

Chapter 7.9

The Emerging Ethics of Knowledge Sharing: Hacker Ethics, Participatory Culture Ethics and Proselytization Commons Ethics

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ABSTRACT

A key challenge that is emerging for organizations in nowadays is how to encourage knowledge sharing. Knowledge sharing is an activity through which knowledge is exchanged among people, a community or organization. Knowledge constitutes a valuable intangible asset for creating and sustaining competitive advantages. Knowledge sharing activities are generally supported by knowledge management systems. Nevertheless, technology comprises simply one of the several issues that influence organizational knowledge sharing, such as organizational culture, trust, and incentives. So, knowledge sharing entails a key challenge in the field of knowledge management

because some individuals tend to resist sharing their knowledge with others (it may be an individual, a group, a community, or an organization). The aim of this chapter is to describe and discuss three emerging ethics of knowledge-sharing, namely: (1) hacker ethics, (2) participatory culture ethics, and (3) proselytization commons ethics. Future research directions are suggested and concluded the chapter.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, knowledge sharing has become an important organizational activity. Many companies have come up with their own creative efforts

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to make knowledge sharing happen. Typically, the company will collect and categorize lessons learned, provide yellow pages to help employees locate colleagues who might have access to the knowledge needed, as well as conduct site visits to other businesses. Dixon (2002) stated that these practices allow teams and individuals to successfully develop solutions to difficult problems, thereby reducing the costly duplication of effort while creating new and innovative solutions through collaboration. Due to information and communication technology (ICT) advancement and knowledge transmission, knowledge sharing gets more and more important (Liu, 2008).

In today's knowledge era, knowledge sharing is important for success of organizations operating in turbulent and uncertain environment. Many organizations are starting to realize that knowledge shared is knowledge smartly used and leverage (Dixon, 2002). For example, Japanese industry could grow and develop in this knowledge era because of its ability in converting between personal, tacit knowledge of individuals who produce creative insight, and the shared, explicit knowledge which the organization needs to develop new products and innovations (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

However, the simple equation that knowledge sharing is good for organizations cannot be sustained. Knowledge can be augmented if it is shared, and in this respect knowledge sharing may also prove detrimental to knowledge. Perhaps the most prominent ICT tool for facilitating knowledge sharing is an Intranet. Related problems may occur when information systems, such as Intranets, distributed libraries, document management systems, or groupware applications are introduced to support knowledge sharing (Cheng, Hailin & Hongming, 2008). The common motivation to introduce these technologies is that they may empower the individual knowledge worker by providing the tools to support and boost his or

her knowledge-sharing skills (Hendriks, 1999). Hendriks further pointed out that the motivation for knowledge sharing provides the appropriate focus for conceiving the difference such as personal preferences.

Ethics relates to codes of conduct regarded by a community as right and good (Land, Amjad & Nolas, 2006). They are based on values and faith which is determined by rules of proper conduct laid down by higher authority, notions of morality. However, conflicts generally will arise when values clash. Unacceptable, illegal, and unethical use of computers are concerns of information system (IS) and/or information technology (IT) professionals because of the potential harm to society and to the integrity of the IS/IT profession (Leonard & Cronan, 2005). Sharing requires knowledge. We are not sharing if we did not ask for permission or the other party does not accede to our request. Take for example, when library staff takes records without the knowledge or permission of the other library, they are not sharing. They are basically stealing the intellectual property of the other library. Generally, gathering knowledge is easy, but sharing it is difficult. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to describe and discuss three emerging ethics of knowledge-sharing, namely: (1) hacker ethics, (2) participatory culture ethics, and (3) proselytization commons ethics. This chapter is best classified as a discussion paper rather than as a research paper.

In this chapter, we would like to discuss the need to share knowledge, how to ethically manage knowledge, as well as how to foster and sustain healthy activities of knowledge sharing. The chapter is divided into four sections. First we provide an overview of the knowledge management, knowledge sharing and ethics. Then, we describe how hacker's participatory culture and, proselytization view of knowledge sharing regarding ethics. Finally, we give some future research directions and end the chapter with a conclusion.

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