

Chapter 4.12

The Green Bay Chamber of Commerce: Foundation's Foundation

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge management is many things to different people. Within complex organizations, this reality needs to be acknowledged. For an organization to utilize and enhance knowledge for competitive advantages, systems and culture need to be analyzed within the context of an organization's strategy. Once analyzed, an honest appraisal of the knowledge systems in place and those needed to fulfill the strategic goals of the organization will have to be performed. For everyone within an organization to be able to "pull in the same direction" and achieve maximum value from a knowledge management system, that system will have to mean the same thing to all. If a knowledge management system is to be central in maintaining a competitive advantage

for organizations, it will engulf the organization. To understand financial systems, audits are undertaken to ensure that systems provide the information as expected. It is well understood that for financial information to be meaningful, it must be understood. To be understood, it must be logically prepared and presented in a manner useful and timely to the end user. Through an audit process of this nature performed on knowledge management systems within the context of business strategy and culture, an organization learns what is needed to get their divergent individuals on the same page, as it were, to fulfill the promise of enhancing its most valuable resource in a competitive world. This chapter examines how to systematically conduct a knowledge management audit. By design, the audit was simplified and designed around a single specific issue. By breaking apart where the organization needs to go and combining it with a study of what it will

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take to get there from a knowledge management systems standpoint, individuals can come together to build the framework literally from the ground up. Companies can use this framework to assess how they plan with knowledge management as the central, differentiating factor in their business strategy.

BUSINESS ISSUE

The business world is increasingly global. Local ownership of companies is diminishing. With this comes the diminishing ability of local management to affect decisions made in a community. Many local foundations rely on the generosity of companies located in their areas for funding their missions. This isn't as easy as it used to be. In today's business world, it may take months for a decision of any funding request. Getting a decision to fund a foundation request is usually a matter of personal contact. This is all the more difficult in the absence of local ownership. Turnover at either the foundation or corporate level adds to the complexity of maintaining personal contact information. Foundations can be funded from many different parts within an organization. Some companies have foundations of their own which support other foundation activities. Others rely on internal public affairs or relations budgets. Others support foundation activities through marketing departments. Identifying and keeping track of these avenues and leveraging this knowledge to increase funding is also complex. The business issue for foundations is to identify ways to raise more money in this environment. They need to do it more efficiently and with fewer resources.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AUDIT INTRODUCTION

The Green Bay Chamber of Commerce–Foundation was begun in 1982. It is broken down into

two major programs. These are its economic development initiatives and its education and leadership initiatives. The majority of the funding needed to run these programs is raised primarily through private business contributions. For the Foundation to be able to fulfill its mission, these contributions not only must continue but increase. This is increasingly becoming more difficult due to the business environment described above. Companies with local ownership and decision making capabilities are increasingly declining. The art of local networking for success is diminishing. With it is the ability to just “pass that knowledge along.”

Currently there is no system in place that adequately addresses fundraising across the organization. This has created an information void in the Foundation's fundraising. More importantly, the knowledge that is currently being learned while individuals in these groups are fundraising is never recorded, analyzed and used to enhance the probability of future success. Many organizations fund both Foundation initiatives and are openly asking the programs to justify why that should be so. To make matters worse, competition for funds has increased with the introduction of New North – a regional entity with many of the same goals as the chamber's foundation programs.

Knowing there are issues and knowing what to do with them are usually two different things. Assuming that the chamber's Foundation can go forward in a “business as usual” manner will surely fail. Moving forward, however, should not be through happenstance. It is expected that a thorough analysis of the current ways of fundraising tied to current best practices will enable the organization to record, analyze and enhance its ability to raise valuable funding resources. Passing that knowledge throughout the organization will help ensure success moving forward in this ever-changing business environment. It is anticipated that the building blocks of data within the context of the Foundation will be used to create information which will allow staff to take fundraising action which will add value to the foundation. The fol-

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