to manage their customer data, respect the privacy of their employees, and ensure security of their IP, especially when it comes to knowledge sharing across the countries. Management of the legal complexity is an area where the global expansion of EasyJet is very vital. In Conclusion, since EasyJet takes a value-driven approach of optimizing their expenses in terms of knowledge management at the same time maintaining compliance with their legal obligations (Sull, 1999).

6.1 Cost Management and Legal Compliance

For one to operate a knowledge management system a company has to make serious financial as well as legal considerations. With a substantial number of all over Europe, EasyJet requires to several data protection as well as the privacy regulations when it comes to knowledge management in the organisation. EasyJet has a set of robust protocols to enable them to secure their customer data, intellectual property, as well as the confidential information and thus remaining compliant UK Data Protection Act as well as EU GDPR (Stewart et al., 2009).

EasyJet is able to conduct a comprehensive employee training regarding data privacy, security, access, sharing and storage in knowledge databases. When it comes to the transfer of knowledge across EU borders, EasyJet does their due diligence in preventing the breaching of any international legal obligations. As such, adhering to the changing regulations as well as educating employees remain an ongoing priority in EasyJet expansion plans, to minimize compliance associated risks and possible penalties (Stewart et al., 2009).

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the report gives one a more comprehensive overview of EasyJet's Knowledge Management systems, with more emphasis placed on their historical background, the participants' roles, the approaches, challenges, incentives, opportunities, cost management, as well as the knowledge promotion strategies. Effective Knowledge management is a vital part of EasyJet's continuing success in spite of a highly competitive industry that EasyJet operates in.

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