

Chapter 9

Implementing a Knowledge Management–Based Model for Lessons Learned

Moria Levy

ROM Knowledgeware, Israel

Rinat Salem

Hebrew University, Israel

ABSTRACT

Lesson learning is a well-known and crucial organizational tool that serves many organizations wishing to improve their performance. This chapter describes a knowledge management (KM)-based model, improving the level of learning and of the lessons learned with the goal of reducing repeated mistakes as well as recreating their successes. The key features of the model were the base of a research conducted using a case study approach implemented at the Welfare Division of the Jerusalem Municipality's Community Services Administration. The implemented model, based on KM ideas, added two significant stages to the process of debriefing—refining the lessons learned and transforming them into lessons that are managed in an independent database—as well as an additional stage, which was comprised of active processes of integrating the lessons into the organizational work.

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INTRODUCTION

The Welfare Division at the Community Services Administration of the Jerusalem Municipality provides welfare services to a variety of populations: children, youth, families, individuals, the disabled, the elderly, new immigrants and any individual or group who wish to receive help of a social worker. The division provides information, counseling, care, social services, guidance and mediation for receiving complementing services. The welfare division is the largest of its kind in Israel, and consists of over 600 social workers providing services to approximately 40,000 families.

The Welfare Division at the Community Services Administration of the Jerusalem Municipality has been conducting lesson learning processes since 2006, as part of an excellence in service approach.

The process of transforming and improving the methodology for lesson learning in the division began in 2013. This process included content analysis of the minutes of lesson learning discussions and evaluation of the existing work process.

The content analysis raised several issues:

- Lessons learned in the organization were not being implemented in all its units.
- The process of lesson learning in the organization was not organized or methodical.

As a result, the organization witnessed repeated mistakes and repeated learning of similar lessons.

This information formed the basis for the management's decision to improve the methodology for lesson learning in the division, and to move from 'lesson learning' to 'lesson management' in the beginning of 2015. This change entails managing the entire life-cycle of the lesson learned, and includes, beyond the learning of lessons, processing those lessons, managing them in an independent database and creating mechanisms for increasing the use of this database. All in order to reduce repeated mistakes.

This article describes the proposed model, and examines the results of the intervention using this model at the Welfare Division of the Jerusalem Municipality.

Literature Review: Lesson Learning and Management

Lessons learned (LL) are defined as "knowledge artifacts that convey experiential knowledge that is applicable to a task, decision, or process such that, when reused, this knowledge positively impacts an organization's results." (Weber & Aha, 2003: 1).

This definition encompasses the definition of learning:

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