

Chapter 5.7

The Readiness of IDSC to Adopt Knowledge Management

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ABSTRACT

Over the last two years Knowledge Management has become the latest hot topic in the business world. Companies are realizing that their competitive edge is mostly the brain power or intellectual capital of their employees and management. Many organizations are drowning in information, but starving for knowledge. In order to stay ahead of the pack, organizations must leverage their knowledge internally and externally to survive. Knowledge management is believed to be the current savior of organizations. Creative and innovative people form the core of any organization. In turn, those people form the corporate memory. The Information Decision Support Center for the Cabinet of Ministers for the Egyptian Government (IDSC) faces a problem of employees' high turn-

over rate (17%), which threatens to cause IDSC to lose its memory. One common mistake many organizations make when they implement KM initiatives is to place too much emphasis on the technological aspect of KM and ignore the human resources aspects. IDSC developed a knowledge management system called the Organizational Memory (<http://www.home.idsc.gov.eg/>), but ignored the human factor of KM. The purpose of this chapter is to test the readiness of employees and managers working at IDSC to adopt knowledge management. Human issues were clearly shown to outweigh any technology constraints, and views of managers and employees differed to some extent. It is recommended that these human and managerial concerns be addressed if KM is to be successful in organizations.

INTRODUCTION

Background

A study conducted by KPMG consulting (2000) on 500 companies in USA and UK reveals that 81% of the respondents said they had or were considering a KM Program; 38% had a KM program in place; 30% were currently setting one up; and 13% were examining the need for a KM program.

This chapter focuses on various human issues with regard to KM in the Egyptian Cabinet Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC). These issues are often overlooked and their importance underestimated, and attention needs to be paid to these human aspects so that IDSC can effectively achieve the benefits of KM.

Problem Definition

Creative and innovative people form the core of any organization. In turn, those people form the corporate memory. IDSC faces a problem of employees' high turn-over rate (17%) which threatens IDSC with losing its memory. One common mistake many organizations make when they implement KM initiatives is to place too much emphasis on the technological aspect of KM and to ignore the human resources aspects. IDSC developed a knowledge management system called the Organizational Memory (<http://www.home.idsc.gov.eg/>), but ignored the human factor of KM. The purpose of this study was to test the readiness of employees and managers working in IDSC to adopt knowledge management by focusing on the various human aspects related to knowledge management.

Research Questions

In order to determine the human factors influencing the development of a successful KM program

in IDSC, the research, therefore, focused on questions such as:

- Was IDSC ready to adopt a knowledge management program?
- Are employees and managers working at IDSC ready to be part of a knowledge management program?
- What was the knowledge management environment in IDSC?

And additionally:

- What were the employee perceptions of sharing knowledge?
- What were the impediments to sharing knowledge in IDSC?
- Was privacy of employee information an issue in IDSC?
- What were the difficulties in managing knowledge in IDSC?
- Did IDSC maintain innovation and creativity in its problem solving approaches given the availability of the knowledge base?
- Did conflict arise between an employee's career ambitions and the knowledge management culture of the organization?

Research Methodology

Collected data is the heart of the study. There are many sources of data such as interviews, meetings, etc. Other important sources of information are theory and personal experience. In order to determine the human factors influencing the development of a successful KM program in IDSC, we developed two questionnaires, one aimed at the senior and middle managers in the IDSC and the other aimed at lower ranking employees. Questions were adapted from previous research on KM conducted by Jordan and Jones (1997) amongst others.

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