

Chapter 8

Knowledge Sharing Motivation: An Integrated Model

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ABSTRACT

Organisations invest heavily in knowledge management technologies and initiatives which are entirely dependent on the willingness of employees to share their knowledge. Educational and reward programs need to be informed by an understanding of what motivates people to share their knowledge at work. Prior research based on motivational theories suggests the importance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators to encourage voluntary pro-social behaviours such as knowledge sharing. However, the literature on motivation in the context of knowledge sharing is still emerging and fragmented. This chapter therefore proposes an integrated model that brings together theoretical insights from motivational research to explain the influence of key intrinsic and extrinsic motivators on knowledge sharing. The chapter reports the results of the assessment of the model based on data collected across 10 organisations. The discussion of results contributes to the understanding of motivational factors influencing attitude and intention to share knowledge and their relative importance.

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INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is a strategic asset which grows as it is shared between individuals in organisations. Knowledge sharing within organisations is positively linked to firm innovation and performance. (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Wang & Wang, 2012). Organisations are therefore developing and setting up knowledge management systems and initiatives to support knowledge sharing practices. Knowledge resides in people and individuals need to actively contribute their knowledge to realise the benefits of knowledge management systems and to create value for the organisation. (Nonaka, 1994, Rode 2016). Therefore, the creation of organisational knowledge is dependent on whether the knowledge held by individuals is also shared with others and thus the knowledge can move from individual knowledge to the group and organisational levels (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2005; Ipe, 2003). However, employees do not always share their knowledge as they fear that they will lose power or job security (Gagné, 2009; Huber, 2001). Managers have reported that “a culture of hoarding knowledge” is one of the major obstacles to the success of knowledge management initiatives (Sveiby & Simons, 2002, p. 421).

Prior research has identified and examined different motivational factors and their influence on knowledge sharing attitudes and behaviour (Bock & Kim, 2002; Lin, 2007; Lin & Lo, 2015). The studies have considered individual extrinsic motivators such as organisational rewards and intrinsic motivators such as self-efficacy. However, most studies focus on and emphasise only one type of motivator - extrinsic or intrinsic (Bock & Kim 2002; Welschen, Todorova & Mills, 2012) or they use only one construct to represent intrinsic motivation (e.g. self-efficacy) or extrinsic motivation (e.g. tangible rewards) (Bock, Zmud, Kim, Lee, 2005; Akhavan, Rahimi, & Mehralian, 2013). All of these studies have contributed to our understanding of the importance of each motivational factor but they offer only fragmented explanations of why people share their knowledge. When studies aggregate several motivating factors into one construct or when they focus only on a single motivator or only one type of motivator, it is difficult to understand the relative importance of the different intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, and provide insights to organisations as to which ones need attention. However, the field lacks empirical studies which test integrated models of knowledge sharing motivation (Law, Chan & Ozer, 2017).

Previous models of knowledge sharing have concentrated on the role of either extrinsic or intrinsic motivating factors (Law et al., 2017). Therefore, the first objective of this study is to identify the key intrinsic and extrinsic motivators and examine their relative influence on knowledge sharing attitude and intention. This would allow understanding of which factors affect knowledge sharing more than others. In addition, most of the previous studies aggregate several motivating factors into one construct (e.g. extrinsic rewards) and this limits the understanding of the relative

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