

Chapter 2

Role of Knowledge Workers in Business Process and Innovation

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ABSTRACT

Highly skilled knowledge workers are the main driving force for innovation; however, their innovation may not always ensure the achievement of business goals. Only the alignment of the innovation with business goals can transform their innovation into individual performance. Similarly variation in individual capabilities of knowledge workers may not lead to final business goals. This paper focuses on knowledge workers, their performance, the business processes followed and effectiveness of the business processes to enhance productivity of the organizations.

1. INTRODUCTION

Today's economy is defined as the knowledge-based economy. Peter Drucker has aptly said that "To make knowledge work productive would be the greatest work of the century, just to make the manual task productive was the great management task of the last century (Peter Drucker, 1969).

Even during the primordial stage of the 'industrial age, the corporate managements had clear goals "work must be carried out with due care and accuracy to achieve high quality of product". In order to safeguard the reputation of a company it is necessary to consistently produce high quality of products within the time-to market constraints. Consequently, to achieve this, the day-to-day goals of the employees must be streamlined with the business goals and employees are expected to deliver allocated work within the deadlines.

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With the ever increasing complexity of the products, managements started following a set of processes to be carried out in the organizations. But the processes carried out at the beginning of the industrial age and those carried out in the late 20th century changed dimensions of business world. The companies are rooted in the same values even today, though the working conditions have changed. As the economy all over the world became knowledge centric, the complexity of tasks started growing. Thus tapping the ideas and innovations in employees and employing it to productive use such that they are aligned with the business goals became a very tedious task for organizations.

To carry out this knowledge work effectively, an expert or skilled staff is necessary. People possessing these qualities, which help them to make better decisions, and thus help the businesses to prosper, are called knowledge workers. Knowledge workers have thus gained a significant importance in helping the organizations to achieve high levels of productivity and hence attain a distinguished status in the world-markets. The businesses cannot become successful only by employing knowledge workers. There has to be a set of processes that would help govern the organization effectively. Business processes are incorporated in the organizations to determine the business goals, derive the individual goals for everyone in the company, and achieve them (Davenport, 2005). A knowledge worker is anyone who works for a living at the tasks of developing or using knowledge. For example, a knowledge worker might be someone who works at any of the tasks of planning, acquiring, searching, analyzing, organizing, storing, programming, distributing, marketing, or otherwise contributing to the transformation and commerce of information and those who work at using the knowledge so produced. A term first used by Peter Drucker in his 1959 book, *Landmarks of Tomorrow*.

A knowledge worker is a person that adds value to an organization by processing existing information to create new information that could be used to define and solve problems. Some examples of knowledge workers include

- Lawyers
- Doctors
- Diplomats
- Law-makers
- Software developers
- Managers
- Bankers
- Chief Information Officers
- Knowledge Managers
- Librarians
- Content Managers
- Information Officers
- Knowledge Analysts

Knowledge workers are often the core of the organization. It can be their ideas, experiences, interpretations, and judgments that keep the company business and the economy and society – moving forward. They invent new products, develop new strategies, lead negotiations, and help keep the company ahead of the competitors.

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