

Strategic Knowledge Management for Futuristic Organizations

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In today's global economy, capital moves speedily, technology spreads quickly and goods can be made in low cost countries and shipped to developed markets. Managing knowledge in such a phase of continuous change is an imperative function for 'smart' organizations. Amalgamation of different technologies is indispensable to carry out various tasks of a 'learning organization', yet these technologies show inadequacy for building knowledge networks and communities of practices within such organizations. Knowledge Management for the future organizations has many implications and impacts on the way our existing educational, socio-cultural, economical, religious, governmental processes work. We need to work on the technologies of knowledge creation in addition to managing it. Many connectivity, document management, concepts management, project management, employee's portals and so called knowledge management tools and techniques are available. Ontology is another wonderful technique which is probably the ultimate choice for managing knowledge in virtually all possible environments. Community computing, community networking, collaborative work, digital meeting places, electronic education, social informatics, spatial information processing, virtual communities, visualization can be few typical means of managing knowledge in organizations. But an effort to manage knowledge can only be successful if we can work and rethink the ways by which knowledge is generated and created. This does not necessarily mean the classical knowledge engineering techniques that are described from Artificial Intelligence standpoint. Strategic view of Knowledge Management considers the synergy between technological and human issues necessary for organizational survival. This synergy is based on the distinction between the 'old world of business' and the 'Global Knowledge Networking'. Technological infrastructures, "SECI" Knowledge Creation/Conversion cycle and "Ba" are three important concepts in the latest Knowledge

Management literature that provide us yet another view of the knowledge creation and generation processes.

Traditionally, knowledge is defined to be information put into certain context. Nonaka, Toyama and Konno (2000) note that knowledge creation is necessarily context dependent in terms of who participate and how they participate. Knowledge needs a physical context. This is one such central premise that gets extreme importance when selecting technologies for building knowledge management, sharing and creation system (Fayard, 2003). Polanyi (1966) has pointed out two dimensions of knowledge i.e., Tacit and Explicit. Explicit knowledge is formal, systematic and precise whereas Tacit knowledge is difficult to formalize, difficult to express and it has low precision. Tacit knowledge is very personal and is not readily available without personal involvement and interest. Tacit knowledge is intuitive and is earned through experience and skill. One might not even find appropriate words or conditions to explain what one knows. The explicit dimension of knowledge has to be married with the tacit dimension in the continuous knowledge management, sharing and creation process. The SECI model suggests a four stage process for knowledge creation and conversion. The four stages include **S**ocialization, **E**xternalization of knowledge, **C**ombination of knowledge and **I**nternalization of knowledge.

Another important concept outlined above is “Ba”. “Ba” is a Japanese word which means “place or platform”. As evident from traditional definitions of “Knowledge”, we know that Knowledge is context sensitive and a context is necessary for its very existence. “Ba” provides this context to information converting it into knowledge. More specifically, meeting rooms and class rooms are typical physical places that provide shared context to the participants to understand, share and create new knowledge in the form of products, processes and services. Virtual chat rooms, e-mail and web conferences are few such technologies that could provide a shared context or platform i.e., “Ba” to the knowledge workers using technology. A question however can be raised on the quality of “Ba” provided by these technologies e.g., email is time consuming, chat rooms involve a lot of typing, web conferences bring many technical hitches in the process of knowledge

creation. All the technologies are available and accessible to many organizations but still, knowledge management efforts are not as productive as they should be. This can be avoided if we can take care of the human aspects of such efforts while selecting technologies.

When a technology model is built, using any technique or technology, to manage knowledge, provision of the shared context of knowledge needs to be considered. The organization have to focus significant attention on the development of its “Ba’s” since more is to be gained by developing the environment around knowledge processes than efforts directed at the processes themselves. A true knowledge management system can only be created by marrying human and technological aspects of knowledge creation to take care of educational, socio-cultural interaction, economy, business, politics, government, religion and environment needs of the stake holders.

In summary, without going into the epistemology and philosophy, the presentation shall shed light on the “SECI” model and the concept of “Ba” that assumes even more importance for such the societies and organizations and of the future. Presentation shall also discuss various knowledge management models and their implications for human perspectives. Focus shall be on presenting and synergizing both the technical and the human aspect of managing knowledge in an organization and society. It shall also thrashes on how such a synergy will take care of the educational, socio-cultural, business and governmental needs of knowledge organizations.

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