

Chapter 22

Risk Management: Strengthening Knowledge Management

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ABSTRACT

Deliberate exploitation of natural resources and excessive use of environmentally abhorrent materials have resulted in environmental disruptions threatening the life support systems. A human centric approach of development has already damaged nature to a large extent. This has attracted the attention of environmental specialists and policy makers. It has also led to discussions at various national and international conventions. The objective of protecting natural resources cannot be achieved without the involvement of professionals from multidisciplinary areas. This chapter recommends a model for the creation of knowledge-based systems for natural resources management. Further, it describes making use of unique capabilities of remote sensing satellites for conserving natural resources and managing natural disasters. It is exclusively for the people who are not familiar with the technology and who are given the task of framing policies.

INTRODUCTION

There are many approaches intended to aid the implementation of knowledge management (KM) strategies in an organization; there are also many frameworks that structure the rationale and management of organizational knowledge. In order for a KM practitioner to seriously reflect on practice and manage KM risks, he or she needs both a conceptual framework and tools. In this article, the capacity to manage risks to the effective

implementation of strategy, and the capacity to review and to revise strategy according to need is presented as a tool for effective KM practice.

Risk management is the process of identifying, analyzing, evaluating, dealing with, and monitoring risk. Risks to knowledge management are both structural and cultural (Chua & Lam, 2005; DeLong & Fahey, 2000; Pfeffer & Sutton, 1999; Zyngier, 2002). The effective implementation of KM strategies demands that we manage risks to those strategies in order to realize the benefits of

leveraging organizational knowledge to fulfill strategic aims and objectives.

This article is structured as follows: the following section discusses knowledge management strategies and observed risks to those strategies. KM governance is presented as a mechanism that includes risk management as an integral element in a suite of activities. It locates the responsibility for risk management and demonstrates how this is supported within the planning and implementation of strategy. Two case studies present find clear outcomes that support the role governance in ensuring risk management as a tool for strengthening practice in KM. Finally, it is concluded that risk management is part of a suite of activities that support the effective and sustainable implementation of an organizational KM strategy through KM governance.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The effective practice of the management of knowledge acts to increase the effectiveness and profitability of an organization (Davenport, 1999; Davenport, De Long, & Beers, 1998; Davenport & Prusak, 2000; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; O'Dell, Grayson, & Essaiades, 1998). Managing knowledge ensures that the organization can leverage its key resource and has the right knowledge at the right time to fulfill its aims and objectives. Where systems are designed to support the capture, utilization, and re-utilization of knowledge using the experience of knowledge workers then innovation and creativity are enhanced throughout the value chain of organizational activity. This can improve revenue flows, staff quality, and staff and customer satisfaction. It can reduce the unit cost of the initial creation of knowledge and the overall of the service or product delivery process in an ongoing and continuous cycle (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

KM literature reflects multiple approaches to the understanding of what knowledge is important to an organization and how it can or should be leveraged to fulfill organizational aims and objectives. To this end many specific tools and techniques have been developed that can be parts of a strategy implemented to achieve KM objectives. These techniques are usually focused on a theoretical methodology that will provide the greatest leverage in implementation (Walsham, 2001). There are a broad variety of approaches to KM or combinations of approaches—each meeting a perceived need in the organization through a wide range of techniques to manage the transfer of organizational knowledge including those to leverage tacit and explicit resources.

Table 1 shows examples of the range of tools and techniques that have been developed by theoreticians and practitioners.

KM tools and techniques are selectively and variously employed according to the specific needs of an organization.

Acknowledging Risks: Obstacles to KM Strategy Implementation

A recurrent theme in KM research is the development of strategies to overcome obstacles to the successful implementation of a KM strategy. While many barriers are recounted as the responses of individuals, these people operate within and reflect the organizational environment. The KM strategy is implemented within that environment and therefore the responses of individuals are what can be measured to establish efficacy of organizational response. The unit of analysis in this research is KM strategy implementation within the organization. Within the literature cultural barriers seem to predominate.

Pfeffer and Sutton (1999) discuss fear and power relationships as a factor that can prevent organizations leveraging existing knowledge resources. Fear and distrust of management may affect to the ability of staff to act without being

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