Chapter 17
Exploring Knowledge Types and Knowledge Protection in Organizations

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge management has emerged as an area of enquiry for managing organizational knowledge. It is a key driver for organizational effectiveness and competitive advantage and an effective way to address economic problems including losses related to high turnovers and retiring workforce. It also has been considered an important weapon for maximizing the potential of knowledge for sustainable performance for public and private organizations. Knowledge is a critical resource for organizations, and the knowledge resources need to be properly recognized and used for achieving organizational goals. Knowledge has limited value if it is not shared within the organization. The aim of the chapter is to examine the relationship between knowledge types and knowledge protection. It will also identify several approaches (i.e. tools and programs) or mechanisms for protecting the knowledge from loss.

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge management is increasingly important in a fast-changing knowledge society (OECD, 2004). It has emerged as an area of enquiry for managing organizational knowledge. It is a key driver for organizational effectiveness and competitive advantage, and an effective way to address economic problems including losses related to high turnovers and retiring workforce. It also has been considered as an important weapon for maximizing the potential of knowledge for sustainable performance for public and private organizations.

Knowledge is a critical resource for organizations, and the knowledge resources need to be properly recognized and used for achieving organizational goals. Managers in an array of firms are recognizing that to survive in complex and dynamic environments, organizations should be efficient in managing knowledge (Bhatt, 2002). Businesses are expected to espouse and employ knowledge management processes or practices to facilitate their endurance in an increasingly dynamic and competitive business environment (Jayasingam, Ansari, Ramayah & Jantan, 2010).

Knowledge has limited value if it is not shared within the organization, and as an organizational resource, knowledge has to be managed well in order to gain organizational competence. The Economist Intelligence Unit (2005) stated that most large organizations only capture and act on a fraction of the knowledge contained within their organization, and knowledge that is locked inside someone's head is lost to the organization when the person leaves the business. Some knowledge must be protected if the knowledge is to be used to generate or preserve a competitive advantage (Porter-Liebeskind, 1996). The aim of this chapter is to explore how knowledge in its different types or forms, and sources are captured, documented, organized, stored, disseminated, used and protected to achieve strategic development goals. It also will examine and identify several approaches (i.e., tools and programs) for protecting the knowledge from loss.

The chapter is organized as follows: The first section presents an overview of knowledge management in organizations. The second section discusses knowledge management and its role in organizations. The third section describes the definition of knowledge, types of knowledge and its sources. In the fourth section, the use of knowledge protection in public or private organizations is presented and discussed. Thereafter, we propose a framework for knowledge protection in the fifth section and provide concluding remarks in the last section.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN ORGANIZATIONS

Knowledge management (KM) is regarded as a process involving various activities, which include four basic components that must exist: creating, storing and retrieving, transferring and applying knowledge within and between organizations to maintain competitive advantage (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Darroch, 2003; Mason & Pauleen, 2003; Kakabadse et al. 2003). It These activities are aimed at improving knowledge, knowledge-related practices, organizational behaviors and decisions and organizational performance (King, 2009). King (2009) pointed out that through KM, organizations seek to acquire or create useful knowledge and make it available to those who can use it at a time and place that is appropriate for them to achieve maximum effective usage and influence organizational performance.

Knowledge management processes are divided into four major components, which are knowledge acquisition, knowledge conversion, knowledge application and knowledge protection (Gold, Malhotra & Segars, 2001). Knowledge acquisition or creation is an ongoing process that involves the capability to think out new ideas, deep understanding and solutions, and incorporates it within the organization. Knowledge conversion and dissemination involves the distribution and sharing of knowledge among employees throughout the organization. Knowledge application or use involves the practical use of knowledge acquired into new situations that focus on the organization's products, processes, and services (Jayasingam et al., 2012). Knowledge protection ensures the protection of key knowledge resources of a firm from expropriation (Bray et al., 2007).

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