
ROLE OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGERS IN THE KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Meeta Rathod

Abstract

Libraries or Information Centres are the hubs in which knowledge is a major resource and the performances of these knowledge in terms of adding and delivering value to their users depend upon their ability and effectiveness in generating , organizing, manging, and using this knowledge.

As knowledge is continuously changing, it is necessary to dedicate and maintain a group of people to continuously update and maintain the knowledge repositories as well as validate the knowledge in the repositories.

The system for managing this knowledge is known as Knowledge Management System and the person who manages this knowledge is better known as Knowledge Manager.

The paper tries to describe briefly knowledge management ,tools of knowledge management and thereafter illustrates the essential characteristics required in the Knowledge Manager.

Keywords : Knowledge Management, Internet.

1. INTRODUCTION

In this Information explosion era, the emphasis of storing an individual's knowledge, idea, views are shifting to sharing and using them with others. The major fear of an individual for sharing his/her knowledge with others is losing his/her competitive advantage over their colleagues. This fear could be removed by creating an environment of mutual sharing of this knowledge.

Most of our work is information based. Advances in technology and communication tools are expanding the opportunities and new platform for sharing, accessing and creating information. Information is just signs and numbers, while knowledge involves their meaning. What we want is knowledge. Continuous innovation is impossible without knowledge assets. Knowledge is the core competence for coping with the change. Nothing but knowledge can generate originality of services. Knowledge enables to anticipate customer needs. Knowledge grows when shared and when used, and deteriorates when not used.

Knowledge is also referred to as Intellectual Capital. Knowledge when applied becomes wisdom. Knowledge is that which is distinct from both data and information. We can understand this by following relationship.

Data (raw symbols and facts) + Information = Knowledge (Ideas, thoughts, beliefs)

Knowledge can exist and be expressed in many forms. For ex: facts, attitudes, opinions, issues, values, theories, reasons, processes, policies, priorities, rules, cases, approaches, models, tools, methodologies, relationships, risks and probabilities.

Library is viewed as an information processing house where work is done primarily with the help of an explicit knowledge base which can be expressed in words and numbers; and easily communicated or shared in the form of hard data, codified procedure or specific schedule. While explicit knowledge is relatively easily processed by computers, transmitted electronically and stored in databases for perusal and discussions, tacit knowledge needs similar expressions before it can be understood and developed further.

2. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The primary goal of knowledge management is to provide right knowledge at the right time to the right person. This would enable the individual to make an appropriate and informed decision. Knowledge Management incorporates information sharing and resource optimization and thus to build and exploit intellectual capital effectively and gainfully.

KM promotes an integrated approach to identifying, capturing, retrieving, sharing and evaluating an institute's knowledge asset. It is the system to transfer knowledge into a valuable organizational asset. Knowledge, expertise and experience must be formalized, distributed, shared and applied.

KM has always been managed implicitly. However , effective and active KM requires new perspectives and techniques and touches on almost all facets of an organization. Rishi Ved Vyas converted the tacit knowledge of the ages into explicit knowledge by writing Gita.

For creating , implementing and maintaining successful Knowledge Management system in the library / Information Centre a two-pronged approach of people and technology should be implemented.

1. **People** : People are the central core for the library. This includes librarian, library staff and users or clientele of the library.(In academic library it includes both teachers as well as students). Librarian or library staff are the people who identify, capture, store, evaluate and retrieves the knowledge and users are the people who access these knowledge assets. Both are very key factors for the effective and efficient knowledge system.
2. **Technology** : In this 21st century , use of latest technology is the major aspect for the successful implementation of any system. With regard to knowledge management system Information Technology is a very effective tool in bridging distances and in creating a common platform for knowledge sharing . The web based system helps in reaching out to people in various geographical locations. Answers to queries are only an e-mail away as experts can be contacted via an e-mail.

3. TOOLS FOR HANDLING KNOWLEDGE

- Intranet
- Extranet
- Groupware
- Intellectual Asset Management
- Data Warehousing
- Workflow Management
- Electronic Document Management
- Information Retrieval

1. **Intranet**

An intranet is a corporate LAN or wide area network (WAN) that uses Internet technology and is secured behind company's firewalls.

- Intranets are developed on the same TCP/IP protocol as the Internet, they operate as a private network with limited access.
- Only authorized employees are able to use it.
- It contains exclusive and often proprietary and sensitive information.

Advantages of Intranet :

- It is fast, low-cost to implement.
- Easy to learn and use.
- Multimedia, hypertext links.
- Simple interface to information resources and services.
- Access to internal and external information.
- Improves communication.
- Can capture and share knowledge.
- Supports links with customers and partners.
- Increases collaboration and coordination.

Disadvantages of Intranet :

Security Concerns

- Unauthorized access
- Denial of service
- Abuse of access
- Packet sniffing

Productivity Concerns

- Overabundance of information
- Information overload lowers productivity
- Users set up own web pages

Intranet Application

- This can be applied for
- Electronic Commerce

-
- Customer service
 - Training Programs
 - Reduced time to market
 - Knowledge Sharing
 - Enhancement of Group Decision and Business Processes
 - Empowerment
 - Virtual Organization
 - Software distribution
 - Project Management

2. **Extranet**

An extranet, or “extended intranet,” uses the TCP/IP protocol networks of the Internet, to link intranets in different locations. Extranet transmissions are usually conducted over the Internet, which offers little privacy or transmission security. Therefore, when using an extranet, it is necessary to improve the security of the connecting portions of the internet. This is done by creating tunnels of secured data flows, using cryptography and authorization algorithms. The Internet with tunneling technology is known as a virtually private network (VPN).

Advantages of Extranet

It provides secured connectivity between a corporation’s intranets and the intranets of its business partners, materials suppliers, financial services, government and customers. It allows groups to collaborate, sharing information exclusively and exchanging it securely. It is an open and flexible platform suitable for supply chain management.

Disadvantage of Extranet

Extranet transmissions are usually conducted over the Internet, which offers little privacy or transmission security.

Extranet Application

- Enhanced Communication
- Productivity Enhancement
- Cost Reduction
- Information Delivery

3. **Groupware**

These are the programs that help people work together collectively while located remotely from each other by multiple LAN users. This includes software with built-in calendars, scheduling, e-mail, web navigational tools, that support the collaborative activities of work groups.

4. **Intellectual Asset Management**

It is the intellectual material- knowledge, information, intellectual property, and experience- that can be put to use knowledge management.

Include patents, copyrights, etc., and allows firms to organize, analyze and manage intellectual property using an Intranet.

5. Data Warehouses

Data warehouses are designed as central information repositories for combining and storing vast amounts of historical and reference data from a number of different sources. These corporate data sources include mainframe databases, client-server relational databases, spreadsheets, text reports, flat files and proprietary systems.

A data warehouse, simply stated, is a physical separation of an organization's operational data systems from its decision support systems. It includes a repository of information that is built using data from far-flung and often departmentally isolated systems.

6 Workflow management

As libraries convert materials into digital formats, the need for efficient work flow management tools will increase.

With the addition of multimedia content, it becomes even more important to enhance the user's ability to search, identify, navigate, or browse through a collection of digital objects.

The potential of digital library is great, but the substantial effort, from a workflow perspective is equally, if not more daunting.

The workflow management system will reduce the manual input necessary to manage the workflow of large scale digitization projects. The work flow management system will also support the path from physical object and/or digitized material into a digital library repository by providing effective tools for perusing multimedia elements.

The reduction of manual labor for managing the workflow of large scale digitization efforts will encourage other libraries to move forward with the creation of digital libraries.

This includes dynamic work management solutions such as document management, workflow, imaging, Computer Output to Laser Disk and network storage management.

7 Electronic Document Management

Information is a critical resource for all kinds of organizations either large or small, governmental or private. For effective decision making, it is necessary to have the most relevant and up-to-date information at hand at the time of the actual decision making. The amount of information to be dealt with has increased dramatically with the advent of Internet and other communication means. The growing need to manage information abundance has given rise to fast evolution of knowledge management technology, the fundamental component of which is electronic document management (EDM).

The solution to the information overload problem of information intensive organizations can be found only by technologies providing intelligent information retrieval with easy access to information from anywhere to anyone.

An electronic document is defined by its content and format. Content is the critical information that provides the desired knowledge, and format is the method by which the information is stored and displayed. Electronic documents may include text files, spreadsheets, presentations, scanned images, faxes, video and audio information.

Electronic document management system (EDMS) is usually a part of a more complex work process and collaborative computing support system. Such systems integrate knowledge intensive components for project work, workgroups, data analysis, and decision making.

EDMS consists of a document ware house, document retrieval engines, and tools for document routing, imaging and publishing.

8 Information Retrieval

It enables text search, retrieval and document management. They are using state-of-the-art information technologies to acquire, organize, store, retrieve and disseminate Information. Online databases, CD-ROM based databases and reference resources, Electronic journals, internet services, online document delivery are some illustrative Products and services of this information age.

4. ROLE OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGERS IN THE KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The traditional functions and services of the library are undergoing dramatic changes and a new concept of library and librarians is emerging. The librarians in this digital environment are known as Knowledge Manager.

As knowledge is considered as a source of competitive advantage, knowledge managers must then know how to manage what they do know and how do they manage what they don't know. Knowledge managers should have capabilities for managing knowledge and strengthens learning. Learning more and more and using this knowledge should be the topmost concern of knowledge manager.

Knowledge Manager should create an environment and culture of openness, trust and teamwork through various interventions. The culture of knowledge sharing should be encouraged. This can be achieved by frequent interaction.

Knowledge Manager should use information lecture as enabler to leverage knowledge. They should develop the synergy between the capabilities of humans and capacities of Information and Communication Technologies. They should try to use those technologies, which are accompanied by a knowledge compatible culture.

The knowledge manager needs to understand how to :

- Acquire, develop, package, share and manage and exploit information, knowledge and understanding ad related support tools.
- Help and enable others to use and apply them efficiently.
- Develop and launch new information and knowledge based offerings and services.
- Use combinations of emerging technologies to network people, organizations and relevant sources of information, knowledge and support tools together.
- Handle knowledge to multiple formats, including animation, audio and video material.
- Lead and manage knowledge workers, network organizations and virtual team.

Knowledge managers have to know enough about systems to be able to use appropriate technologies to identify, access and exploit relevant sources of know-how. However technical understanding on its own is not enough. Communication and relationship building skills are also needed to interact with

information providers and the experience and skills are required to assemble a support package. There are new electronic tools to meet old objectives; but without the condition that librarians know how to provide, they would not be effective tools.

In short, the Knowledge Manager in this digital era should possess certain characteristics, which are defined below in the table.

Characteristics	Functions
Information Technologist	Information expert, Technology Savvy
Effective Communicator and Negotiator	Communicate and negotiate effectively with stakeholders
Leader	Leadership skill
Manager	Managing the task and change efficiently
Vision	Far-reaching vision towards innovation
Executor	Execute the information system effectively
Delegation	Delegate responsibility with authority to others
Evaluator	Evaluate the new information system
Planner	Develops plan for fulfilling objectives of information center
Trainer	Conducts training and user orientation program

5. CONCLUSION

A well-planned infrastructure for knowledge management is required. This includes the resources, processes and policies for analyzing user's needs; locating knowledge management system to answer these needs; and acquiring, implementing and maintaining the knowledge management system. The development of the software and network architecture to support its integration and maintenance.

Knowledge Management refers to a range of traditional and nontraditional system for the organization of knowledge. The system can be developed in numerous environments outside the traditional library environment. It is valuable to analyze user's needs and interest and then to identify knowledge Management system that can be used to enhance the digital environment of libraries.

6. REFERENCES

1. Chaudhary, H. C. "Knowledge Management for Competitive Advantage", Excel Books, New Delhi, 2005.
2. Chaudhary, S. K. "Modern Library Strategies", A. P. H. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 2002.
3. Davidson, C. and Voss, P. "Knowledge Management", Vision Books, New Delhi, 2003.
4. Gaur, Ramesh, C. and others (ed.), "Business and Management Libraries : Opportunities and Challenges in the 21st Century", Excel Books, New delhi, 2003.
5. Maruthupandian, B., Moorthy, R. and others, "Impact of E-Documents in the Modern Information Era".
6. Sahu, Hemant Kumar, "Human Resource Development: Knowledge, Skills and Qualities", Seminar Papers of All India Library Conference, Vadodara, 2004.

7. Tiwari, Aravind, " Evaluation of Electronic Libraries", A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 2002.

ABOUT AUTHOR

Meeta Rathod is a librarian with B. R. C. M. College of Business Administration, Surat.

E-mail : mudita96@yahoo.co.in