Chapter IV

Knowledge Management Systems Acceptance

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ABSTRACT

This chapter introduces a framework of knowledge management systems acceptance labeled Requirements of Acceptance Model (RAM). It argues that acceptance of knowledge management systems is dependent on perceived relevance, systems accessibility, and management support. Together these components constitute the RAM. Further, it argues that implementation of systems is at large a process of acceptance where the requirements of acceptance are attained. Finally, it argues that to achieve the requirements of acceptance, implementation should be iterative and cooperative between users and developers by continually developing, implementing, and testing prototypes.

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge management is the name given to the set of systematic actions that an organization can take to obtain the greatest value from the knowledge available to it (Davenport, Prusak, 1998). Systematic means that knowledge management projects are intentional actions in an organizational context. Value means that knowledge management projects are measured according to how knowledge
management projects contribute to increased organizational ability (Prieto, Gutiérrez, 2001; Goldkuhl, Braf, 2002). The raison d’être for knowledge management is that the key to competitive advantage for organizations in today’s business world is organizations’ ability to manage knowledge (Nanoka, Takeuchi, 1995; Davenport, Prusak, 1998). Knowledge management as an intentional and value-adding action is not easy to accomplish in practice (Scarborough, Swan, 1999). Scarborough and Swan (1999) present several case studies in knowledge management, successful and unsuccessful in their respective knowledge management project. A major point and lessons from the case studies is that prevalent approaches in knowledge management overstate technology and understate how technology is implemented and applied.

To succeed with a knowledge management project, comprising the development of information in a technology-based information system, some requirements have to be fulfilled. An important aspect in the development process is system acceptance. Implementation is at large a process of acceptance. Implementation is the process where the system becomes an integrated part of the workers’ (who use the system) work practices. Therefore, implementation is essential to make a knowledge management project successful in order to attain increased organizational ability.

This chapter addresses these issues by answering the following question: What are the requirements of acceptance of a knowledge management system?

In order to systematically present requirements of acceptance of a knowledge management system we put forward a framework labeled Requirements of Acceptance Model (RAM).

The empirical research presented in this chapter has been conducted through a case study using interviews and conceptual analysis. The unit of analysis is a Swedish small to medium-sized manufacturing company. At the beginning of 2000, we initiated a knowledge management project in collaboration between the company and the researchers (the authors). The aim of the project is to create an information system managing knowledge about operational disturbances (Ericsson, Avdic, 2002; Ericsson, 2001a). The system is at present being implemented and we expect the system to be fully implemented at the end of 2002.

In this chapter we elaborate on how the system is to be used by workers in their work practices to utilize the organizational knowledge embedded in the system. The focus is on requirements to obtain system acceptance. We identify the requirements by elaborating on how the implementation of the system serves as a process of making workers accept and integrate the system into their work practices.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE

In this section we provide broad definitions and a discussion of the topics to
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