
KNOWLEDGE ORGANIZATION IN DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

In a rapidly changing, increasingly competitive world of today, Knowledge may be Organisation's greatest competitive advantage. Knowledge should flow freely in the organisation and a knowledge portal is essential in any organization from where users get knowledge they need to do their work at their finger tips and should get appropriate reputation for the knowledge they share. The paper briefs Knowledge Management (KM) and highlights the salient features of a knowledge portal. The paper stresses the importance of a knowledge portal in any organization.

Keywords : Knowledge Management, Knowledge Portal

1. Introduction

Advancement in information technology has changed the traditional method of collection organization and dissemination of information/knowledge. Information explosion and the advancement in various technologies have revolutionized the traditional method of dissemination of information/knowledge. Issues related to the management of Knowledge and its need to be assessed and planned for the future. Better knowledge can lead to measurable efficiencies in product development and to make wiser decisions. Organisation has to create an environment that optimises knowledge and encourages information sharing, knowledge creation, and team working. Knowledge portal is the ideal solution for this.

2. Knowledge Management

Knowledge Management (KM) is the process of identification and analysis of available and required knowledge, capturing and leveraging it so as to fulfill organisational objectives. This knowledge has to be disseminated to the users in the form and in the right quantity they required. Knowledge assets resides in many different places such as: databases, knowledge bases, filing cabinets and peoples' heads and are distributed right across the enterprise [1]. Knowledge itself is of two kinds viz. tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is the most important type of knowledge that exists in any organization and one that is least supported by IT [2]. Tacit knowledge is internal and it is in human brain and is very difficult to retrieve. But explicit knowledge is easy to collect and it is mainly recorded. It is very important that the tacit knowledge is to be retrieved by any means and to be converted to explicit and should be stored for future reference before the individuals leave the organization. There are many types of knowledge in an organization from embedded

processes, to legacy systems, to explicit knowledge codified in documents to the tacit knowledge of experience, skills, education and judgment. But of foremost importance is the creation of flows of knowledge - between individuals on a team, between teams, among departments, within the marketplace. There are also continual flows of knowledge from tacit to explicit and back to tacit.

4. Knowledge Portal

A knowledge portal is the ideal solution for all the above-mentioned three steps. The knowledge portal provides a gateway to databases, institutional repositories, internal web content and external web sites even if users from remote places will be able to access the same. Knowledge Portal will offer the capability to create, transfer, deliver and access information and education without borders. It can also provide a forum for the capture of intellectual capital and staff experiences, which is so vital in transforming data and information into knowledge. The primary purpose of this portal is to share knowledge and experiences, and digital documents. It is also a forum to help each other learn, capture tacit knowledge and convert it to explicit knowledge.

Knowledge Portal has the following major functions:

- Establish processes for effective knowledge management .
- Helps to capture the technical and managerial knowledge generated in the organisations
- Benchmark the best practices in successful R&D projects
- Provides supporting information to the organization in strategic and operational planning and policy formulation.
- Finding an expert in various fields and getting their expertise as and when needed.
- Organises the best practices and Lessons learned and these can be retrieved as and when needed.
- Act as Institutional digital repositories and as digital library which Provides references, useful documents, such as project reports, proposals, product specifications, users manuals, demos, price lists, etc.
- Provides Knowledge map to identify where knowledge lies in the organization, which means identify subject experts and their profiles and these should be readily accessible by all.
- Provides various collaboration tools-opinion poll, active discussion forum, brain storming sessions, etc.
- Workflow mechanism, which allows information to be pushed to those who need the same
- Provide easy-to-use interface for sharing knowledge, which will reduce barriers for sharing.

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- Measure knowledge sharing and usage.
 - Idea Recognition system idea can be posted to the system and get recognised.

Thus it facilitates knowledge sharing and creation. Knowledge is created through the interaction of users by sharing their experiences and skills. One can also gain an understanding of who can assist them by searching expert database. By accessing Project documents one can avoid repeated mistakes and can follow best practices. Organisation can monitor the portal users and can offer reward system for the persons who contribute more to the system by sharing their knowledge or actively take part in the discussion, or using the existing knowledge to the maximum. This reward system will motivate the users to share their knowledge and experience.

So it is highly essential for a research or business establishments to have a knowledge portal. The portal should be updated frequently with current and relevant knowledge. The obsolete knowledge should be removed from the system frequently. Feedback should be collected from the users on its effectiveness and should be modified accordingly.

4.1 Major Components of a Knowledge Portal

There are different modules to be available with the knowledge portal. User module as well as administrator module is essential. In the user module all the features for interaction of the users with the system should be integrated. Administrator module is mainly for system administration and it should be access restricted. Administrator should have the total control of the system as well as knowledge flow in the system.

The major components/features to be available in any knowledge portal are explained below :

4.1.1 Expert Database

Creation of knowledge map with experts in the organization with their expertise should be possible. These expert database [4]

- Facilitates easy identification of experts in the organization for consultation, clarification of doubts, etc.
- Reducing the communication gap between the expert and novice.
- Question-Answer session can be supported with help of interaction between experts.

4.1.2 Knowledge Base

Knowledge base of documents, about people, websites, FAQ, procedure, glossary, etc can be able to generate in the portal. Both user and administrator can do uploading of useful knowledge/information. Following are the major category of uploads.

- News/notification of the organization.

- The best practices or procedures followed in the organization may be uploaded for future reference.
- Frequently visited useful web sites can be highlighted
- Articles of common interest like health articles, carrier capsule, etc
- Conference alerts, tutorials on various subjects, etc.

The institute of chartered accounts of India knowledge portal (<http://www.pdicai.org/>) may be sited as an example here.

4.1.3 Search Engine

The portal should have a search engine, which allows users to access information available in various databases and platforms by creating connection strings to these databases. The Software provides a web based search engine and able to carry out simple search, advanced search, Boolean search, etc and can save the results.

4.1.4 E-mail

Provision for sending/receiving e-mails between the users of the system should be available in the portal.

4.1.5 Discussion Groups

Various discussion groups related to the field of interest to parent institution can be started with the development of online communities. This discussion groups

- Facilitates live discussion on useful topics.
- Enhancing more professional interaction.
- Identification of available online communities with their members.

4.1.6 Minutes of Meeting

Minutes of meeting can be drafted; online sharing, approval, etc are possible [4]. Also Minutes of meeting can be searched using keywords and access can be restricted at various levels.

4.1.7 Brain Storming

Brain storming sessions can be conducted virtually and ideas to be shared among users. Also Teleconferencing can be conducted to share the knowledge of experts in the field even if they are remotely located.

4.1.8 Opinion Polls

Option for conducting Opinion polls may be available in the portal. This will allow the freedom to express opinion regardless of designations.

4.1.9 Knowledge Sharing Metrics

Different types of reports can be generated and evaluation may be done user wise, Department wise, etc using scoreboard and this can be effectively used as metrics for knowledge sharing rewards.

5. KM Software

KM software is highly essential to be integrated with the knowledge portal or KM software as such can have the total capability of a knowledge portal. Many vendors claim to have a KM solution [4]. Several collaboration tools like Lotus Notes, Domino TeamRooms, Domino Discussion databases, Ferret Software Suite and Total KM Solutions are readily available in the market. Knowledge management will have to suit the culture of that particular organization. We may find that no one technology or tool will work for any organization. Many tools/technology may have to be integrated into meet all the requirements. So it is recommended that develop software of our own which suits our culture and needs.

6. Conclusion

An effort is made in this paper to explain the need for a knowledge portal in organisations and the components that should be integrated in the portal to capture and disseminate both tacit as well as explicit knowledge. For the effective knowledge management of any organization a knowledge portal is highly essential. In fact knowledge portal is a combination of functional as well as structural features of an intranet and digital library. The major difference is in the fact that Internet and digital library handles information but knowledge portal holds the knowledge. The Librarian has to take initiative in moulding the library portal to a knowledge portal by enhancing the same with knowledge rather than mere information. Knowledge has to be retrieved from the persons holding it and it should be codified and made available for one who needs it.

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