Abstract

Organising information in ways that encourage knowledge sharing turns information management into knowledge management or knowledge facilitation. This chapter investigates the role of portals in achieving this goal. A coordinated approach is required to achieve knowledge advantage (K-Adv) through the sharing of knowledge and diffusion of innovation through the organisation. Organisations, large and small and across industries, are now recognising that unless they take steps to establish the required information and communication technologies (ICT) infrastructure to support people to effectively use knowledge in their business activities, they will not gain the benefits which K-Adv offers.
Introduction

Organising information in ways that encourage knowledge sharing, not just within groups but between groups across the organisation, takes information management and turns it into knowledge management—or, better still, knowledge facilitation. Portals can do this, but not all portals do. Well-designed portals have the potential to provide a single point of access to information stored in a variety of repositories so that it may be used to support informed decision-making. Early claims of portals supporting knowledge management initiatives in organisations were generally misleading. With time, there has been a move from information portals to knowledge portals that do support the creation of a knowledge-sharing environment (Awad & Ghaziri, 2004).

The objective of this chapter is to discuss the role of portals in supporting knowledge sharing and innovation diffusion within organisations. Portals used within organisations or by an organisation and its suppliers, customers, or partners are the focus of the chapter. A range of portals is discussed, and their role in managing knowledge within organisations established.

Portals to Support Knowledge Creation and Sharing

The greatest contribution that knowledge management makes is not just in providing objective information; it is in the way it enables the transfer and use of tacit knowledge and its conversion to explicit knowledge. Expertise, creativity, innovation, and skills are some of the forms of knowledge that are captured, codified, and shared in a knowledge-creating organisation (Chong, Holden, Wilhelmij, & Schmidt, 2000). Portals can support and enable this to occur.

Portals enable organisational knowledge from multiple sources to be pooled, organised, and distributed through a single access point—the gateway that the portal provides. The important point is that portals enable information from disparate databases to be integrated, categorised, shared, and used to advantage. They link people, processes, and knowledge (Chong et al., 2000). Personalised access enables individuals to gain the information they need as it
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