

Chapter 14

The New Age E–Enterprise: Internet–Based Collaboration, Innovation, and Co–Creation

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ABSTRACT

Globalization and the resultant transition to virtual work are changing the dynamics of critical business relationships today. The organizational fabric is undergoing a transformation. The new knowledge economy, coupled with the modern customer based relationship approach has transformed the shape of business, catalyzed further by the internet revolution. Shrinking distance barriers and the emergence of new ways of building and delivering products and services online, is enabling the rapid globalization of markets. This chapter traces how the new knowledge economy, along with the modern customer based relationship approach, impacts the organizational fabric. The collaborative Web along with the e-enterprise, has brought into vogue the use of emergent social software platforms within companies, or between companies and their partners or customers. This, along with organizational willingness to take risks, has created new opportunities for companies in the domain of innovation, Internet based collaboration and co-creation.

INTRODUCTION

The chapter discusses concepts pertaining to the new knowledge economy, approaches how organizations function and studies the modern customer based relationship approaches being followed in organizations. It further details the tools of the

collaborative web-viz., corporate blogs, online communities, business and social networks, wikis and micromedia-Twitter in the context of the e-enterprise and proceeds to discuss how Procter and Gamble, a modern day enterprise, uses these new approaches on innovation, harnessing consumers, e-commerce, and brand-customer centricity through four case studies.

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BACKGROUND

The New Knowledge Economy

Signifying volatility with extremely fast change, explosive upsurges and sudden downturns, the new knowledge economy is characterized by market changes that are fast and unpredictable. The lifecycle of products and technologies is short and innovation and entrepreneurship are the buzzwords. Competition has adopted a global face and differentiation is the name of the marketing game. The pace of business is appreciably faster with ever-rising customer expectations. Change management is the focus area and business development approach has become opportunity driven with dynamic strategies. Knowledge has become the source of strategic planning for the creation of a value proposition for consumers. Market sensing is a core business process and organizations which are able to manage, analyze and combine knowledge faster for product innovation and improvement in line with customer expectations are succeeding in the competitive scenario. The connected millennium lays tremendous importance on the concepts of market opportunity analysis and global marketing.

Innovation processes are continuous and appropriate human capital is fast becoming a scarce resource. Distinctive capabilities coupled with institutional excellence now spell sources of competitive advantage. Organizations are transforming from hierarchical, bureaucratic, functional, pyramid structures to interconnected subsystems, characterized by flexibility, employee empowerment, and flat or networked structures. People, knowledge and capabilities are the key organizational assets.

The Organization

Ad hoc workgroups and communities are constantly forming and operating in diverse locations over widespread geographic areas, countries and

companies. Geographic proximity is no longer essential for people working together, courtesy the advances made in the field of information and communication technology. People are engaged in project-based work with an ever changing and increasing circle of colleagues, customers and partners, many of whom they have never met. Employee attrition is frequently ushering in new work partners, leading to an intrinsic need for better documentation which can enable projects to withstand the change in project participants and maintain continuity. Optimum teaming of world class competencies is the order of the day. Work is now no longer limited to the office;-it can take place in the electronic network. The ability to access vast information resources within a matter of minutes and to communicate across huge distances at ever lower costs while maintaining quality levels along with dramatic changes in competition, technology, and workforce values are causing organizations to search for new and more human ways of increasing productivity and competitiveness. Newer systems support collaboration and employee interaction. Examples of successful projects of this type include worldwide product launches involving training, presentations and project planning that eliminate the need to bring employees from multiple locations to a single site, with substantial savings in travel and associated costs and time.

The Modern Customer-Based Relationship Approach

Marketing is shifting from making and maximizing profit from individual transactions to building mutually beneficial relationships with consumers and other parties. Relationship marketing focuses on customer satisfaction and retention as organizations move from product based campaign marketing to a customer based relationship approach. Economies have become customer driven. Companies are going global, reaching out to customers located afar as e-commerce and

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