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STUDY ON KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO IT ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract

Knowledge Management, as the word implies, is the ability to manage "knowledge", a deliberate business optimization strategy that has been adopted in recent years to gain competitive advantage over others. It comprises of a range of strategies and practices or a collection of processes that govern the creation, spread and utilization of knowledge, insights and experiences within the organization. Such insights and experiences comprise of knowledge, either embodied in individuals or embedded in organizations as processes or practices in the form of technology.

Most large organizations have resources that are exclusively dedicated towards management of knowledge, which could be a part of their business strategy, information technology, or human resource management agenda. The overall objective of knowledge management is to create value and to leverage, improve, and refine the firm's competences and knowledge assets hence meet the organizational goals and targets.

Effective implementation of any knowledge management strategy is viewed from organizational, managerial, cultural, technical and political.

Over past few years several studies are conducted in this field. The present study is effort to know the existing practices of knowledge management in IT companies.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, IT industry, organisation

Introduction

In an era where there is a massive competition between organizations to keep ahead of others every resource is valuable and of vital importance. The resources needed by one are abundant and not different in comparison to what the competitor has. Then how does one make itself better than the competition? How can one ensure that the solutions to problems are found permanently? Will it be possible to make available information at all times and at light speed on all occasions?

The answer is yes!!! All is possible if the organization manages it knowledge resources properly. In a time where it is difficult to gain the correct information inspite of abundance what can really prove to be of advantage is how the organization creates its forte around its data, how well it manages it and allows it to leverage its employees.

Knowledge management can thus become a source of differential advantage for an organization looking forward to turn around its health and wealth and stay ahead of competition.

Most IT organizations see a cut throat competition on daily basis. The resources possessed by each are the same and yet very different. From time to time these have to be refreshed or replaced to stay in competition. Knowledge management and its maintenance are thus very important.

The roots of KM lie in the fact that today there is an abundance of information and talent. To spot the right fit for a role or to obtain a quick reference for a task is very important. Knowledge is the new advantage.

"If you have an apple and I have an apple and we both exchange our apples we will still have one apple each. But if I have an idea and you have an idea and we both exchange our ideas we both will have two ideas" –George Bernard Shaw.

Unlike many other resources that get depleted when shred knowledge is one that multiplies.

It is the currency of the millennium and the key for corporate survival. It has turned into a deliberate systematic business activity where communications plays a vital role. Thus Knowledge management is the process through which an organization generates value for its intellectual and knowledge based assets.

Knowledge management has seen a phenomenal change in paradigm in the past two decades and will definitely be important at every step to be innovated upon.

Methodology

The present study is exploratory and descriptive in nature. It is not a quantitative study.

The objective of the study is to find out Knowledge Management Practices existing in the Industry. The paper also highlights some of the existing best practices in this area.

Data Collection involved both Primary and Secondary Sources of data.

The primary data was collected through informal personal interview and observation of the literature. Working professionals form the selected IT organizations were contacted. Data was collected in form of personal interview and observation.

Secondary data was used in the research to gain knowledge on the topics of knowledge management. Websites and online resources were used.

Limitations:

The study is qualitative in nature. It is based on discussion and interviews of respondent working in the industry. Responses are also subjective opinion of individuals and limited to their experience. Therefore finding of study cannot be generalized.

Scope for further Study

The study can be taken forward by maximizing number of companies under study. Model for Knowledge Management can also be created based on the further study.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES
KM@INFOSYS:

"Our assets walk out of the door each evening. We have to make sure that they come back the next morning."

-Narayana Murthy, Chairman Emiretus Infosys

At Infosys the attempt has been to create a centralized value system based on "*learn once, use anywhere*" model.

Since its inception, Infosys has given importance to learning as a key to organization success. Learning and knowledge management is more of Change Management that needs to be dealt effectively continuously. It must be firm enough to leverage performance of employees yet flexible enough to include exceptions.

Infosys has a three fully functional portals or centres of knowledge exchange:

1. Knowledge Management Portal (K-shop) which acts as the central repository around which all knowledge sharing initiatives have been built within the organization. It allows online search and sharing of content thereby providing an integrated platform and access solution spanning across the corporate intranet.
2. Process Asset Database (PAD) is an online system that captures certain project deliverables as they are. Essentially this contains project plans, source codes, database design references, type of project etc.
3. Process Knowledge Map (PKM) is more of a knowledge directory. Employees are able to search, locate

experts and reach out to them for specific queries.

The mission of KM efforts at Infosys has been to ensure leverage all organizational learning in delivering business advantage to employees across geographies. This has proved to be of tremendous importance as it helped remove geographical barriers and overcome real and perceived cultural restrictions of the organization.

Every project at Infosys is backed by a team of technically sound and human resource experts. There are project specific knowledge repositories and detailed training material pertaining to it. It allows the Human resources team to keep track of attrition numbers for similar projects.

With the rise of global operations and hence advent of virtual teams, effective communication and building confidence and trust among members is catered by promoting cultural training sessions and language training.

Weekly Knowledge sharing sessions (KT sessions) are held. Team members impart knowledge, discuss past learning and then document it. Approximately 2%-3% of efforts in a project are spent on knowledge management.

HEAR is Hearing Employees And Resolving which again is a forum directed towards addressing employee grievance by the Human Resource department.

As opposed to others Infosys prides itself in subjecting team's performance to bell curve. Consistent players over a period of time are identified and are awarded with top class material to enhance their personal knowledge database and competence.

The following have been the advantages observed and cited by the professionals.

Advantages:

1. The K-shop helps employees share knowledge, learn from each other and create a knowledge repository. Also Manager's portal helps managers from across the organization connect with each other and share best practices and tools on effective project management.
2. This has allowed massive transparency and speed to the Human resources as issues related to corporate affairs such as reorganization and restructuring can be conveyed on time citing proper reasons, impact and processes involved in making such transitions.
3. Quick accessibility to data allows for lesser time spent on irrelevant information and quicker completion of work.
4. Statutory compliances will be easier to handle as employees can be tracked and so can be the information accessed to by them.

Problems/Challenges:

1. Maintaining the authenticity, integrity and accountability of the data available and its source.
2. Effective coordination between team members or with others could prove to be cost intensive and time consuming.

3. Cultural issues are related to managing change accompanied by pre-, current and post knowledge sharing.
4. Selection of individuals who must be included while creating, updating and managing the information.
5. Enabling such employees to improve KM process and enhance productivity.

KM @WIPRO:

In 2010 Wipro Technologies, the global Consulting, System Integration and Outsourcing business of Wipro Limited, was awarded the prestigious Asian MAKE (Most Admired Knowledge Enterprise) Award administered by Teleos, an independent research firm which is based out of the UK.

Wipro has been specially known for its outstanding accomplishments in creating a knowledge-driven enterprise culture, ensuring enterprise-wide collaboration and knowledge sharing and driving organizational learning.

At the beginning of the knowledge initiative, on completion of each project, review boards setup would help project teams to step back and evaluate its performance and outcomes. A very detailed template would be created used to capture project data, including what went right or wrong, risks that were identified at the beginning of the project and whether they were avoided, and changes in direction that took place along the way. That process resulted in a draft document that became part of the

company's document repository. In short it was all paper, heaps of it- and the Human Resource Department more or less the Administration would be responsible for its safe keeping through the years.

Some project documents were converted into a case study for reference with conclusions based on lessons learned during the project. Finally, the software code and information system architecture developed during the project was identified and saved for potential reuse.

As it was relatively new to the IT business earlier, Wipro had sought to benchmark its performance against top international standards- to raise its performance bar. Thus was born the need to not only align but also maintain and make available key information throughout the organization to improve business performance and decision making i.e. capitalize on experience, technology and understanding.

Wipro's KM process Model emphasized combining the power of Business vision, intellectual capability, technology and strategic HR practices. Thus was born KNET or KnowledgeNet which can be defined as the employees WIPRO "Google". It is a portal acting as a central repository and generator of a large variety of HR essentials like reports, whitepapers, tips and guidelines, templates, case studies, newsletters etc.

The key Knet applications include DocKNet, KoNnEcT, War Rooms and

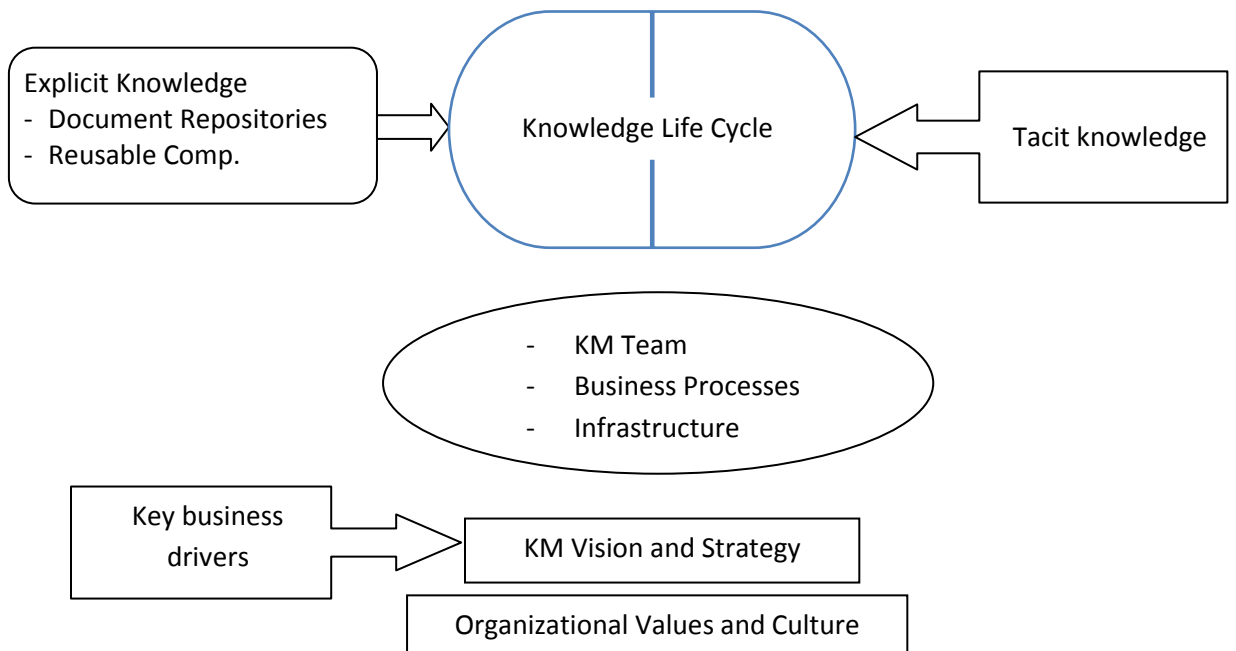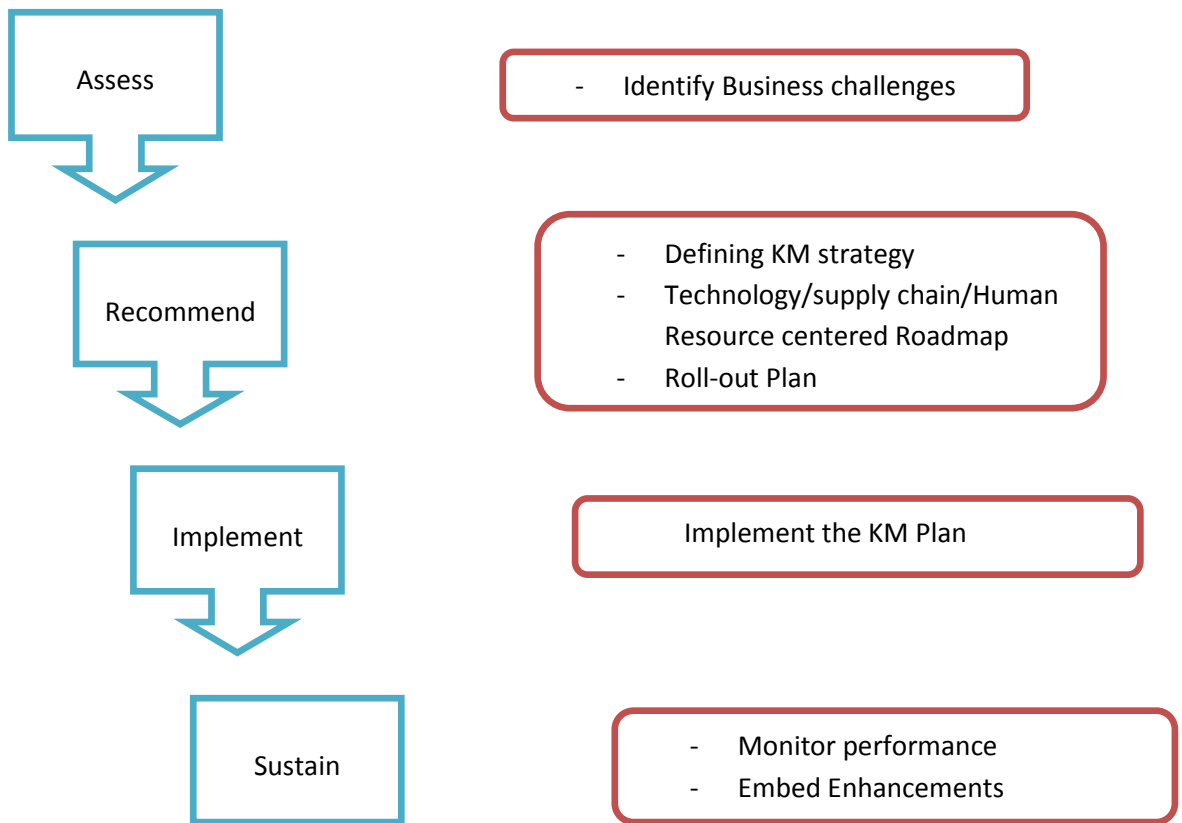Reusable components which have been discussed later.

The company supports Centers of Excellence (CoEs) wherein people learn, create new knowledge and propagate knowledge throughout the enterprise. The CoEs have a number of different focus areas. In addition to generating new patents, reusable components and services, the CoEs also provide a forum where in Wipro staff can develop their expertise by interacting with experts in the field and be mentored.

At Wipro multiple mechanisms for knowledge creation and evaluating them have been identified by the Human Resources department in collaboration with the other departments. The most basic being

1. Engagement i.e. getting people to work on a project and derive a steady flow of knowledge from it.
2. Looking at the effectiveness—whether one is using the knowledge and avoiding past mistakes.
3. Finally, the distilled knowledge is used as an edge for Wipro Technologies in creating a satisfying and competitive advantage over others.
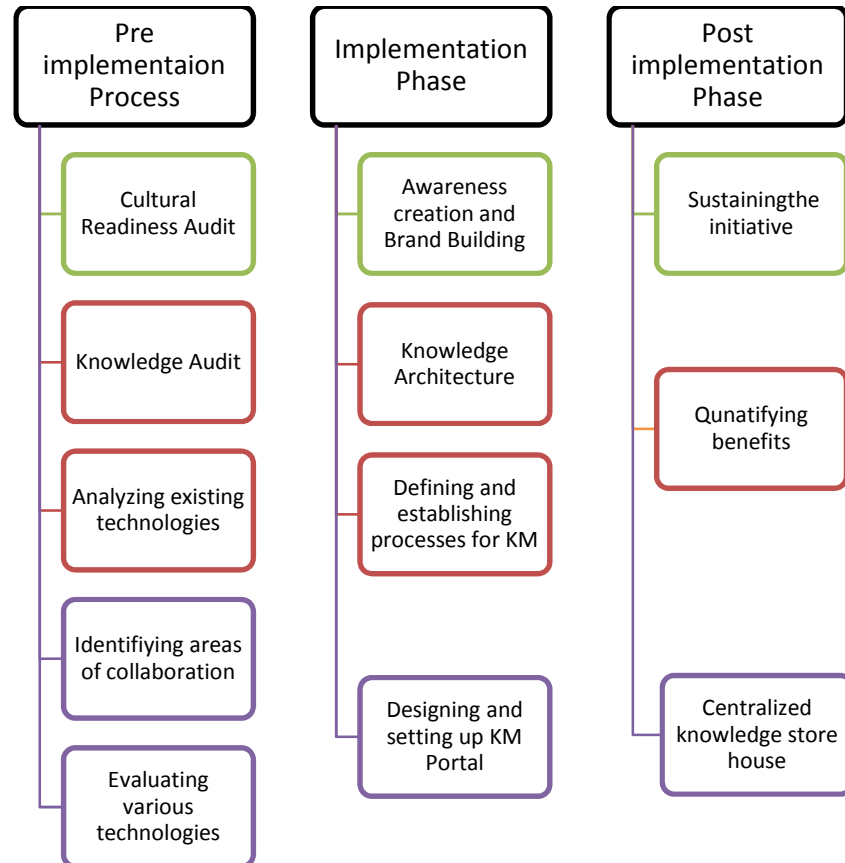
The human resource department is responsible for creating an environment of collaboration, trust and readiness in creating a value and knowledge driven enterprise.

THE K.M. MODEL

| Assess | - Identify Business challenges |

| Recommend | - Defining KM strategy
- Technology/supply chain/Human Resource centered Roadmap
- Roll-out Plan |

| Implement | Implement the KM Plan |

| Sustain | - Monitor performance
- Embed Enhancements |

Explicit Knowledge
- Document Repositories
- Reusable Comp.

→ Knowledge Life Cycle ←

Tacit knowledge

- KM Team
- Business Processes
- Infrastructure

Key business drivers → KM Vision and Strategy

Organizational Values and Culture

Essentially the KM model views the business challenges from organizational, cultural, technical, political and

managerial point of view. The following depicts the phases of KM thought process.

Pre implementaion Process	Implementation Phase	Post implementation Phase
Cultural Readiness Audit	Awareness creation and Brand Building	Sustainingthe initiative
Knowledge Audit	Knowledge Architecture	Qunatifying benefits
Analyzing existing technologies	Defining and establishing processes for KM	Centralized knowledge store house
Identifiying areas of collaboration	Designing and setting up KM Portal	
Evaluating various technologies		

The various components of Knet are discussed as follows:

DocKNet: The repository of documents. Place to go to for anything ranging from technical documents, proposals to training material on various subjects

War Rooms: It is a virtual workspace for time -bound and task oriented jobs.

KoNnEcT: The Yellow pages with an associated database of experts, queries, responses and ratings. Popular and very useful!

Reusable Repository: The repository of software reusable components and tools developed in-house.

DocKNet

It is a very comprehensive repository of all document categories to assist you in

various business, client scenarios and other activities

- It contains a host of documents that includes proposals, whitepapers, presentations etc. with subscriptions and discussion forums
- Repository aiming to provide single access to all the information, previously available on Sales Support & TeckNet
- Contributions to DocKNet could come from Verticals and Horizontals
- Different verticals deal with different industries.
- Different horizontals deal with different technologies

Konnect

It is a platform for collaboration and connecting people who seek help to people having experience and required expertise related to work.

Share the tacit knowledge within the organization, above and beyond the explicit knowledge captured in the KNet Repositories

Members listed under Konnect are volunteers; memberships open to all. The role of members is provide help when contacted by Konnect users

Confidentiality is provided to users & experts

The deliverables include

- Answering queries posted by the user(s)
- Ensuring that the right profile is provided in Konnect, making it easier for the user to
- Connect to the right consultant

War Rooms

Being a misnomer it is a virtual space for team members scattered and dispersed to collaborate and work together as virtual teams and communicate.

- It facilitates sharing of documents, information exchange, real-time online discussions, work plan sharing and online updates allowing monitoring the progress of activities.
- Certain access privileges and restrictions exist within the War Rooms
- It is only accessible through VPN (Virtual Private Network) and Intranet

Reusable Repository

This is the repository of all the software reusable components and tools developed in-house by the organization.

KM@ACCENTURE:

KM vision: to create a world class knowledge sharing culture and environment that contributes to Accenture's success.

In the 90s Accenture adopted a knowledge oriented strategy: build a knowledge-management under the CIO. But by the 2000 the focus was widened to include learning and development and create training and learning organization.

Ms Jill Smart was the Managing Director of HR delivery in the late nineties. Her responsibilities entailed overall human resources operations and people development. From 2000 until 2003, she was head of the company's People Enablement business practice, which included training and knowledge management.

There were four critical goals identified by the human resources department to create a knowledge driven culture at Accenture

1. Fostering and sustaining a knowledge sharing culture
2. Ensure and improve the ROI on KM
3. Rendering matching support technology to cater he needs
4. Provide consistency over a period of time to tools and functionalities

The business needs are driving innovation, particularly in Accenture's Human Resources (HR) function. This saw the portal upgrade as an opportunity to equip employees to meet their HR needs via a self-service model. "We wanted to help our people manage their HR needs themselves," explains Phil

Calcutt, Accenture senior executive and business owner of the portal revamping. "Our HR transformation initiative was seeking to take the HR function out of the business of sending umpteen reminder e-mails by giving our people access to the data they needed as well as the self-service tools they needed to drive action."

The vision for the next-generation portal was to create a daily performance workspace integrating information and knowledge, content, learning, workforce management, and performance management in a single virtual desktop. "We wanted this new portal to be everyone's first stop in the morning, and to do everything during their day," Calcutt recalls, "going beyond just an HR tool or a knowledge management tool to become broadly useful for a wide spectrum of tasks."

A special LKM department (Learning and Knowledge Management) department exists to train and guide new joinees, mew teams under the leadership of technical managers and human resources departments. Courses particularly include tests and boot camp session wherein candidates are groomed on domain knowledge. Most of the tests are accessible on/via filelearning.accenture.com.

At Accenture Emphasis is laid on performance. The entire appraisal system is online and less on paper. Also certain trainings are provided via simulation once basic level of education in domain is over for the trainee leading to even greater use of technology.

The site mylearning.com is an internal alternative that can be accessed by the employees for additional data at times.

The following are some of the advantages and disadvantages stated by professionals from Accenture relating to centralized system of KM:

ADVANTAGES OF KM:

1. Allows single point of access/entry to all irrespective of location, time zone and nature of work.
2. Central repositories with contents verified primarily by Human Resources, Information technology departments.
3. Allows for significantly enhanced search functionality for ease of use.
4. Helps brake barriers of geography, mind-sets and language (to a an extent)

DISADVANTAGES:

1. Extensive usage of SharePoint templates leads to a lot of time consumption.

2. A typology of the documents has to be created first before data can be uploaded: extensive exercise

3. Obsolescence of documents

4. Loose integration may at times lead to reduced focus on innovation and collaboration opportunities.

5. Training the employees in how to use the website for better results.
General Challenges
- Language
   a. Non English Contributors: difficulty in translation
   b. Ease of using local language repositories
- Promoting the usage of the file sharing and access system among the employees
- Reluctance of complete dependency on the central repository for work.

KM@MSAT(MAHINDRA SATYAM)

Mahindra Satyam has seen ups and downs ever since its acquisition by Mahindra in 2009. Its system has not seen any massive change since the acquisition.

Once known for its knowledge enterprise Satyam Computing Systems has turned an underdog in the recent years. Not much has been done to turn it around and operations and logistics remain more or less the same.

The following are the highlights of what remain of the once admired Satyam Company's knowledge enterprise

1. The knowledge/data collected is maintained mostly in the form of trackers, wherein different competencies and experience etc. are listed in order. This is done so that they're accessible when needed.

2. HR has a major role to play in it, since the entire data collection is their responsibility.

3. Interaction with potential talent/ prospective candidates and storing their information a part of the HR's job. This way the HR has an idea about the different resources available and it's easier to manage. All the information is stored in the organizations database which is accessible only to the Human resource department and specially authorized/ higher level Database Administrators.

4. There does exist a central repository to be accessed by the entire organization and contains wide info. All the data related to the resources are stored through (PeopleSoft.).

The following advantages, disadvantages and challenges have been reported by the professionals

1. Increased efficiency in retrieving information by the professionals (queries can be posted and resolved by seeking help from others).
2. Reduction in workload due to availability of help on critical matters.
3. Employees are able to access information from other

KM@ TCS:

Ultimatix.com is the central repository/ web portal at TCS that is responsible for harnessing and storing all relatable information about the internal requirements and cater to needs of the employees.

Most information is available on Ultimatix.com from project nature, strategy source codes etc.

At TCS weekly KT sessions are held between team members and their peers as well as superiors to ensure knowledge transfer. These sessions may not be taken by experts but are driven by employees with knowledge about subject and some experience. The Human resource departments' responsibility is to validate these sessions.

Take aways of such sessions are then fed to the central repository which again is proceeded to by the validation and authorization by the Human resource department and the Database administrator.

According to employees knowledge gained through project related information available helps them to not only reach across geographical areas but also allows them to get in contact the best in the industry/organization for help and suggestions.

Grievance redressal is also done online through the central repository wherein Human resources professionals are able to access the grievances and quickly respond if not solve the problem for the employee.

The entire work of human resource department gets reduced in volume as professionals become accountable or the information whether they are at the receiving or the delivering end.

Following are some of the advantages, disadvantages and challenges cited by professionals from the organization.

ADVANTAGES:

1. Improved retention of knowledge otherwise lost due to attrition
2. Contribution of better work experience and availability to complete organization
3. Satisfaction of new joiners with the ocean and range of data available.
4. Maximizing growth opportunities by decreasing the lapse time in delivering products and processes thereby reducing the problems like dissatisfaction at work, attrition etc.

DISADVANTAGES:

1. Costs become higher when more acquisition activities are carried on in future.

2. Information is easily available, though it cannot be carried for future use or reference.

CHALLENGES:

1. An employee would prefer to seek guidance and help to solve the problem, owing to the expertise and speed at which information is available, rather than rack his brains.
2. Amalgamation will be difficult with future acquired cost as back ends may differ.

DISCUSSION

There has been a phenomenal shift in terms of knowledge management especially in the IT sector since the liberalization in 1991.

Over the past two decade massive technological advancements have been met leading to the disintegration of the traditional ideologies and thought processes related to knowledge which if were continued today will create great bottlenecks for the organizations seeking progress. Traditionally a paper is the most acceptable form of any document required. But the bulk of it only takes space. Converting them into soft copies appears to be the best idea available. But what will happen when the numbers running into thousands of line lines of code and changes?

Technology driven cultures have allowed the integration of knowledge and technology by helping create massive repositories that are in fact not the sole responsibilities of the human resources but a collaborative responsibility of technical associates also.

Content generation by any organization, today, is not difficult. Maintaining the authenticity, integrity and accountability of the data is. Content generated once tagged effectively and stored for efficient retrieval, forms the knowledge bank of the organization. This is not as easy a task as it appears to be because as more and more content gets generated, storage, even in the digital form becomes a herculean task.

The main aspect of creating knowledge out of the available content is adding intelligence to the business and create a value add to the employees experience. Knowledge becomes relevant and value adds only if it empowers employee to deliver an above expectation result. Sharing of knowledge is thus very important.

Though all of the above organizations agree to have restricted/blocked the use of non-firm website, professionals registered little reliance on them to gain information. This also proves the KM initiatives to be moving in the right direction.

CONCLUSION

Knowledge is the new branch of management which has to be strategically handled to achieve high performance results through collaboration of people, technology and process. The focus is on managing change, complexity and uncertainty in times of abundance.

The integration of components of knowledge and aspects of technology has left subtle difference between the functions of the various departments within the organization but the core responsibility to cater to the needs of employees and empower with world class knowledge and

information has been on the right rack of progress.

In future the only threat would be to strike a balance between the various aspects of technology and KM and their amalgamations.

Recommendations

Though in times when there is over abundance of information the following recommendations can be made:

1. Information entered by individuals can be subjected to filters by the human resources to check for any discrepancy.
2. Information should be first quickly reviewed by the managers before being uploaded on the portal.
3. Information should be screened by associates and allowed to be discussed upon in open forums.
4. Actively updated information must be under the authorization of the Human resource department and must have a limit to it.
5. Amalgamation of technology with knowledge must be conveyed to all in the organization and not just a few privileged ones.

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