



Chapter XI

Knowledge Workers as an Integral Component in Global Information System Design

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Abstract

Analyzing an information system through knowledge's point of view causes a change that inevitably engenders the awareness of the importance of the human and socio-cultural dimensions to improve its performances. This chapter, based on a model for global knowledge management within the enterprise (MGKME) helps to stress the need to integrate the knowledge worker, both at once, as a component and a user of the information systems within extended companies. Actually, this challenge, put out by a knowledge management's vision that is centered on the core business processes and the people, ought to be included in the strategies for information resources management.

Introduction

Under the influence of globalization and the impact of information and communication technologies (ICT), the Enterprise turned into Extended Company. That implies a cross-cultural impact of its members, who are the components and users of information systems (IS) disseminated all over the world. As knowledge workers, the users are in the heart of the IS that is implemented. Therefore, their knowledge, which is rooted in their individuals' culture, are beginning to be a key factor of success for the design, development, implementation, and utilization of information systems. More and more, employees' knowledge must be considered as an asset as it was as early as 1990 when Carnegie Group, Inc., Digital Equipment Corporation, Ford Motor Company, Texas Instruments, Inc., and US WEST Advanced Technologies, Inc. launched the Initiative for Managing Knowledge Assets. They defined for the first time the notion of knowledge assets as follows: "Knowledge assets are those assets that are primary in the minds of company's employees. They include design experience, engineering skills, financial analysis skills, and competitive knowledge" (IMKA, 1990).

As of that date, numerous research works were carried out, enterprise applications were deployed, and an abundant literature enriched the domain of knowledge management (KM). Nevertheless, KM could not exist without information technologies, which have drastically changed our relationship with space and time. In turn, from the KM point of view, IT cannot be efficient without the knowledge of users. Gradually, the concept of KM has highlighted a broad range of topics and has become a fuzzy concept taking as many senses as people speaking about it. For instance, in his editorial preface titled "What is Knowledge Management?" M. E. Jennex (2005a) gathered some authors' definitions that show that there is no common evidence about what KM is. In our research group, we consider that knowledge cannot be processed as an object independently of the person who has to act. Thus, we think that KM must address activities that utilize and create knowledge more than knowledge by itself. With regard to this question, since 2001, our group of research has adopted the following definition of KM:

KM is the management of the activities and the processes that amplify the utilization and the creation of knowledge within an organization, according to two additional goals closely interlinked, and their underlying economic and strategic dimensions, organizational dimensions, sociocultural dimensions, and technological dimensions: (1) a patrimonial goal; (2) a sustainable innovation goal.

As we can see, this definition, directly addresses some elements of corporate governance and one of its subsets, IT governance, except that there is not a unifying

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