

Chapter 7

Knowledge Management: Perspectives and Practices from the Middle East

Hesham Magd

University of Buraimi, Oman

Mark McCoy

University of Buraimi, Oman

ABSTRACT

This chapter gives an introduction to the core concepts behind knowledge management as well as the reasons behind the increasing emphasis that has been placed on the knowledge management process as a source of competitive advantage, innovation, and organizational performance. Some of the key influences on knowledge management processes are also examined such as culture and the roles of management before being examined in the context of KM initiatives in the Middle East. The critical success factors relating to the implementation of knowledge management processes are then outlined before a framework for implementation that takes into account the unique features of organizations in the Middle East is discussed.

INTRODUCTION

In the new era of business environment which is characterized by an increased turbulence and complexity, it was clear that an organization with an unstructured approach to knowledge management was incapable of competing in the new business environment (Johannessen and Olsen, 2003; Davenport and Prusak, 2003). Additionally the recent rise of the knowledge economy has created new challenges for organizations and made managing

intellectual capital an integral part of the firm's strategy, thus making the creation, development and capturing of value from knowledge a critical issue in today's competitive environment. The rise of knowledge is due to the fact that not much knowledge is documented and it disappears from the organizations' knowledgebase when staff members leave the organization (Sirianukul, 2009; Passerini, 2007). Therefore knowledge and knowledge management were perceived as an organizational resource (Holsapple and Joshi,

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-4884-5.ch007

2000) and also important tools in achieving organizational excellence, performance and competitive advantage (Joia and Lemos, 2010) through knowledge transfer and sharing.

Knowledge management has become vital to organizations in today's business environment due to the technological development, fierce competitive and globalization (Mundra et al., 2011) as the implementation of knowledge management tends to provide benefits such as an enhanced way to organize existing corporate knowledge; productivity; making individuals more effective at sharing explicit knowledge; and providing new ways to expose tacit knowledge and in turn this will lead to competitive advantage as emphasized by Collins et al. (2010); Omerzel and Antoncic (2008); Wang et al. (2006); Leitch and Rosen (2001); Adam and Lamont (2003); Sharkie (2003); Huber (2001); Stewart (2001) and Carlucci et al. (2004). In addition, achieving competitive advantages is based on knowledge assets and the manner which they are deployed Johannessen and Olsen, (2003). However the majority of the existing literature review is based on different countries where there is no evidence or any perspectives to shed some light within the Middle Eastern countries and therefore the proposed chapter intends to cover some aspects related to knowledge management in the Middle East to provide perspectives on issues such as;

- Core concepts of knowledge management and understanding,
- Factors that influence knowledge management,
- Critical success factors,
- Knowledge management in the Middle East,
- Steps for establishing a knowledge management program.

In addition to examining what the literature has to say about attitudes towards knowledge management in the Middle East, the authors have

also aimed at examining primary data in order to provide a snapshot of the prevailing attitudes towards KM in a Middle Eastern organization. This was achieved through the use of a survey modeled on that of Siddique (2012) and was issued to faculty members of the University of Buraimi in Oman. The survey was designed to examine the broad areas of perceived benefits of an operational KM initiative, potential barriers, critical success factors and reasons for not implementing a KM process. It must be stressed that the survey was not meant to be representative of the entire Middle East, but rather give a sample of the prevailing attitudes held in a single organization.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT DEFINITIONS: AN UNDERSTANDING

Recently the rise of the knowledge economy has created new challenges for organizations and made managing intellectual capital an integral part of the firm's strategy, thus making the creation, development and capturing of value from knowledge a critical issue in today's competitive environment. Murray and Myers (1997) indicated that 89% of the surveyed participants considered knowledge to be the key to business success and 85% of the surveyed organizations believed a value can be attached to knowledge. The rise of knowledge is due to the fact that not much knowledge is documented and it disappears from the organizations' knowledgebase when staff members leave the organization (Sirianukul, 2009; Passerini, 2007).

It is important to understand the concept of knowledge management, where many authors agree that knowledge management requires a total organizational transformation including organizational culture, structure and management style (Davenport and Prusak, 2000). Firstly, it is important to understand the term knowledge, where Davenport and Prusak (1998) defines knowledge as "a fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, and expert insight that provides a

28 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/knowledge-management/105869

Related Content

How Do We Get There?: Strategy Action Framework—"Action Engine"

Meir Russ, Robert Fineman, Riccardo Paterni and Jeannette K. Jones (2012). *Organizational Learning and Knowledge: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools and Applications* (pp. 442-476).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/get-there-strategy-action-framework/58106

Knowledge Packaging and Knowledge Protections

(2018). *Supporting Innovation Through National R&D Programs: Emerging Research and Opportunities* (pp. 68-82).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/knowledge-packaging-and-knowledge-protections/192292

Implications of Land Grabbing on Sustainable Food Systems

Agatha Osivweneta Ogburn and Sarah Edore Edewor (2020). *Developing Sustainable Food Systems, Policies, and Securities* (pp. 109-125).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/implications-of-land-grabbing-on-sustainable-food-systems/257936

Effectiveness of Risk Assessment Models in Business Decisions: Reinforcing Knowledge

K. Madhu Kishore Raghunathan and S L Tulası Devi (2021). *Research Anthology on Small Business Strategies for Success and Survival* (pp. 1076-1096).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/effectiveness-of-risk-assessment-models-in-business-decisions/286134

The New Marketing Realities and the Major Marketing Forces: Strategies and Initiatives

Pratap Chandra Mandal (2023). *Journal of Business Ecosystems* (pp. 1-14).

www.irma-international.org/article/the-new-marketing-realities-and-the-major-marketing-forces/320484