

Chapter 5

Enhancing Creative Performance: The Role of Knowledge Management System Usage, Absorptive Capacity, and Motivation

Tobias D. Herbst

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7922-053X>
Avacon Netz, GmbH, Germany

J. Piet Hausberg

Osnabrück University, Germany

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted firms' prior working modes. As more employees are required to work from home, firms need to successfully implement remote working and distance learning conditions. In this context, knowledge management systems (KMSs) are helpful in sharing knowledge and enhancing employee creativity, regardless of their place of work. This study elucidates the antecedents that moderate the impact of KMS usage on employees' creative performance. It explores how absorptive capacity (AC), as well as extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, directly influences employees' creative performance and their moderating effects. Results from an online survey of 415 employees indicate that KMS usage increases employees' creative performance. Moreover, AC as well as extrinsic and intrinsic motivation have a positive direct effect on employees' creative performance. However, the authors find no positive moderating effect of AC or extrinsic and intrinsic motivation on the relationship between KMS usage and employees' creative performance.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-8797-3.ch005

INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive and dynamic environments, firms need to find ways to operate successfully, and thus achieve competitive advantage. In most sectors, to sustain competitive advantage and survive in the long run, firms also need to innovate continuously, at least to some degree. Extant research highlights the importance of knowledge as a resource that enables innovation, and thus, sustainable competitive advantage. However, the mere existence of knowledge in a portion of a firm is not sufficient. To develop new products and services, knowledge must be transferred within and across firm boundaries. In the past, remote work was viewed mainly as a change in the spatiality of work; for example, it improved the lives of long-distance commuters (Hardill & Green, 2003). However, the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed both the challenges as well as the vital importance of effective, continued remote collaboration (Wang et al., 2021). Some studies show ways to improve knowledge sharing under such peculiar circumstances (Lee et al., 2020). However, knowledge sharing by itself is not sufficient to generate creative outputs. Firms need to facilitate the creative usage of available knowledge.

Therefore, how to manage internal and external knowledge effectively is highly relevant for strategic innovation management, particularly with the increasing diffusion of remote and smart work practices. Due to advancements in information technology (IT), knowledge management systems (KMSs) are effective and used extensively in corporate settings. Prior studies highlight the positive direct effect of KMS usage on firm performance, which helps to create knowledge by linking individuals and organizations. Specifically, employees provide the creative output. Up to 70 percent of initiatives fail because they do not integrate and link human resources, processes, and technology (Petter et al., 2008). Hence, investing in KMSs alone is not sufficient. Despite their relevance and the evident difficulty in implementing them effectively, the contingency factors that render KMS usage effective have been scarcely studied. Therefore, the authors investigate the effect of KMS usage on employees' creative performance and help clarify relevant contingencies that positively affect this relationship.

The authors noted a lack of research on the moderating role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as well as absorptive capacity (AC), on the relationship between KMS usage and employees' creative performance. Despite employee creativity being an essential factor in firm innovation performance, research examining the effects of AC, KMS usage, and motivation on creative performance at the employee level is scarce. In rare exceptions, employees' motivation and ability are investigated jointly to understand the effect of AC on some form of innovative output; however, this does not consider KMS usage and returns to firm-level of analysis in the dependent variable (Liao et al., 2007).

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