

# Chapter XV

# Knowledge Management

*It is impossible to observe certain inter-related roles associated with knowledge, information is acted upon through these roles to become knowledge...these roles can be broadly classified as Acquisition, Utilisation, Adaptation, Distribution and Generation. (Koh et al, 2005)*

## **KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT (KM) DEFINED**

**Knowledge Management** can be defined as the critical issues of organisational adaptation, survival and competence against discontinuous environmental change. Essentially it embodies organisational processes that seek synergistic combination of data and information processing capacity of information technologies, and the creative and innovative capacity of human beings. This definition proposed by Dr Yogesh Malhotra summarises a key issue for e-learning strategies and the way they will impact professional training and companies' organisation policies.

Knowledge management (KM) initiatives, projects and systems are just beginning to appear in organizations, there is little research and field data to guide the successful development and implementation of such systems or to guide the expectations of the potential benefits of such systems (Alsadhan et al, 2008). Knowledge

management concerns with capturing, organising, and storing knowledge and experiences of individual workers and groups within an organisation and making it available to others in the organisation (Nonaka, 1998).

The information is stored in a special database called a knowledge base and is used to enhance organisational performance. Two of the most common ways are: Documenting individual's knowledge and disseminating through manuals or a database. Using such tools as groupware, email, and the internet could also facilitate communication (Koh & Maguire, 2004).

The concept of Knowledge Management (KM) has been around for a while; management gurus and academicians in the last two decades have researched KM as a tool for achieving innovation and competitiveness. In an economy where the only certainty is uncertainty, the one sure source of lasting competitive advantage is knowledge (Nonaka, 1998). KM and research initiatives have been implemented in a wide range of industry sectors like manufacturing, consulting, software, banking, insurance, call centre, etc. across the globe.

## KNOWLEDGE CLASSIFICATION

Not all information is valuable. Therefore, it is up to individual companies to determine what information qualifies as intellectual and knowledge-based assets.

Explicit and tacit knowledge are the most widely accepted and elaborated knowledge classification (Nonaka, 1994). **Explicit knowledge** is precisely and formally articulated and codified in documents and databases of corporate procedures and best practices (Alter, 2002). For example, patents, trademarks, business plans, marketing research and customer lists. An example of application of converting tacit into explicit knowledge can be found in Koh & Gunasekaran (2006)'s work on a new approach to manage uncertainty.

**Tacit knowledge** is the practical wisdom possessed by experts that is difficult to capture, yet repeatedly demonstrated in contexts as varied as factory floors, research laboratories, army basis, and corporate board rooms (Crowley, 2000). The challenge inherent with tacit knowledge is figuring out how to recognise, generate, share and manage it. While IT in the form of e-mail, groupware, instant messaging and related technologies can help facilitate the dissemination of tacit knowledge; identifying tacit knowledge in the first place is a major hurdle for most organisations. A method to capture tacit knowledge can be found in Koh et al (2005). Another major distinction of knowledge is cultural knowledge (Blackler, 1995; Snowden, 2000; Choo, 2002). Cultural knowledge is defined as the assumptions, beliefs, and values of people (Choo, 1998).

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