

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT: COMPETENT EMPLOYEES ARE THE ONLY CHANGE AGENTS OF IMPERATIVE ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge is increasingly being recognized as the new strategic imperative of organizations. The most established concept is, that knowledge is power. Knowledge Management (KM) is an emerging, interdisciplinary business model that has knowledge within the framework of an organization as its focus. It is rooted in many disciplines, including business, economics, and psychology and information management. It is the ultimate competitive advantage for today's firm. Knowledge workers are actually those workers in an organization who are sensitive to change. They constantly respond to the changes in the environment by gathering information and then arranging their work accordingly. With the accelerated pace of change, we should not hesitate in accepting the reality that all knowledge workers have significant place in the organization. Corporations preparing their human capital to be knowledge workers in a competitive environment must consider several core competencies of self – directed knowledge workers such as- Thinking skills, Continuous learning, Innovative teams and team work, Risk taking and potential success, etc. This paper takes into the consideration of 'Work Adjustment Model for Knowledge Workers' and also discusses about the means of motivating knowledge workers such as skill alignment, benefits management, expense reimbursement, etc.

Key Words:- Core competencies, KM , Knowledge Workers, Motivation , Skills .

1.INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is increasingly being recognized as the new strategic imperative of organizations. The most established concept is that knowledge is power. Therefore, one has to store it, keep it to oneself to maintain an advantage. The common attitude of most people is to hold on to one's knowledge since it is what makes him or her as an asset to the organization. Today, knowledge is still considered power – an enormous power in fact – but the understanding has changed considerably, particularly from the perspective of organizations. The new concept is that within the organization knowledge must be shared in order for it to grow. It has been shown that the organization that shares knowledge among its management and staff grows stronger and becomes more competitive. This is the core of knowledge management – the Sharing of knowledge. Management is a system for managing, gathering, refining, analyzing and disseminating knowledge in all of its forms within an organization. Knowledge is a fluid mix of fragmented experiences, values, contextual information, expert insight and grounded intuition that provides an environment and framework for evaluation and incorporating new experiences and information.

Knowledge Management (KM)

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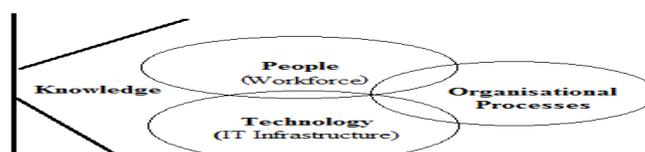


Figure 1 Overlapping Humans, Organizational and Technological factors of KM

Knowledge Management (KM) is about survival in a new business world – a world of competition that increases in complexity and uncertainly each day. It is a world that challenges the traditional ways of doing things. The focus is not only on finding the right answers, but also on asking the right questions. What worked yesterday may or may not work tomorrow. The focus is on “Doing the Right Thing” rather than “Doing Things right” so that core competencies do not become core rigidities in the future Knowledge Management is the process of capturing and making use of a firm’s collective expertise anywhere in the business – on paper, in documents, in databases (called explicit Knowledge), or in people’s heads (called tacit Knowledge). The goal is for an organization to view all its processes as knowledge processes. This includes knowledge creation, dissemination, upgrade and application toward organizational survival. Today’s knowledge organization has a renewed responsibility to hire knowledgeable employees and specialties to manage knowledge as an intangible asset in the same way that one calls on an investor to manage a financial portfolio. A firm seeks to add value by identifying, applying and integrating knowledge in unprecedented ways; much like an investor adds value by unique combinations of stocks and bonds. The process is part science, part art, and part luck.

A knowledge worker is a person who transforms business and personal experience into knowledge through capturing, assessing, applying, sharing, and disseminating it within the organization to solve specific problems. Knowledge workers are actually those workers in an organization who are sensitive to change. They constantly respond to the changes in the environment by gathering information and then arranging their work accordingly. With the accelerated pace of change, we should not hesitate in accepting the reality that all knowledge workers have significant place in the organization.

2.KNOWLEDGE WORKERS

Knowledge workers in today's workforce are individuals who are valued for their ability to interpret information within a specific subject area. They will often advance the overall understanding of that subject through focused analysis, design and/or development. They use research skills to define problems and to identify alternatives. Fuelled by their expertise and insight, they work to solve those problems, in an effort to influence company decisions, priorities and strategies. Knowledge workers may be found across a variety of information technology roles, but also among professionals like teachers, lawyers, architects, physicians, nurses, engineers and scientists. As businesses increase their dependence on information technology, the number of fields in which knowledge workers must operate has expanded dramatically. Generally, if the knowledge can be retained, knowledge worker contributions will serve to expand the knowledge assets of a company. While it can be difficult to measure, this increases the overall value of its intellectual capital. In cases where the knowledge assets have commercial or monetary value, companies may create patents around their assets, at which point the material becomes restricted intellectual property. In these knowledge intensive situations, knowledge workers play a direct, vital role in increasing the financial value of a company.

3.DEFINING A KNOWLEDGE WORKER

The term “knowledge worker” seems to have started to appear after 1973 when Peter Drucker first presented it. However, a clear definition has not yet been established. Drucker defined it as “someone who knows more about his or her job than anyone else in the organization.” This does not seem to represent his true intention correctly, because it implies that there is only one knowledge worker per job, per organization, and even a skilled worker who has the best skill in the organization can be classified as a knowledge worker. Thomas H. Davenport’s definition is “knowledge workers have high degrees of expertise, education, or experience, and the primary purpose of their jobs involves the creation, distribution, or application of knowledge.” This improves on Drucker, but there is still an ambiguity. The ambiguity is caused by the “or” between distribution and application—it should say “and.” Performing jobs only by the direct application of given knowledge must be excluded from the category of knowledge work. Otherwise, almost all jobs would be classified as knowledge work because almost any work nowadays needs a certain degree of knowledge.

Table 1 lists some concrete examples for categorizing workers either as knowledge workers or non knowledge workers. As can be seen in the table, all white collar workers are not necessarily classified as knowledge workers, since the direct application of given knowledge is excluded from the qualification for knowledge workers. For example, the office clerks who use knowledge, but knowledge creation is not their main expected role, are classified as non-knowledge workers. Similarly, not all workers in a factory are non-knowledge workers: for example, production engineering staff may put on the same factory uniform as production workers, but they are categorized as knowledge workers, since their job includes the creation, distribution and application of knowledge.

Table 1 : Classification examples for knowledge and non-knowledge workers.

Classification		Examples
Categorized as knowledge workers	Within ordinary businesses	Top executives, managers, planning staff, financial staff, human resource development staff, auditors, R&D engineers, production engineers, sale representatives, etc Other workers: Office clerks, receptionists, production workers, call center attendants, logistics staff, etc
Not categorized as knowledge workers	Within ordinary businesses	Other workers Government clerks, public transportation systems staff, cashiers, car dealers, car mechanics, etc

In reviewing the literature, several views and definitions have been proposed for knowledge workers.

4. THE KNOWLEDGE WORKER AND WORK ADJUSTMENT

Smart managers attempt to ensure the right match between the vocational needs of their knowledge workers and the requirements of their jobs. The goal is to assure stability of the workforce and continuity on the job in the interest of the corporation. One approach to work adjustment is a model developed by a group of counseling psychologists at the University of Minnesota who were concerned with the general problem of adjustment to work (Dawis, Lofquist, and Weiss 1968). The model is based on the concept of “correspondence” or a match between the individual and his or her work environment. Achieving and maintaining correspondence with the work environment are viewed as basic motives of human work behavior. As shown in Figure 1.2, correspondence begins when the individual brings certain skills (abilities) that enable him or her to “respond” to the requirements of the job or the work environment.

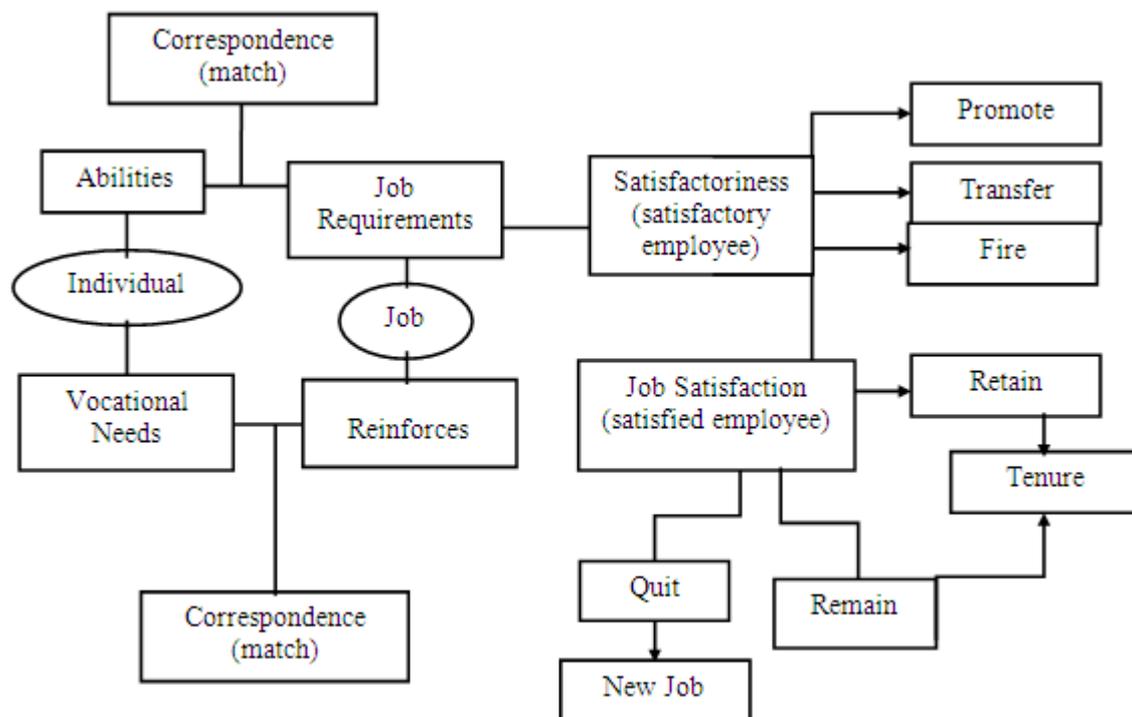


Figure 1.1: A Work Adjustment Model for Knowledge Workers

On the other hand, the work environment provides certain rewards (reinforces such as wages, prestige, personal relationships, and so on) in response to the individual’s requirements. When both the individual’s and the work environment’s minimal requirements are mutually fulfilled, correspondence exist. When the individual achieves minimal correspondence, he or she is allowed to stay on the job and have an opportunity to work toward a more optimal correspondence and to stabilize the correspondence relationship. When this relationship (correspondence) continues, it contributes to job tenure and stability of the bank as an entity.

5.CORE COMPETENCIES OF THE SELF- DIRECTED KNOWLEDGE WORKER

Corporations preparing their human capital to be knowledge workers in a competitive environment must consider several core competencies of self – directed knowledge workers :

- **Thinking skills**

A knowledge worker is expected to possess strategic thinking skills that shed potential on the work performed or the ideas provided on the job. Strategic thinking means having a vision of how the product can be better, how the company can improve by the value-added contributions of its employees, and how continuous learning contributes to a knowledge worker's career, loyalty to the firm, and satisfaction on the job.

- **Continuous learning.**

Knowledge work implies innovation through continuous learning on the job, professional seminars, and working in an environment conducive to creativity and advancement. This implies unlearning and relearning to be in tune with the fast- changing business. It also means the learning corporation must provide both the support and the funding for allowing its employees to continue to learn, in the hope that the outcome is better products or better quality service, or both. In one professional's words, "learning is about working and working is about learning"

- **Innovative teams and team work:**

As competition becomes more intense, the problems facing today's corporation become more complex, requiring innovative team work and joint decision making for solutions. Teamwork requires collaboration. Cooperation, and coordination, based on a knowledge-sharing attitude and commitment to knowledge exchange. For a career oriented knowledge worker, intrinsic rewards (such as recognition) go farther than extrinsic rewards (such as salary increase or stock options) in the long run.

- **Innovation and creativity:**

The spirit behind innovation and creativity is for knowledge workers to expand their vision and "dream" a new or a different product or service for the advance of the firm. For that to happen requires open and equal opportunities to explore, to test, and to try things out. It means a solution focus mind-set, a passion to create knowledge, and a strong desire for idea generation and follow-up.

The ultimate goal is to focus on creating tomorrow's product or service that the knowledge worker wants for the firm.

- **Risk taking and potential success**

Innovation and creativity mean risk taking. Maintaining the status quo requires minimum risk, but it also breeds no change for the betterment of knowledge workers or the organization. Like investing in stocks, the higher the risk, and the greater the chance of higher return on investment. It could also result in a greater loss. What the knowledge worker or management must do is first share and exchange the best knowledge available, work together as a team, and make joint decision with calculation risk. In risk taking, you have to be willing to lose as much as you hope to gain. Vision, experience, and seasoned knowledge enter the picture in risk taking for the forward-looking firm. It is part of what a learning organization has to undergo to gain and advance its employees' knowledge base.

- **Decisive action taking**

With all these factors considered, decisive action taking means that knowledge workers should be willing to embrace professional discipline factors and determinants. Motivation is a critical factor in keeping the focus on a product or a service for the future. Analyzing, choosing among alternatives, testing, and the selling of change must come before final adoption .

- **A culture of responsibility toward knowledge**

This core competency means loyalty and commitment to one's manager or leader. Knowledge workers must consistently support their leaders, their peers, and the company as a whole. When a problem arises, a knowledge worker is expected to take the problem to a responsible source, discuss or brainstorm it, settle on a "Best solution" outcome, and let it go at that. In traditional organization, employees with problems or grievances often gripe about them through the rumor mill, which breeds misinterpretation or misunderstanding. This route finds no winners. Related to this core competency is a subculture of referrals and knowledge exchange. By that, we mean identifying knowledge workers who have specialized knowledge for certain problems and who are willing to provide such knowledge on call. A network of knowledge source of knowledge availability is a critical component of a learning organization.

6.MOTIVATING KNOWLEDGE WORKERS

Knowledge management can help companies save significant sums of money by enabling them to improve employee management. Key areas, in which knowledge management is most effective, include the following :

1. Training helps keep knowledge workers employees sharp: It can take many forms, including multimedia, online handbooks and manuals, and so on.
2. Skill alignment ensures that the right people are working on the right projects at the right time: Knowledge management enables companies to find experts that are available for a particular job.

3. Benefits management is a natural target for any knowledge management system: Companies can simplify paper-based systems, reduce HR costs, provide corporate information to employees, and more.
4. Bigger companies can benefit most from better staffing management: Using knowledge management, those companies can keep track of headcount and reorganize more quickly.
5. Performance reviews, are more efficient when moved from manual processes to knowledge-management system: As a result, reviews are completed on time, and supervisors can better manage their budgeting processes.
6. Expense reimbursement is best done on an internet: Companies can significantly reduce the cost and turnaround time for reimbursing employees for out-of-pocket expenses, improving morale and productivity.

7.DELIVERING WORKFORCE EXCELLENCY

The challenge for businesses seems simple by aligning and engaging workforce to a clearly articulated strategy. However, this can be difficult to achieve. It requires a holistic, coordinated effort to put a number of key elements or building blocks in place. The key elements of organizational effectiveness, as illustrated in the figure below, are needed to drive employee engagement in an organization. Engagement influences the customers experience and ultimately, the overall performance of an organization in terms of productivity and profitability.



Figure 2 Right Management’s Organizational Effectiveness Framework

Achieving organizational effectiveness through an integrated framework that addresses the following organizational effectiveness elements:

Strategy	The role, purpose, and strategic direction that summarizes the work of the organization and/or division being clear and appropriate.
Structure, Capacity, and Capability	Capable people doing the right work through a “fit for purpose” structure and clearly described role accountabilities and relationships.
Leadership	Leaders have the capability and capacity to drive sustainable business success.
People Systems & Processes	Leaders need to be supported by good people systems and processes. These systems and processes work in organizations to send messages, share information, and make well-informed decisions across the business. Organizational processes and systems are an extension of leadership, creating consistency and trust.
Culture & Values	A set of shared, basic assumptions about how to behave and carry out work within the organization that is aligned to business strategy. The systems, symbols, and behaviors that leaders and other employees are exposed to within an organization must align to the desired culture to achieve the business strategy.
Employee Engagement	High numbers of engaged employees whose hearts and minds are aligned with both the job that they do and the organization that they work for. Engaged employees are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfied with their current job and their organization as an employer. • Committed to making the job and organization successful. • Proud of their organization and the work they do. • Willing to positively talk about their job and the organization.
Customer Experience	High levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty achieved through employees being aware of customer needs, acting on customer feedback, and being supported to deliver what customers require. Organizations are environmentally responsible and support the community.

Integration of the first five elements will produce powerful and mutually reinforcing results and a true performance-based, customer-focused culture. No single initiative can create organizational effectiveness. Excellence is required across the full range of organizational effectiveness framework elements to achieve competitive strength.

8.ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS : A NEW REALITY

As the results of our study , to create organizational effectiveness and ensuring sustainability, business leaders need to focus their attention on aligning their people, the systems, the structure and roles with the organization's strategy, while engaging their employees with their jobs and with the organization. There are four below mentioned phases are as follows:

Phase : I Measuring Employee engagement

Every organization is unique in nature to measure employee engagement in organization. The only way to gain accurate insight into the unique culture and challenges ,firstly to measure current levels of engagement across the factors impacting organizational effectiveness captured in Figure 2. The most accurate way to achieve this is through a quantitative survey supported by qualitative interviews and focus groups. Surveys need to be tailored and aligned with strategy, values and language. Therefore , measuring performance against each of the key elements of organizational effectiveness: Strategy, Structure, Roles & Capability, Leadership, People Systems & Processes, Culture & Values, Employee Engagement and Customer Satisfaction. Effective survey is designed to identify the barriers to engagement that are impacting business performance. The right questions are not going to write themselves. What is required are robust, proven question sets designed by organizational effectiveness experts that can be customized based on the unique culture of the organization. The right solutions only comes from the drivers of employee engagement and also the benefits of comparing demographics by Business Unit, Job Type, and Location, which allows to target solutions where they are needed. A robust discovery process can be executed without a large investment in money, time and resources.

Phase : II Building Capability to Take Action

To identify the engagement factors impacting performance and plan to translate the findings into action. Often, organizations fail to engage key stakeholders and line managers in the process and are unable to leverage the survey results to create an actionable plan. It is important to involve all line managers so that they are not introduced to the initiative when a survey arrives in their inbox. To Achieve line managers' commitment and support by involving them in the discovery and survey design phase; discussing the business case in terms they can relate to; and providing tangible examples of how they'll benefit. With the "why" and the "what" explanation , the focus will turn to the "how." The "how" requires knowledge and skills that managers may or may not already have. The outcome experience will results that the managers need coaching and guidance in how to interpret results and build collective ownership with employees to make the changes required. Responding to the employee input must be carefully considered. Turning the problem over to employee committees who have no authority, no broader business understanding, or no organizational behavior expertise is often ineffective and can damage employee trust.

Phase : III Designing Process to Support Action

There are a number of processes that need to be in place to ensure leaders are supported to take action and that the right changes occur and are embedded within the organization. These includes :

- A communication process that reaches all key stakeholders and clearly covers the why, what, when, and how.
- A process for communicating the findings quickly and transparently.
- A developmental process to ensure leaders have the knowledge and skills to take action.
- A process for effectively cascading engagement initiatives throughout the entire workforce.
- Leadership support that ensures resources and energy are aligned with the strategy.
- A process for business leaders to report progress and draw ideas and support from their leader and peers.
- A process for measuring success and return on investment.

Phase : IV Identifying Successive Measures

Business leaders across the organization often do not have alignment with goals and expectations. Time is well spent developing consensus on what success looks like and how you know you've achieved it. Success measures should be of short-term, medium-term and long-term.

For example,

- Short term success looks like a well-planned, well-executed discovery and action planning process. Measure to ensure implementation is rolled out on time and within budget. Articulate clear and actionable findings.
- Medium-term success is achieved when leaders' behaviors and decisions are aligned to the strategy and positively impact key engagement drivers. Measure with tracking surveys, observation, and focus groups.
- Long-term success is realized with increased employee engagement improved key business metrics, such as retention, absenteeism, productivity, customer loyalty, and profitability .Measure with tracking surveys and existing business metrics.

Getting it Right

Right Management utilizes an approach that incorporates robust research and skill development methodologies with real business application. The areas of talent assessment, leadership development, employee engagement and organizational effectiveness ,companies has to create high levels of capability to deliver their strategy and achieve sustainable, improved business performance by Knowledge Management. The built capability to design processes to support change, equip leaders with skills to act, and track progress. Below mentioned four phases of approach are as follows:



Thus the above mentioned approach ensures that the organizations executed strategy will achieve superior business results that are sustainable regardless of the market conditions.

9.CONCLUSION

We are moving into an age where business is measured not in terms of historical performance, but in terms of how it makes use of the knowledge and intellectual capital of its knowledge workers. This study was motivated by the actual need of understanding about knowledge workers. Hence, by reviewing knowledge workers roles and strategies, it was understood about the knowledge workers work adjustment model and motivating knowledge workers. Unless knowledge workers have engaging employment experiences, career development opportunities and a supportive manager, their organizations will suffer from costly loss of human capital and potentially distressing attrition. Never before has the motivation and retention of knowledge workers been more critical for organizational sustainability than it is today. This Conceptual study concludes that the real success of Knowledge management implementation is to create organizational effectiveness and ensure sustainability, business leaders need to focus their attention on aligning their people, the systems, the structure and roles with the organization's strategy, while engaging their employees with their jobs and with the organization.

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