BENEFITS OF KNOWLEDGE SHARING WITHIN AN IT ORGANIZATION

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Knowledge has been often crucial for an organization in order to maintain a competitive advantage and it's a fact that has been well-known and established. Nowadays knowledge has become more and more important, one factor being that the organizations are no longer restricted to local operations. This now means that knowledge from an original location needs to be transferred onto the new ones, employees must be trained and prepared, systems and processes must be kept up to the original standard and, of course, progress must be unhindered by all of this. In this new context, knowledge is increasingly seen as an important asset and valuable resource for the organization, often making the difference between the success and the failure of a company.

Knowledge management is now seen as a strategic initiative and is being considered the key to creating opportunities for companies, businesses and organizations that aim to use their knowledge resources in order to maintain themselves competitive and in order to conduct business in an era of information technology. The reason for this is that companies now operate in a global market, meaning that the competition is always present and the most important, is evolving faster than ever.

This research study and its future results will provide an insight into the knowledge environment of an IT company, the overall state of it and the opinions of the ones involved. IT is a very competitive market where technologies evolve at an astounding rate, where keeping an edge means always coming up with new solutions for new and existing problems, providing qualitative work in the scope of keeping and attracting customers and, of course, creating new knowledge and information that is aimed at helping the individuals within the organization and the company itself.

KEY WORDS: *Knowledge, competitive advantage, Knowledge Sharing, knowledge environment, knowledge resources*

1. INTRODUCTION (HEADING 1)

Given the importance of knowledge to productivity and efficiency, it is only logical and of the utmost importance that any organization manages their knowledge effectively. KM is represented by any process or system that helps people in an organization access, share and update knowledge in a business context.

Collaboration and KM are so important because through their process, they facilitate sharing experience, best practices, a good feedback loop that ultimately leads to progress and one of the main issues, seeking support from colleagues and promoting communication within the team.

Knowledge has been often crucial for an organization in order to maintain a competitive advantage and it's a fact that has been well-known and established; recipes have been passed down to the next generations and were kept secret, researches were kept under the radar until they were at a convenient point and so on.

Nowadays knowledge has become more and more important, one factor being that the organizations are no longer restricted to local operations. This now means that knowledge from an original location needs to be transferred onto the new ones, employees must be trained and prepared, systems and processes must be kept up to the original standard and, of course, progress must be unhindered by all of this. In this new context, knowledge is increasingly seen as an important asset and valuable resource for the organization, often making the difference between the success and the failure of a company.

As knowledge has gained importance over time, we are now confronted with the issue of how to manage it. Knowledge

management is now seen as a strategic initiative and is being considered the key to creating opportunities for companies, businesses and organizations that aim to use their knowledge resources in order to maintain themselves competitive and in order to conduct business in an era of information technology. The reason for this is that companies now operate in a global market, meaning that the competition is always present and the most important, is evolving faster than ever.

1.1. Defining concepts

The answer to the question "what is knowledge management" is significantly broader if we take into account the numerous points of view of specialists. In this material we will present two of the definitions given to this concept, definitions that we consider utile to comprehensively define this concept. So: **Tom Davenport** on (Davenport, 1994): "*Knowledge Management is the process of capturing, distributing, and effectively using knowledge.*" **Davenport & Prusak** (2000) present a similar definition, which states that KM "*is managing the corporation's knowledge through a systematically and organizationally specified process for acquiring, organizing, sustaining, applying, sharing and renewing both the tacit and explicit knowledge of employees to enhance organizational performance and create value.*"

Knowledge management is about successfully getting the right knowledge to the right person at the correct time. It may not seem like a complex task, but it requires a good understanding of where and in what form it exists and organizations must make sure that their ideas and processes are embraced by its members. (KMtools.net)

The diversity of definitions is similar if we refer to knowledge sharing. The knowledge sharing process can be defined simply as "the voluntary process of transferring or disseminating **knowledge** from one person to another person or group in an organization." ¹ or "**Knowledge Sharing** is an exchange or transfer process of facts, opinions, ideas, theories, principles and models within and between organizations include trial and error, feedback and mutual adjustment of both the sender and receiver of **knowledge**"² (Szulanski, 1996).

It was demonstrated that managing knowledge properly can bring a lot benefits to a company. Some of those we consider that are the most important and able to influence the way an organization works, in a positive way, are:

- *Make the organization's best problem-solving experiences reusable*
- *Enable better and faster decision making*
- *Stimulate innovation and growth*
- *Improve delivery to customers*
- *Reduce the loss of know-how*
- *improves productivity*
- *improve employee engagement and retention*
- *It ensures knowledge transfer within changing workplace dynamics*

Andra Postolache in Article 5 Benefits of Knowledge Sharing within an Organization stressed that "Knowledge sharing is essential for a company to be successful, as it can facilitate decision-making capabilities, build learning organizations (through a learning routine) and, ultimately, stimulate cultural change and innovation."³

Here, too, the emphasis is on the fact that an organization can generate, store and disseminate knowledge efficiently only if its information system is properly implemented and developed.

"Knowledge sharing is essential for a company to achieve success, since it can facilitate decision-making capabilities, build learning organizations and finally, stimulate cultural change and innovation.

In order for an organization to be able to generate, store and disseminate knowledge efficiently, the information systems must be properly implemented and developed. In order for the employees to have the best of accessing and using information, the IS (Information systems) must be built and be made

1. ¹ EFFECTS OF EXTRINSIC REWARDS ON KNOWLEDGE SHARING INITIATIVES

Gee Woo Bock (Sungkyunkwan University, Korea), Chen Way Siew (IBM Consulting Services, Singapore) and Youn Jung Kang (Sungkyunkwan University, Korea), Encyclopedia of Information Science and Technology, Second Edition <https://www.igi-global.com/chapter/effects-extrinsic-rewards-knowledge-sharing/13742>

2. ² EXPLICIT AND TACIT KNOWLEDGE: TO SHARE OR NOT TO SHARE

Iris Reyachav (Bar-Ilan University, Israel) and Jacob Weisberg (Bar-Ilan University, Israel) Encyclopedia of Information Science and Technology, Second Edition, <https://www.igi-global.com/chapter/explicit-tacit-knowledge/13773>

³ Andra Postolache in Article 5 Benefits of Knowledge Sharing within an Organization, <https://www.quandora.com/5-benefits-knowledge-sharing-organization/> 06/08/2017

available in a precise way and within the timeframe that facilitates the usage of that information."⁴

2. CASE STUDY AND INTERPRETATION

In order to analyze the state of the Knowledge Management environment and the Knowledge sharing in the studied company, to extract useful information about what processes are used and their impact onto its members and to provide some improvement suggestions based on the theory presented before, two questionnaires were created and distributed in order to fully encompass the Knowledge Management medium in the company.

We have chosen to conduct two questionnaires, one addressed to the trainees and one to the trainers. The members may overlap, but that is what we wanted feature because it will highlight the differences in perspective,, the evolution of those that are older in the company and how the actual state of the organization is like.

Trainee questionnaire

Because space does not allow us to analyze the most important answers offered to questions addressed to people who were recipients of knowledge, answers that can help us formulate conclusions and proposals to improve the activity of the company analyzed from their point of view.

The first questionnaire that will be analyzed is the one from the perspective of the person that was on the receiving end of the knowledge sharing processes in the company.

Questionnaire	Detail
Questionnaire content	12 questions
Key elements	Multiple choice questions, single choice questions and rating questions
Tool used	Google Forms
Questionnaire focus on	Company with 24 employees
Questionnaire sent out	08.05.2020
Questionnaire closed	11.05.2020
Participation	17 / 24 = 70.83%

Table 3.2.1. Questionnaire details

The first question we analyze is the question no. 6 in the questionnaire, is about how the members of the company perceived the overall openness of their trainer in relation to sharing knowledge. This is not limited to technical knowledge,

⁴ Andra Postolache in Article 5 Benefits of Knowledge Sharing within an Organization, <https://www.quandora.com/5-benefits-knowledge-sharing-organization/> 06/08/2017

but keeping in mind that the company is a software development one, the focus will obviously be on the technical side.

The results are shown in the following graph:

Figure 1.1. When receiving the training, did you feel like the knowledge of your trainer was given freely?

There is an overwhelming result showing that almost all of the participants felt that the trainers freely gave their knowledge, no matter what the subject was about. There is one respondent which gave the middle answer, indicating that the trainer could have done more in order to achieve a higher level of openness. The third possible choice was “Not quite open about his expertise” and is of no surprise that none of them answered this, because as seen in the previous questions, the empathy, the communication skills and the level of expertise were all three with very high ratings, so this question only re-affirms the above.

Overall, this paints a very favorable image of the knowledge sharing environment of the company so far in the questionnaire and sets the expectations very high for what is to come. It also comes as a confirmation to the company that they made the correct choice when they picked the trainers.

Question 7 comes as a complement to question number 6, as it delves deeper into what exactly means to share knowledge, if anything other than technical was gained and in what measure.

Figure 1.2. Aside from the technical knowledge, did you feel like you gained expertise in the studied subject? Think of tips and tricks, information that usually takes time to gain on your own, etc

This question was aimed at exposing the level of tacit knowledge sharing, without explicitly asking so and it provided a great insight into what exactly is happening at a deeper level. It is also in accordance with the previous one, the difference being very small (1 answer)

As a comparison between the two, the following graph shows the connection between the perceived level of openness and the actual gain of knowledge not necessarily technical.

Figure 1.3. Comparison between the two previous question

It is now obvious that the more open a person is received, the more knowledge there is to gain from them and the more they are willing to share. This confirms the facts above even more, standing as proof of the correlation between all of these factors.

Question 8 is about the rating of the level of engagement of the company in the knowledge sharing practices, not strictly related to the formal trainings.

Figure 1.4. How would you rate the level of engagement of the company in the Knowledge Sharing practices?

There are mixed results here, but the majority is again in favor, because most of the answers (10) indicate that the company is involved in sharing practices, develops and implements them and actively supports its members on the course of sharing. This is a good indicator of the environment because a company that is engaged and active in promoting the sharing of expertise between it members is a company that has a market advantage due to the fact that all the members have a faster progression in their learning, they keep each other up to date to various points

in the field and they do not feel compelled to keep knowledge for themselves.

Question 9 looks over the aspect of individual involvement in the knowledge environment of the company, which was designed to be a complement to the previous question, as the two are in relation and ultimately paint the picture of the overall involvement of the company as a group and of the company as individuals in the knowledge sharing environment.

Figure 1.5. How would you rate your level of involvement in the knowledge environment of the company?

The results are in agreement with the previous question, with the mention that the individual engagement appears to be lower than the engagement as a group. This would contradict the two of them, but the persons questioned participate without realizing in sharing knowledge and improving the group and themselves, but a suggestion would be to involve them in more formal sharing activities in which they get to expose their knowledge consciously. Also, the graph from question 10 is in accordance with the overall direction of the company:

Figure 1.6. Do you consider that the company promotes a culture of knowledge sharing between its members?

Figure 1.7. Is knowledge sharing rewarded in your company?

Most of the answers were in the neutral to agree area, which stands to prove that the level of reward could indeed be a point of discussion within the company, and a point in which it could increase its compensation.

The last question on the survey is question 12 which puts into perspective the relation between the members of the company and their participation in the knowledge sharing practices.

Figure 1.8. Do you consider your colleagues played a role in your progress of gaining knowledge?

This is an important question because it shows the overall image of the knowledge sharing environment within the company. A healthy environment, which promotes the culture of sharing and collaborating is essential to the development of the company and in keeping the market advantage. Also, in the context of a member leaving the organization, a lot of his knowledge will remain in the company as the collaboration with his colleagues will have paved the way to a healthy tacit knowledge sharing behavior.

3. CONCLUSIONS

This research project and its results provided an insight into the knowledge environment of an IT company, the overall state of it and the opinions of the ones involved. IT is a very competitive market where technologies evolve at an astounding rate, where keeping an edge means always coming up with new solutions for new and existing problems, providing qualitative work in the scope of keeping and attracting customers and, of course, creating new knowledge and information that is aimed

at helping the individuals within the organization and the company itself.

Because knowledge is created at a fast pace, companies must make sure that it is properly distributed and managed, it is kept up to date within the organization, and where this is the case, be the creators themselves. This of course raises another point, and that is knowledge retention in the company. The focus of the questionnaires and of this paper was to try and get a light on how much of the tacit knowledge is shared and what are the processes that aim to keep as much information as possible.

Technology such as emails and telephones are invaluable aids in the process of information and knowledge sharing, but they are only supporting tools. Sharing depends on the quality of conversations, formal or informal, that people have, and whether, and between whom, these conversations occur are dependent on the organizational culture that is in place (Warne et al., 2005).

Recommendations

The results of this paper highlight the knowledge environment of the company and could be used in order to gain insight into what the members are thinking. The overall results are encouraging because it is clear that the organization is aiming towards the continuous development of its members, actively engages in knowledge sharing practices.

It is obvious that the current state of the company is in great shape, with minor exceptions and things that could be improved. The fact that knowledge sharing is promoted and encouraged highlights the principles and values of the company, it ensures that it is trying to maintain a competitive advantage on the market by continuously improving and underlines the importance of a good culture. This stems from the fact that the employees were actually willing to give out their knowledge, tacit and not only in order to bring improvements to the company and in helping the newcomers.

The next topic, represented by question 11, is related to the level of compensation and rewarding within the company of knowledge sharing. This question exposed some issues within the company, as the answers were mixed and they have the most diversity in them. This stands to show that the level of compensation for the sharing of knowledge is not appropriate to the general perception.

Based on the findings of this work, a proposal is made the company investigates the results, spends more time in preparing and developing the communication skills of its employees because it was one of the weaker points found by the surveys. By no means is it in a bad shape, but it is one of the subjects that could definitely be improved, leading to better performance on all fronts, not only in knowledge management processes. Another point that could be looked upon and improved is the management of financial and not only rewarding of the ones that are involved in such processes. It was clear that there is a difference in the vision of the employees and the vision of the company. It's either that the expectations are not properly set by the company or that the employees may not be properly compensated.

4. REFERENCES

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