Chapter XVII
Preliminary Knowledge Management Implementation in the Teleco Industry

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to create a unified model capturing and generalising the different arrays of preliminary knowledge management (KM) implementation success factors in the telecommunication industry based on the studies conducted on this sector in Malaysia. The literature and empirical evidence suggest that to become the leading global market players in the new knowledge society, telecommunication organizations are required to have the integration of an effective KM process which consists of construction, embodiment, and deployment. These processes must be supported by five preliminary success factors (clear business strategy; flexible organizational culture; a committed KM Team; and effective implementation of K Audit and K Map) and effective KM strategies, that is, a knowledge sharing culture and a human network, leadership, a wide range of new technological opportunities and increased commitment to measurement.

INTRODUCTION

The era of industrialisation and information age has enabled the telecommunication industry to expand into diversified functions to support the growth of technological advancement for better services demanded by any nation (Yusof, 1998). In its role as a key driver for electronic commerce and a facilitator to the diffusion of Internet, the telecommunication industry has transformed itself as well as economies worldwide (Insight Reports, 2005). The Insight Reports further reiterates that the importance of telecommunication industry is reflected in its growing share of

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world output, increasing over the last twenty five years from 1.6 percent of an estimated US$20 trillion in 1975 to 2.9 percent of an estimated US$40 trillion in global gross domestic product in 2000. The pace of growth has quickened in the last decade of the twentieth century and it has become a period of unprecedented growth for the telecommunication industry.

An example of this is the Malaysian telecommunication industry, wherein, the industry is expanding rapidly with the introduction of the latest services and equipment. For example, the use of broadband services was only at 0.85 percent in 2004 but its usage has increased to 5 percent in 2006 and is targeted to increase to 10 percent by 2008 (Lim, 2004). This development has become a catalyst for the growth of the nation's commercial and industrial sectors. The integration of the telecommunication and computer industries also resulted in the rapid growth of sophisticated technology which ushers in a new Information Technology-based century. The prominence of this sector is therefore not surprising, looking at its contributions as a tool of technological support for the nation's development in line with the development of the knowledge economy in Malaysia (Yusof, 1998). The Malaysian Government has developed policies to channel the telecommunication industry to foster a creation of information rich and intelligent nation via supreme telecommunication facilities and network. Due to the fast-paced developments in this industry both by pull and push factors, this sector is expected to move in a viable direction and thus bring in a better living scenario to the communities.

However, in this new millennium, this industry has to face an increasing level of unpredictability in its business environment and market competitiveness. The globalisation of business, shift from a production-based economy to a knowledge-based economy, growth of the information communications technology (ICT), the strive to become learning organizations and emergence of the need for knowledge workers are among the characteristics that have made knowledge management (KM) practice a must today across all types and levels of firms (Chong, 2006; Chong & Choi, 2005) and the telecommunication industry is not spared. All these changing environmental characteristics imply that the issues of more efficient and effective operation of the knowledge assets owned by the modern telecommunication organizations have become more critical than ever which contribute towards the continuing success of the firms in this competitive environment (Malhorta, 1998).

The importance of KM is also reflected by the strategic plans these telecommunication organizations have in order to become more competitive domestically and internationally. To achieve this, these firms need to continuously adapt and adopt the most effective technology and enhance their productivity. These organizations have therefore heightened their interest on KM practices to improve their efficiency and effectiveness in order to build and/or sustain their competitiveness. Given this backdrop, it is of paramount importance that the industry's KM practices is surveyed so that steps can be taken to improve and enhance the performance of these organizations in order to help the nation in realising its vision of becoming a developed nation by the year 2020.

PROBLEM STATEMENTS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

Notwithstanding the importance and benefits of KM which have been widely documented (Nonaka, 1998; Sanchez et al., 2000; Teece, 2000; Tiwana, 2000), very few theoretical and empirical evidences are available with respect to the telecommunication industry's readiness to adopt KM (Chong et al., 2006; 2007; in press). Hence, KM implementation in the telecommunication industry appears to be an interesting area to be explored as these organizations struggle to adapt quickly, respond faster, and proactively

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