



## INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE AND MANAGEMENT

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## HOW TO GET TACIT KNOWLEDGE AND THE STRATEGIES TO MANAGE TACIT KNOWLEDGE

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## ABSTRACT

*Tacit knowledge has been defined as one's personal, internal or interior knowledge as opposed to the external, physical knowledge that has been written down or recorded as an artifact. Stephen Gourlay presents a clear definition of tacit knowledge as "a form of knowledge that is highly personal and context specific and deeply rooted in individual experiences, ideas, values and emotions". The philosopher Michael Polanyi was the first to differentiate between the tacit, or personal knowledge, and the explicit, or external knowledge domains. Polanyi drew upon ideas originating from Plato to argue that knowledge is internally processed, and is embodied in one's self. The French philosopher Philippe Baumard has provided the most extensive treatment of tacit knowledge for knowledge management and organizations. According to Baumard, tacit knowledge is important because expertise rests on it, and because it is the source of competitive advantage, as well as being critical to daily management activities.*

## KEYWORDS

Tacit Knowledge, Strategies, Employee- Tacit Knowledge, Organizations

## INTRODUCTION

## What is Tacit Knowledge?

Unwritten, unspoken, and hidden vast storehouse of knowledge held by practically every normal human being, based on his or her emotions, experiences, insights, intuition, observations and internalized information. Tacit knowledge is integral to the entirety of a person's consciousness, is acquired largely through association with other people, and requires joint or shared activities to be imparted from one to another. Like the submerged part of an iceberg it constitutes the bulk of what one knows, and forms the underlying framework that makes explicit knowledge possible. Concept of tacit knowledge was introduced by the Hungarian philosopher-chemist Michael Polanyi (1891-1976) in his 1966 book 'The Tacit Dimension' also called informal knowledge.

Tacit knowledge has been defined as one's personal, internal or interior knowledge as opposed to the external, physical knowledge that has been written down or recorded as an artifact. Stephen Gourlay presents a clear definition of tacit knowledge as "a form of knowledge that is highly personal and context specific and deeply rooted in individual experiences, ideas, values and emotions". The philosopher Michael Polanyi was the first to differentiate between the tacit, or personal knowledge, and the explicit, or external knowledge domains. Polanyi drew upon ideas originating from Plato to argue that knowledge is internally processed, and is embodied in one's self. The French philosopher Philippe Baumard has provided the most extensive treatment of tacit knowledge for knowledge management and organizations. According to Baumard, tacit knowledge is important because expertise rests on it, and because it is the source of competitive advantage, as well as being critical to daily management activities

It is probably easier to say what tacit knowledge is not. It will not generally be found in books and journals or written down in particulars. It often incorporates the habits and cultures of organizations but it is also the 'stuff' only known by individuals. Before tacit knowledge can become explicit it has to be codified or articulated, the problem here is that most tacit knowledge is incapable of being codified or articulated and it's very difficult to communicate even if people felt they wanted or needed to. As Polany (1958) puts it 'we can know more than we can tell'. Much tacit knowledge is without boundaries and seldom properly formulated or formalized in our brains. As O Dell (1998) puts it; "if only we knew what we know". In the limited instances

when it can be transferred to other active listeners, it calls for trust, face to face transaction and lots of time to do it. A considerable part of traditional apprenticeships were about inculcating unspoken norms and values

**Tacit knowledge** is that knowledge learned over extended periods of time, through frequent exposure and reinforcement, giving us a depth of knowledge or skills on a topic or concept that is natural, yet difficult to codify into an explicit list of knowledge or skills. Tacit skills and knowledge allow us to go beyond the simple rote learning of a topic or skill, allowing us to understand the theory or concepts behind the task. A person with strong tacit knowledge or skills is able to quickly identify and react to change, respond to emergencies, and use their knowledge to exploit new or emerging opportunities

Tacit knowledge is often ignored when Knowledge Management Systems are planned, designed, and implemented. Nevertheless it represents the most valuable and significant amount of knowledge in any organization. Managing it is hard, but possible.

## I. How Tacit Knowledge is important in Organizations?

Tacit Knowledge is very important to any organization because

- It is not copied i.e. original generated by his / her own mind
- It is expressed whenever is required
- It is unique
- It is the treasure and asset of the company
- It is available immediately from the employees of the organization
- The cost of the Tacit knowledge is comparatively low because to solve any problem if any organization called the third party , consultation charges will be high.

## II. How Tacit Knowledge is different and important compare to other Knowledge?

We can define three different types of knowledge: tacit, explicit, and embedded knowledge. **Tacit** knowledge is what we own as human beings. Sometimes we are not aware that we have tacit knowledge. **Explicit** knowledge is what is represented on media. It is often immediately recognizable as "knowledge". **Embedded** knowledge is an implicit sort of knowledge, enclosed in processes and handmade goods. It is necessary to perform some reengineering to extract such knowledge. In an organization, usually tacit knowledge is **three up to five times** the amount of explicit and embedded knowledge.

Since tacit knowledge cannot be always captured, someone may think that it cannot be managed at all. Technologies led us to think that we can manage only what we can touch: **data**. This is not true. **Human relationships** can be managed as well, and they are the main mechanism to deploy tacit knowledge. Telecommunication technologies can facilitate relationships and deployment of tacit knowledge. The ensemble of tacit knowledge, culture and human relationships is a relevant capital for an organization: the **Social Capital**.

The interplay of tacit and explicit knowledge is a critical factor in organizational learning. It is the role of managers to contribute to this interplay of tacit and explicit knowledge, and to act as "knowledge brokers" within the organization. The primary task of managers is the conversion of tacit, human capital into explicit, structural capital. Communities of practice have been identified as the site where this alchemy can occur.

## III. How to get or manage Tacit Knowledge from the Employee or Public?

Managing tacit knowledge is a significant challenge in the business world – and it requires more than mere awareness of barriers. During the new idea generation – divergent thinking – phase, people create a wealth of possible solutions to a problem. "Chaos succeeds in creating newness because it takes place in a system that is non-linear". In a well-managed development process, where a group of diverse individuals addresses a common challenge, varying perspectives foster creative abrasion, intellectual conflict between diverse viewpoints producing energy that is channeled into new ideas.

Tacit knowledge can only be captured when it is found. Therefore the key to successfully leveraging tacit knowledge within an organization is to accurately find the right people to solve that particular situation. Expertise management becomes a central tenet of tacit knowledge. Organizations that can identify and link experts who can share their tacit knowledge benefit by providing higher quality solutions that are delivered faster and at a lower overall cost. It's applicable in markets that are challenged with business-critical situations, including customer support, IT help desk, strategic account management, team selling, professional services, and R&D. So just how is tacit knowledge captured? Channeling informal discussions into a collaborative workspace--behind the scenes--is a great way to begin. It replaces ad-hoc interactions like shouting over the cube and blasting email threads with a single, well-organized place where people can work together as teams that may extend to customers and partners. Here they can share information about a current issue, problem, or topic. Workspaces nowadays have become much more integrated into communication channels typically used throughout the day, such as email and instant messaging, so ease of adoption concerns have been dramatically reduced. Sometimes it is possible to capture a certain amount of tacit knowledge and convert it to explicit or embedded knowledge. However, not always all tacit knowledge can be explicitly captured.

There are few possible reasons for that. Some knowledge cannot be elicited because the person is not completely aware of it. Some knowledge cannot be physically represented, since it is tightly related to attitudinal characteristics. Some knowledge cannot be captured because the individual is not able to word it, is not aware of its value, or is not motivated to do it.

Managing tacit knowledge requires understanding how it is shared and who are the facilitators and the inhibitors of sharing mechanisms. Technology can help, especially in geographically distributed environments, but does not suffice. Managing tacit knowledge involves an integrated approach to strategic, organizational, cultural, procedural, and technological aspects.

## IV. Strategies to Manage Tacit Knowledge

Defining a strategy means to become aware of how knowledge can be used to pursue an organization's purposes, and which is the leverage to be used to plan and control management of knowledge. There are two success factors when developing a knowledge strategy: **alignment** to organization objectives, and care to **human factors**. The fundamental human factors involved in knowledge management are: attitude, intelligence, experience, and motivation.

Implementing a knowledge strategy requires appropriate organizational structures and roles, that is, individuals and functions that have knowledge-oriented objectives. Advocates, evangelists, leaders, influencers: a dynamic mix of official and natural roles, where the organization behaves as a knowledge provider, an out-and-out sponsor of communities of practice. It is also necessary to identify and set-up physical and virtual places to take people to meet and know each other, a foundation of any kind of collaboration.

### • Communities of Practice

One approach to manage the creation and exchange of tacit knowledge is communities of practice. The primary task of managers is the conversion of tacit, human capital into explicit, structural capital. Communities of practice have been identified as the site where this alchemy can occur. A community of practice has been defined in simple terms as "a group that shares knowledge, learns together, and creates common practice. Communities of practice share information, insight, experience, and tools about an area of common interest". A community of practice, as differentiated from other kinds of communities or groups, manifests coherence among three dimensions of its practice: a joint enterprise, mutual engagement of its members, and a shared repertoire of resources (Wenger, 1998). A community of practice is therefore different from a team or taskforce, which focuses on specific and/or temporary problems. Communities of practice are not goal driven, like tasks and projects, nor are they necessarily deadline driven. According to Davenport and Hall, communities of practice provide a means of constructing "recipes" for knowledge development. It is just a matter of building certain structures, such as an intranet, and allocating personnel to those communities, where they will work together to facilitate knowledge development and sharing.

Another approach to managing the creation and exchange of tacit knowledge is the creation of a shared workspace, or environment, for the elicitation and sharing of knowledge. Ikujiro Nonaka writes about the concept of "ba" (a Japanese concept meaning "place"). According to Nonaka, "ba" can be thought of as a shared space for emerging relationships. This space can be physical (an office, dispersed business space), virtual (e-mail, teleconference), mental (shared experiences, ideas, ideals) or any combination of them. What differentiates "ba" from ordinary human interaction is the concept of knowledge creation. According to Nonaka, "ba" provides a platform for advancing individual and collective knowledge. Knowledge is embedded in "ba" where it is then acquired through one's own experience or reflections on the experiences of others. To managers, this means providing an environment, whether it is physical or virtual, that will lend itself to the creation and sharing of tacit knowledge.

It is the role of managers to encourage and support the creation and exchange of tacit knowledge. Managers should act as “knowledge brokers,” contributing to the diffusion of knowledge across and between communities. Nonaka and Konno suggest that the role of the broker is essential to the interplay of tacit and explicit knowledge. It is the role of top management to be providers of “ba” for knowledge creation. Several ways that tacit knowledge can be managed have already been offered. For example, managers can offer assistance in the creation and continuation of communities of practice, they can provide a shared work environment that is conducive to the advancement of individual and collective knowledge, they can utilize the “double-knit” strategy that McDermott proposes, and managers should be aware of the observed behaviors that indicate how knowledge is being shared in the organization. These are all ways that a manager can facilitate the conversion of human capital into structural capital by turning the internal, tacit knowledge into external, explicit knowledge.

- Build on natural networks. Since communities of practice arise naturally in most organizations, utilize those existing networks of people who already share knowledge about a particular topic.
- Develop community coordinators and core groups that will organize and maintain the community.
- Support communities – managers need to give people the time and encouragement to reflect and share ideas with other teams.
- Be patient – communities of practice are organic, and take time to develop
- **Creation of Shared workspace or environment**

Another approach to managing the creation and exchange of tacit knowledge is the creation of a shared workspace, or environment, for the elicitation and sharing of knowledge. Ikujiro Nonaka writes about the concept of “ba” (a Japanese concept meaning “place”). According to Nonaka, “ba” can be thought of as a shared space for emerging relationships. This space can be physical (an office, dispersed business space), virtual (e-mail, teleconference), mental (shared experiences, ideas, ideals) or any combination of them. What differentiates “ba” from ordinary human interaction is the concept of knowledge creation. According to Nonaka, “ba” provides a platform for advancing individual and collective knowledge. Knowledge is embedded in “ba” where it is then acquired through one’s own experience or reflections on the experiences of others. To managers, this means providing an environment, whether it is physical or virtual, that will lend itself to the creation and sharing of tacit knowledge.

- **Tacit Knowledge by creating a Cultural Environment**

It is often necessary to **encourage** people to interact and share their knowledge. Those initiatives may involve a significant organizational **change**. Sometimes knowledge is perceived as a power of sort, sometimes people is embarrassed to admit they do not know how to search, sometimes individuals are measured only on their own results and not on their availability to collaborate and share. It is a precise responsibility of organization to create a **cultural environment** for exchanging tacit knowledge

- **Personnel Training**

More specifically, there are several techniques that managers can use in managing tacit knowledge. One way is for managers to offer personnel training and exercises to allow the individual to access the knowledge realm of the group and the entire organization. For example, training programs in larger organizations help trainees to understand the organization and their roles in the whole. Teaching people new concepts or methods for how to share knowledge can be useful.

- **Knowledge Sharing Activities**

Managers need to provide motivation for knowledge sharing activities. The willingness to share anything usually depends on reciprocity. Therefore, “knowledge management strategies need to be linked to people by building reward and recognition programs to encourage employees to share best practices, strategies, and ideas”. A manager may explicitly reward an individual who participates in knowledge sharing activities in the form of a tangible benefit, such as increased pay or bonuses in the forms of cash or stock options. Instead, employees may be rewarded in more subtle ways, such as enjoying the personal satisfaction of holding membership in a thriving, knowledge sharing community. Human concerns about reputation and status lies behind an important “soft” reward for knowledge sharing activities, such as acknowledgement from peers.

- **Incentives to encourage knowledge sharing**

In addition to rewards, organizations can set up a range of other types of incentives to encourage knowledge sharing. These include making knowledge sharing part of the job of each individual, encouraging employees to work in groups as communities, allowing experimentation and risk-taking, and providing tools for these activities. In the C-Nox study, employees used a self-developed intranet as a tool for collaboration and communication. Managers are responsible for providing these types of incentives and tools that are needed to facilitate knowledge sharing activities.

- **Time spent in working hours on knowledge sharing activities should be regarded as legitimate.**

Also, time spent in working hours on knowledge sharing activities should be regarded as legitimate. This may require a significant change in mindset on behalf of managers and their employees. In fact, time should be set aside specifically for individuals to learn, share, and help one another. Leading by example can also have a positive impact on knowledge management. Managers should be positive role models in the knowledge sharing process. This will help to build trust, which is critical in the knowledge sharing environment. Each contribution to knowledge sharing increases not only the amount of knowledge, but also trust among community members. As trust increases, more participants will become willing to share, and further contributions will be made.

- **The knowledge sharing depends upon social interactions**

Further, the knowledge sharing depends upon social interactions. The easier it is for individuals to interact, the more likely those interactions will occur. Managers can use the following techniques to improve the ease of social interaction: clear rules on the operation of the community, a shared language, social events, and physical co-location of staff. In addition to how easy it is to interact, the perceived usefulness of interacting is also a primary motivation. The provision of a suitable technological infrastructure, such as an intranet, for knowledge creation and sharing is thus important.

- **Tacit Knowledge Thru Strong facilitator**

Strong facilitators to knowledge sharing are the **models** and **representations** of tacit knowledge and contextual information, as well as knowledge **taxonomies** and **classification** techniques.

Similarly, it is necessary to design and implement **processes** to create, acquire, identify, collect, capture, adapt, organize, apply, and share knowledge within the organization, and sometimes across different organizations. **Education** is a terrific driver, not only to teach techniques and deploy a culture of collaboration, but also to make people **aware** of what they know and how they can share it.



- **Tacit Knowledge thru Computer Supported Co-operative Working systems**

A fundamental initiative, especially in geographically distributed environments, is to develop technologies that foster human interaction for exchanging tacit knowledge through mediating

**Computer Supported Co-operative Working** systems. Such technologies should allow for fluent information exchange, be **non-intrusive**, and encourage the creation of **social networks** in which knowledge would float seamlessly.

- **Focus on Individual**

Individuals are the most valuable resource in any organization, more valuable than processes, technologies, and physical assets. Those organizations which are able to lever on social capital and tacit knowledge have a relevant advantage with respect competitors.

- **Focus on a few important topics**

In order to leverage knowledge effectively, companies should begin with a few communities of practice that are focused on topics strategically important to the organization.

- **Tacit Knowledge thru modern Information and Communication Technology**

Modern ICT (Information and Communication Technology) solutions may be also very useful in the area of tacit knowledge. Portal is an advanced solution for knowledge-content businesses. Portals use Internet technology, but basically a portal is very different from simple Internet or intranet pages. A big quality related opportunity in portal solutions is to get the use of business related knowledge and information appearing in many forms and in different locations in the organization more effective and efficient. Web-based group work environments promote collaborative learning and innovation in organizations and networks. These issues have become most significant factors in modern successful quality management systems

Although information systems were originally developed for the needs of explicit data and information, the modern ICT solutions may, however, be useful also in the area of tacit knowledge. That is based on the fact that new technology makes possible effective cooperation and collaboration between knowing individuals and collaborating groups even around the world.

Portal is a modern solution for knowledge-content businesses. Portal is a single, Web-based interface into the world of heterogeneous and incompatible information and knowledge sources distributed across the telecommunication network. The key quality management related solution is an organizational portal with quality management applications: "A cutting-edge gateway to quality-related business reality for enhancing quality awareness, improved use of expertise, performance management and interested party confidence." This kind of portal provides automatic services for quality management to the members of an organization as well as to its partners. Portals use Internet technology, but basically a portal is very different from simple Internet or intranet pages of organizations. Portal has general features that are beneficial for all kinds of knowledge-based activities including:

- A consistent view of the relevant business community
- Information organizing and searching capabilities
- Direct access to knowledge and resources
- Direct links to relative data and knowledge experts
- Individual identity and personalized access to content

In the Internet age we are not only competing within our local communities and markets, we are competing within a global economic community. Electronic commerce puts all inefficient business or activity at risk - regardless of the service or geographic location. As examples just look at the impact companies such as Amazon.Com and Travelocity have had on their industries - it is a new world that is very foreign to those of us from prior generations.

To have the knowledge and skills needed to not only compete, but to function in the Internet age, young people need a strong base of tacit knowledge in the concepts and use of computers, networks, Internet, and communications. After a young person enters the work force, requiring special training in basic office automation tools, networks, or Internet skills is simply not acceptable. In the Internet age our young people need these skills as tacit skills before they leave the basic education system - or they will represent a burden on our ability to compete as an economy and society.

An interesting topic is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the use of knowledge and information via a portal. The biggest challenge for these solutions is the poor use of business related knowledge and information that may appear in many forms. Important knowledge may be missing. It may be unused because the needed knowledge is not available or accessible when needed or is not in a useful form. It may be used but not appropriately or at opportune time and place, or it may be misused. As one can see, a greater challenge than to stretch the usefulness of explicit knowledge, information and data to its extreme is to bring about a radical improvement of utilization of tacit knowledge. Internet technology makes it possible to create multifarious access interfaces to the business information and knowledge, and related shared services. Especially information security aspects should be emphasized when developing the quality management of information and knowledge.

Modern Web-operated social networking applications based on simple and cheap solutions of disruptive innovations have a wide variety of quality management related uses such as personal management, collaborative learning, carrying out cooperative projects, and supporting networked communities. Their main strengths include customizable group systems that allow many groups to work simultaneously on sharing individual knowledge and to create new mutual knowledge. This may be done with appropriate new tools for projects, calendar, tasks, forums, conferencing, information / knowledge links, chat, reviews, voting, files, instant messages, resource profiles, etc. Designed to ease problems solving with group based working, the solutions make it possible to work in groups, inside and outside the organization. This gives advantages to organizations which have a lot of work groups that have to be in contact with each other around the globe. E.g. a virtual network of quality managers of a corporation or a larger business community may be created on this basis.

- **By applying Problem solving Techniques**

- ✓ Brainstorming
- ✓ Reverse Brainstorming
- ✓ Brainwriting
- ✓ Gordon Method
- ✓ Checklist Method
- ✓ Free Association

- ✓ Forced Relationships
- ✓ Collective Notebook Method
- ✓ Attribute Listing
- ✓ Big-Dream Approach
- ✓ Parameter Analysis

- **By Understanding the Employee**

Employer has to understand the psychology of the Employee or the human beings. Healthy mind, Healthy body, Satisfied salaries & rewards. Treating employee as a shareholder of the company, involving all categories of employees while implementing and solving the problems make to solve the problems in the easiest and fastest way.

- Know the problems of employee as a person, understand their problems and help to solve.
- By having Entertainment programs.
- By arranging periodical Tours so that they will be out of premises for a while.
- By conducting the parties even by offering the Drinks and high Dinner so that their mind will become free to give the better ideas.
- By conducting Yoga & Meditation programs so that the employee will increase concentration and memory power.
- By treating Employee with respect.
- By providing the loans for solving their financial problems.

#### PITFALLS TO AVOID

This tacit knowledge is automatically captured and immediately usable. So, the next time there is a similar critical business situation, knowledge workers can tap into time-saving, relevant information to increase the quality of resolution while reducing resolution time. When done properly, capturing and sharing knowledge becomes an effortless by-product of the normal issue resolution dialogue.

#### CONCLUSION

As Tacit Knowledge is hidden knowledge of the person, it would be revealed when the person is happy. The companies have to create /make the healthy working environment where the employees get peace, happiness and satisfaction. When the Employee is happy then automatically his Tacit Knowledge will come out and gives the better ideas to solve the problem.

Tacit Knowledge will be applied to the Organization by the Employee when the employee is loyal to the company only, so to have the loyalty the company has to treat employees with respect and as a part of the family.

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