

Skills for the Workplace

Module Assignment Submission

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Module No:	BMSK5006
Module Title:	Knowledge and Information Management Skills for the Workplace

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Introduction:

Knowledge management is the procedure of handling information within a commercial entity so that it can be utilized to produce value for the organization and the stakeholders associated with it. It is the process which involves the creation of knowledge through extensive research and query, sharing the knowledge with relevant individuals which is more likely to add value, using the knowledge to experience positive change within the organization and managing the knowledge so that it is efficiently utilized. This report aims to produce an understanding of the challenges associated with managing knowledge within a commercial entity. It will also shed light upon the proper use of management and information systems which is more likely to add value to the organization as a whole. We are going to conduct this assignment in the light of IHG. IHG is the group of some sorts of internationally popular hotels existed in the UK and around the globe. There are about 375000 employees working there and most of the activities like hotel booking, customer feedback collection, marketing are done by ensuring proper knowledge and information management (InterContinental Hotels Group PLC, 2018). In this endeavour, the report will evaluate the importance of knowledge management, elaborate the process involved in managing knowledge and will establish a framework which will foster a culture for knowledge management in the light of the IHG in the UK and around the world.

Part 1

a) Data, information and knowledge

Knowledge is acquired from information. When an information is acquired it is not an isolated entity rather it is the amalgamation of different data structured and presented together in a way which makes logical sense. So data is the basis for formulating information and information helps to acquire or create knowledge.

According to the DIKW model, information can be generated by analysing data and collecting them from various sources. On the other hand, knowledge is the amalgamation of different pieces of information which fit together to formulate a unified entity. Lastly, wisdom is the application of such knowledge along with the involvement of real-life experiences of individuals.



Data:

Data is the most basic representation of a phenomenon, idea or a concept represented through symbols or linear methods of expression. It is generated from observation and inquiry. It is more or less accurate and is influenced by the context under observation. Data is not necessarily meaningful to the one who collects it. It can add value to other aspects for other individuals in different situations. The collected data is either recorded or sent to relevant individuals who have the expertise to extract information from them (Amar, 2002).

Information:

Information is acquired when data is processed. It adds value to its user. It is the process of giving form to raw data. It is like producing a picture from different puzzle pieces by aligning them in the correct order and sequence. These puzzle pieces represent data.

There are some basic characteristics of information. The information contains singular or multiple data. The data contained in a particular information is well-arranged and is logical. The accumulated data produces a significant meaning and is not really abstract. So, the syntax or orientation of data is significantly important for producing meaningful information.

Knowledge:

Knowledge is the ability to comprehend the information at a higher level which is subjected to the capabilities of individuals. Knowledge is created when the information acquired is questioned about its origin, purpose and intent (Back, 2006).

Knowledge gives further structure to information which has a higher degree of justification. This knowledge can formulate general laws which can be applied to similar scenarios. The perception of information and production of knowledge is influenced by experiences and world vision of individuals.

To increase knowledge one has to gain more information about the intended topic and the process is incremental. Individuals can pursue knowledge and find themselves under repetitive circumstances of extracting data and sequencing them to produce information for finally creating knowledge until the thirst is satisfied. The intention behind acquiring knowledge is driven by the amount of enthusiasm and interest one has on the desired topic.

So it is observed that data, information and knowledge has a hierarchical relationship in the mentioned order. Without any one of the elements, the other is of little value. The ultimate goal is to create knowledge which is initiated from data and put through the process of generating information. All these sorts of knowledge and information management are conducted in IHG.

b) Individual knowledge and organizational knowledge

Individual knowledge is the information which is held and utilized by individuals for satisfying personal interests. Whereas the organizational knowledge refers to the capability of its constituent employees that have been acquired over a period of time which helps them to make a distinction in processes and choosing the right ones for carrying out their functions. These distinctions have been evolved by the concepts from historical evidence. Organizational knowledge is the asset of the company whereas individual knowledge is the asset of individuals.

Individuals can add value to organizational functions with individual knowledge. But the organizational knowledge may or may not add value to an individual's life and social activities. The activities can help the individuals to progress in career and pursue similar ventures in the job market, but the probability of adding intricate value to the individual's personal life is significantly less.

Individual knowledge is acquired by the acceptance of a concept. This acceptance is completely subjective to the individual's will. Whereas organizational knowledge might not be flexible for individuals to allow them to choose either to accept or not. Organizations train individuals so that they are more efficient in their work roles by adding value to the work functions from the acquired knowledge gained from the training. The organizational knowledge is to be accepted irrespective of the subjective argument of the individual as it is important for surviving in the organization (Beazley et al., 2002).

Individual knowledge is quite hard to share as human beings are political beings and are more inclined towards having the upper hand by being the holder of the exclusive information. Increased individual knowledge provides a competitive advantage and helps to make the endeavours much more effective and efficient in most cases. But organizational knowledge is shared amongst all as the knowledge is seen into action and the organizational system compels individuals to impart knowledge to make tasks more efficient and easier.

When knowledge is not shared then it cannot be subjected to scrutiny hence it lacks the opportunity to be rectified if it is flawed in any way. So individual knowledge can be flawed in different aspects and this fact might not be brought to light due to lack of exposure. On the other hand, organizational knowledge can be scrutinized and rectified as it experiences a higher degree of exposure within the organization among the people who are working at different levels. Individuals having a higher level of knowledge on the particular matter can easily identify any flaws or shortcoming in the knowledge if it is poorly displayed or poorly executed.

Individual knowledge makes individuals productive and they can add value to the organization and increase their worth. Whereas organizational knowledge helps to bring individuals on level playing fields where they can operate at same efficiency levels. This produces harmony among employees and eliminates the probability of inducing an elitist mindset which later on helps in team building and builds character for better leadership (Conway & Sligar, 2002).

c) Analysis and modelling techniques to identify knowledge assets

In the current age, it is crucial for a business to learn and understand their capabilities and be aware of what they know. In another word, the organizations have to manage their knowledge in order to achieve their full potential. The knowledge is found in many places within an organization. These include files, database, employees etc. if the knowledge is not well organized it cannot be found in the time of need. Which might increase the chances of repetitive work and inefficient use of resources will be initiated. To manage knowledge organizations have to first understand their knowledge assets and identify them for categorization. And then they would have to efficiently manage this knowledge for maximum output.



It is crucial for managing knowledge because the marketplace is becoming more competitive as the consumers are becoming global consumers who are able to assess, compare and justify their choices. All corporations are becoming focused on customers. Increased competition is increasing the amount of unemployment which is the loss of valuable

knowledge. To utilize this limited knowledge in a most efficient manner possible, knowledge management is required. In the following segment, analysis techniques for identifying knowledge assets will be applied (Desouza, 2007).

Knowledge management framework:

For identifying the knowledge assets of a company, it is required to search for some aspects within the organization. First of all the places where knowledge assets can be found are to be determined these places are usually in databases, files and most importantly employees.

Then it is important to determine what these assets actually are. These assets can be information about past and present trends which can be analyzed to predict future trends or the assets can also include proprietary information which gives the organization a competitive edge over the others.

Once the knowledge assets are identified, their use is to be determined. For example, past records on sales of an organization can provide a solid base for predicting future business activities. Proprietary knowledge can help to accelerate innovation and stay ahead of the game. Employee training can help to identify the strengths of the workforce which can help to assign them in the appropriate positions.

Then the form of the knowledge is to be identified. It can be in digital form or in written form. Whichever the form is, it should be secured and backed up in the safe location as insurance. This knowledge should be converted to the most convenient and accessible forms so that it is easy to access and utilize when necessary.

Finally, the accessibility of the knowledge is to be identified. It is to be understood to what degree is the knowledge accessible. Some knowledge is off limits due to the lack of proper resources to acquire them. Others are off limits for security purposes like formulas and source codes of software.

Soft system methodology:

Systems thinking model is another model of identifying knowledge assets within an organization. At first, the problems are identified at its rawest form. In other words, the problem is observed and data is collected in its regard to understanding what is happening. Not interpretation or analysis is done. Then the data is structured in a disciplined fashion so that information can be acquired. Then the root causes are identified and their basic definitions are understood. Conceptual models are identified and compared with other models against the real world scenario. Lastly, the desired changes are identified which are to be achieved, then an action is taken to solve the problem (Erickson, 2014).

Here the problem is lack of understanding of the knowledge assets. So, this problem can be simplified or can be arranged to produce a clearer picture. Then the root causes of such a problem should be identified and understood. Then models which can address such situations should be analyzed against the real world scenario. Then the ultimate aim of identifying the knowledge assets should be set and from the information gathered from the model's activities which will aid in this endeavour should be put into action.

d) Evaluating genuine and potential knowledge

In business, organizations are valued against the assets they hold that can produce value and consequently increased profit. Physical assets can be measured easily as it has a tangible existence, but it is quite difficult to measure knowledge assets as its existence is vague for the most part and lack of tangibility introduces a whole new dimension of complexity. Analyzing the knowledge assets might also prove to be quite difficult as opposed to analysis of physical assets. But the assessments and understanding of knowledge assets can be the determinant between success and failure in most cases. In the following segment actual and potential knowledge assets will be evaluated in light of the learner's work experience in IHG (Knowledge management, 2002).

Actual knowledge assets are the knowledge assets which are presently available in the respective organization. And potential knowledge assets are those knowledge assets which can be acquired by utilizing the current assets properly. While working in IHG, the learner observed that the check-out line of IHG was not like other typical retail chains with a cashier and cash counter. Some of the cash counters were automated. As all the commodities in IHG are tagged with electronic tags, they set up an alarm if anyone tries to walk out with any commodity without checking it out and paying for it. So this method of automating the check-out line is the actual knowledge asset for IHG. The learner also observed that the authorities were intending to make completely autonomous customer Service which doesn't have any employees whatsoever. The customers are supposed to get in and make purchases on their own and check out without even having to interact with an employee. This was the idea phase and was built on the premise of automated cash counters. So this is a potential knowledge asset that is more likely to add significant value to IHG (Managing knowledge to fuel growth, 2007).

Actual knowledge assets are usually proven. But potential knowledge assets are not always proven and requires severe change management mechanisms to address the transitions and ensuring that the intended outcomes are acquired.

During working in IHG, the employees were trained to deal with customers in a calm and cordial manner. This training produced a knowledge which was actual knowledge asset of IHG and was proven to be fruitful. But from the assessment of the training, many individuals were found to have great leadership qualities which can be harnessed with proper training, incentive and motivation. This is the potential knowledge asset.

It can also be said that Potential knowledge is the justification of actual knowledge assets. Actual knowledge assets produce a base for building a premise for increasing potential knowledge, whereas the potential knowledge asset justifies the actual knowledge by producing more value based on the actual one. They share a symbiotic relationship, the understanding of which is crucial for accessing the full potential of any organization's success (Oleksak et al., 2010).

Part 2 a) Process of creating knowledge, storing knowledge, applying knowledge and integrating knowledge.

Creating knowledge:

Knowledge creation is the process which involves the generation of new information which is capable to generate different data. This new knowledge is created following some significant steps. These are discussed in the following segment.

The area in which the knowledge is to be created has to be identified. When the area is identified, the topic, phenomenon or idea based on which the knowledge is to be created is to be agreed upon. This initial supposition or assumption is known as a hypothesis. Hypothesis provides structure to the system adopted for generating knowledge in the required area. Based on this hypothesis research is to be conducted. The research will provide significant insight into an unknown issue which will consequently be the generated knowledge. The minimum viable product has to be defined. The minimum viable product is the combination of the highest return to lowest investment and/or risk. It defines to what extent an individual is willing to go in order to generate the required knowledge.

Then it is important to plan the content. In order to do so, the content grouping has to be identified. The relationship between the contents is to be understood. The nature of the grouping is to be determined and the flexibility of the plan is to be set. By flexibility, it refers to the freedom or room for change associated with the plan (Peel, 2012).

Then the technology plan has to be outlined. In this plan, the information technology and other technological means which will be used to create knowledge are to be determined. For example for analyzing the data and presenting it in a statistical form, it is necessary to use processing plans such as Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) as the calculations can be subjected to error if done by hand. So the software is a technological mean and it will be identified in this stage.

Then the proper analytical abilities are to be developed. For understanding the relationship between two variables one must understand correlation and should have a good command over statistical interpretation. These are the analytical abilities required for generating the knowledge.

Finally, the knowledge acquired should be subjected to continuous improvement. With the more relevant information, the value of the knowledge will increase and will provide the intended outcomes eventually.

Storing knowledge:

Knowledge is not valuable if it cannot be utilized in time of need. In order to do so, it has to be stored in proper convenient places where it can be accessed at the will of the user. In the following segment, the process associated with storing knowledge will be evaluated.

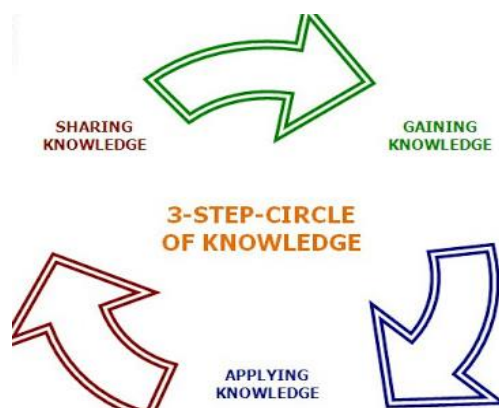
After acquiring new knowledge it should be documented. But paper might be damaged and a bit of important information might get lost. So in this modern age, hard drives are used to store data in digital format. But still, there are possibilities of the drives being subjected to a mechanical problem or a virus which could affect the integrity of the stored knowledge. So, it can be stored online in the cloud which will be safe and can be accessed remotely from anywhere with an internet connection. But this might also put the knowledge in risk of being stolen (Schiuma, 2011).

Commercial entities store their information and knowledge in privatized servers which are maintained rigorously and is kept under strict observation both through software and from external areas. These servers are usually situated in weather controlled and insulated rooms and they are protected by state of the art security solutions which keeps them safe from all negative actors.

Applying knowledge:

Applying knowledge refers to the process of utilizing the generated and acquired knowledge to make significant positive changes in the workflow. In the following segment, the procedure involved in applying knowledge will be discussed.

Knowledge needs to be applied through practice. The first attempt might not always bring forth intended outcomes but through practice, a deeper understanding is created which helps in applying the knowledge efficiently in a gradual manner (Schwartz & Te'eni, 2011).



The prior knowledge in the same field should be activated and the roots should be recognized. When the roots and the apex of knowledge are aligned then the methods of applying knowledge becomes clearer. The understanding is also strengthened.

Another step involved in applying knowledge is conducting simulations. Taking hypothetical scenarios and applying generated knowledge to speculate probable outcomes can prepare for large-scale application.

Integrating knowledge:

Knowledge integration is the process of amalgamating different established knowledge is similar fields to establish a more unified and evident knowledge. It can also be said that knowledge integration is the process of introducing and adding new knowledge to an existing body.

Integration of knowledge requires both social interaction and emotional alignment as it is quite difficult to expand or modify existing knowledge base if the arguments for the new knowledge is not absolutely justifiable (Sen, 2005).

Similar to the process of knowledge generation, the area of knowledge integration has to be identified. Sometimes this identification comes from experience and deep understanding of any topic.

b) Considering knowledgeable assets

Intellectual property encompasses the ideas, recipes, formulas etc. Which companies use to produce their unique products. These intangible entities cannot be valued with monetary resources as it holds higher value to the organization. In the following segment, the impact of intellectual property rights will be evaluated.

Intellectual property rights are the rights which are associated with human beings so that they are able to use their creativity to generate ideas and use them to make positive changes. The rights enable the creators of the idea to be legally able to hold exclusivity to those aspects.

If intellectual property rights were not present, then the market dynamics would be quite distorted. Fair competition would not be ensured as individuals would copy everything they see and the original creator would not be benefitted.

Moreover, the intellectual property rights are significant to small organizations which want to get into the mainstream of their particular industry and survive with all the big players using the advantage of their intellectual property. It also helps to get investments as unique things with a good track record of sales are speculated to generate more sales on a larger scale (Shukla & Srinivasan, 2002).

Part 3

a) Contribution of knowledge in IHG

IHG is one of the largest hotels in the UK operating worldwide (InterContinental Hotels Group PLC, 2018). To gain such a position in the industry they have to manage their knowledge assets properly.

Knowledge assets had a significant contribution to IHG's operations. IHG was the first organization to adopt automated check-out counters which is more convenient for customers as they don't have to stand in line and waste time.

The training provided to the employees on how to interact with customers and how to address issues makes the customers more satisfied with the customers and they are more likely to make repeated purchases.

Lastly, the knowledge they gather from customers through surveys and feedback helps them to modify their processes. This increases the affinity of their customers towards their services (Tiwana, 2002).

b) Evaluating knowledge necessities

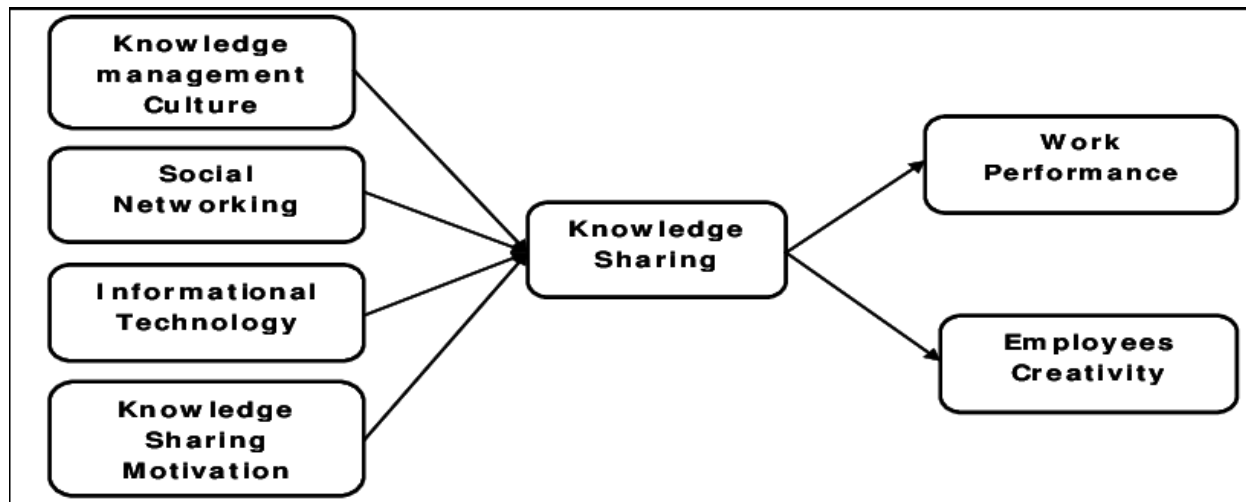
As IHG deals with individuals as customers, it is necessary for them to have a deep understanding of what the customers want. IHG's management has to understand the market trends, customer preferences and supply and demand dynamics which usually influence the purchasing patterns. Moreover, they should also acquire knowledge about international markets and local suppliers, both of which can affect their profit margins.

IHG should also have knowledge of the rules, regulations, laws and legislation produced for preserving consumer and employee rights. The knowledge should be used to modify their own system to be in synchronization with all the requirements (Vaiman & Vance, 2010).

Lastly, IHG's management should have knowledge about the different social aspects, their aspirations, preferences and wants. The knowledge will help them to perform corporate social management, producing a higher degree of trust by the consumer and extended customer loyalty.

c) Agenda for knowledge sharing

IHG has a knowledge sharing framework. It is described in the following segment followed by its evaluation.



Source: (InterContinental Hotels Group PLC, 2018)

IHG has created a knowledge management culture which compels individuals to properly index any new knowledge in relevant databases which can be accessed by individuals who can actually do something with it. They have also harnessed the flexibility and sheer mass of social networking sites to access their employees easily and conveniently. They have also adopted state of the art information technology which enables them to track their employees in cases of emergency. Lastly, they have successfully motivated employees to share knowledge by deliberating the fact that knowledge sharing produces opportunities for all to make progress from their respective work functions. Using all these elements and initiatives, IHG ensures knowledge sharing which increases the performance of employees as well as their creativity.

The Approach IHG has adopted to enable knowledge sharing is quite exhaustive and multidimensional. It is not just a linear mechanism, but rather a complex and effective mechanism for ensuring knowledge sharing (Desouza, 2007). The approach is foster by social networks and information technology while it is driven by the culture and motivation for knowledge sharing. And as it produces significant positive outcomes in regards to performance and creativity, it can be safely assumed that the stricture is effective.

d) Recommendation/improvements to existing knowledge sharing

The knowledge sharing framework of IHG is quite perfect as it is able to fetch intended outcomes. But there is room for some slight improvements which can increase its effectiveness even further. These are discussed in the following segment.

- i) The framework should include team building exercises. When individuals are considered to be the part of a team then they are more open towards sharing organizational knowledge as well as personal knowledge with other members.
- ii) The framework should include human interaction more than technological interaction. Human interaction will increase social capital which is more likely to induce knowledge sharing trends among individuals (Altaf Khan, 2011).
- iii) Lastly, the frameworks should include performance management skills and include a key performance indicator (KPI) as the ability to receive and disseminate knowledge. This would definitely motivate individuals for sharing information so that they can do better in their work.

Conclusion:

Knowledge management is very crucial for the success of an organization. It requires understanding and analyzing the different sources, types and uses. If the knowledge can be understood and managed properly, then success is inevitable (Back, 2006). But the incapacity to do so will increase the chances of losses and might also incur failure in many ventures.

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