

# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE & MANAGEMENT

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- Bowersox, Donald J., Closs, David J., (1996), "Logistical Management." Tata McGraw, Hill, New Delhi.
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- Garg, Sambhav (2011): "Business Ethics" Paper presented at the Annual International Conference for the All India Management Association, New Delhi, India, 19-22 June.

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**KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT: EMERGING PERSPECTIVES**

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**ABSTRACT**

*In one form or another, knowledge management has been around for a very long time. Knowledge management is not a, "a technology thing" or a, "computer thing" knowledge management is much more than a "technology thing" and that elements of it exist in each of our jobs. To start with Knowledge, it is a set of models describing various properties and behaviors within a domain. Knowledge is the full utilization of information and data, coupled with the potential of people's skills, competencies, ideas, intuitions, commitments and motivations. In today's economy, knowledge is people, money, leverage, learning, flexibility, power, and competitive advantage. Knowledge is more relevant to sustained business than capital, labor or land. But, it remains the most neglected asset. Knowledge provides the ability to respond to novel situations. A holistic view considers knowledge to be present in ideas, judgments, talents, root causes, relationships, perspectives and concepts. Knowledge is stored in the individual brain or encoded in organizational processes, documents, products, services, facilities and systems. Knowledge is the basis for, and the driver of, our post-industrial economy. Knowledge is the result of learning which provides the only sustainable competitive advantage. Knowledge is the next paradigm shift in computing following data processing 1945-1965 and information management 1966-1995. Knowledge is action, focused innovation, pooled expertise, special relationships and alliances. Knowledge is value-added behavior and activities. For knowledge to be of value it must be focused, tested and shared.*

**KEYWORDS**

knowledge management, organisational knowledge.

**INTRODUCTION**

**K**nowledge management is the process of capturing, developing, sharing, and effectively using organisational knowledge. It refers to a multi-disciplined approach to achieving organisational objectives by making the best use of knowledge.

An established discipline since 1991 KM includes courses taught in the fields of business administration, information systems, management, and library and information sciences. More recently, other fields have started contributing to KM research; these include information and media, computer science, public health, and public policy. Many large companies and non-profit organizations have resources dedicated to internal KM efforts, often as a part of their business strategy, information technology, or human resource management departments. Several consulting companies provide strategy and advice regarding KM to these organisations.

Knowledge management efforts typically focus on organisational objectives such as improved performance, competitive advantage, innovation, the sharing of lessons learned, integration and continuous improvement of the organization. KM efforts overlap with organizational learning and may be distinguished from that by a greater focus on the management of knowledge as a strategic asset and a focus on encouraging the sharing of knowledge. It is seen as an enabler of organisational learning and a more concrete mechanism than the previous abstract research.

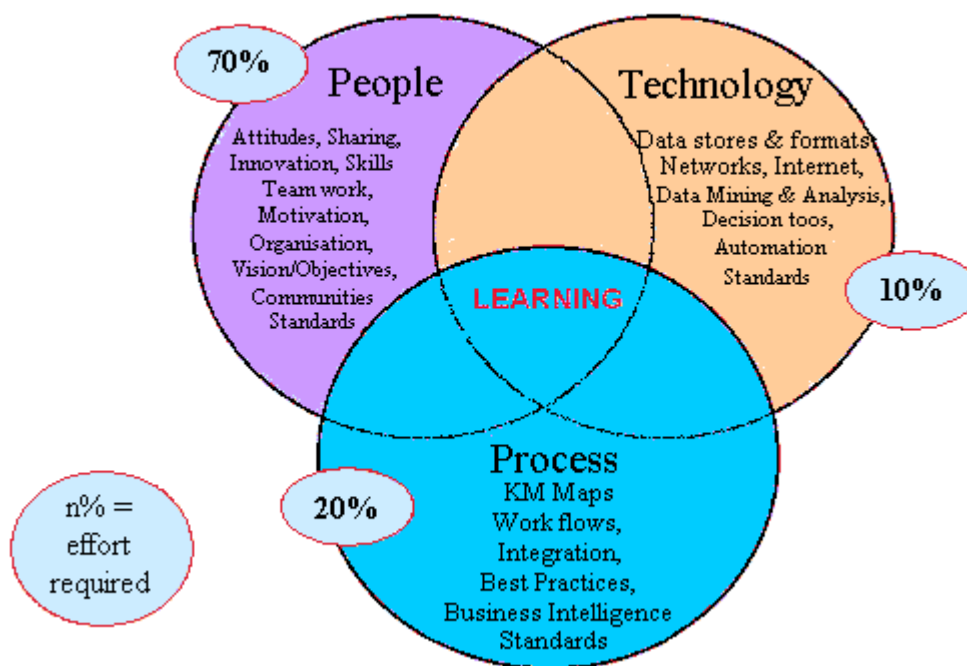
**Components of Knowledge** include

- People – 70%
- Process – 20% and
- Technology -10%

To effectively manage Knowledge in any organization, the efforts of the Human Resource should be utilized to the maximum effect followed by the relevant process and technology.

FIG. 1

**Knowledge Components**



© Dilip Bhatt, 2000

The above model developed by the European Foundation for Quality Management, and using the "hybrid skills" specified in the model, Dilip Bhatt<sup>1</sup> has linked knowledge management strategies directly to business policies and strategies.

## KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Knowledge management is an audit of "intellectual assets" that highlights unique sources, critical functions and potential bottlenecks which hinder knowledge flows to the point of use. It protects intellectual assets from decay, seeks opportunities to enhance decisions, services and products through adding intelligence, increasing value and providing flexibility.

Knowledge management is the management of the organization towards the continuous renewal of the organizational knowledge base - this means e.g. creation of supportive organizational structures, facilitation of organizational members, putting IT-instruments with emphasis on teamwork and diffusion of knowledge (as e.g. groupware) into place.<sup>2</sup>

Knowledge Management is the collection of processes that govern the creation, dissemination, and utilization of knowledge. When people realized that information is a resource that can and needs to be managed to be useful in an organization.<sup>3</sup>

On the Management of Knowledge - Position Statement by Karl M. Wiig, February 6, 1996

Knowledge -- the insights, understandings, and practical know-how that we all possess -- is the fundamental resource that allows us to function intelligently.

It does not replace one's strategy setting, but the strategy itself will be flavored differently if one adopts a KM mindset. In time KM will become simply M, a way of managing the business.

M is not a substitute for a Quality system; it does not replace TQM but helps to achieve the objectives in a smart fashion. It does this by developing a certain mindset in the organization.

As such, knowledge management, and everything else for that matter, is important only to the extent that it enhances an organization's ability and capacity to deal with, and develop in, these four dimensions

- ✓ Accomplishing Mission of the Organization.
- ✓ Gaining Advantage in cut-throat competitive situations.
- ✓ Delivering the requisite results.
- ✓ Coping up with all pervasive Change.

The value of Knowledge Management relates directly to the effectiveness with which the managed knowledge enables the members of the organization to deal with today's situations and effectively envision and create their future. Without on-demand access to managed knowledge, every situation is addressed based on what the individual or group brings to the situation with them. With on-demand access to managed knowledge, every situation is addressed with the sum total of everything anyone in the organization has ever learned about a situation of a similar nature.

Thomas Bertels provides the following definition of Knowledge Management:

Knowledge management complements and enhances other organizational initiatives such as total quality management (TQM), business process re-engineering (BPR) and organizational learning, providing a new and urgent focus to sustain competitive position<sup>3</sup>. The associated terminology with Knowledge management that go hand in hand are :

**Knowledge Analysis (KA):** In Knowledge Analysis, a knowledge source is modelled in such a way that its usefulness, its weaknesses and its appropriateness within the organization are analyzed. Knowledge Analysis is a necessary step for the ability to manage knowledge. Within Knowledge Analysis, knowledge modeling and knowledge acquisition techniques are used.

**Knowledge Planning (KP):** When an organization has a grip on its knowledge (i.e. has performed Knowledge Analysis), it will be able to plan for the future. An organization will now be able to develop a multi-year knowledge plan that defines how the organization will develop its knowledge resources, either by training its human agents, or by developing knowledge-based systems to support the human agents, or by other means that allow the organization to stay competitive.

**Knowledge Technology (KT):** This is, the application of techniques and methods from the field of AI (Artificial Intelligence), or to be more specific, the field of knowledge-based systems. The best known methodology for building knowledge-based systems is Common KADS (formerly known as KADS).

**Computer Supported Work Systems (CSWS):** This is a formal and informal (human) activity system, within an organization where the (human) agents are supported by computer systems. The application of Knowledge Technology is very helpful in such work systems, although definitely not the only important factor in the analysis and design, nor in the effectiveness of the activity system.

KM is mandatorily to be applied ....

- ✓ To serve customers well and remain in business
- ✓ Companies must reduce their cycle times and
- ✓ Operate with minimum fixed assets and overhead (people, inventory and facilities)
- ✓ Shorten product development time, improve customer service, empower employees, innovate and
- ✓ Deliver high quality products, enhance flexibility and adaptation, capture information, create knowledge, share and learn.

**Two broad areas of Knowledge Management** that are requisite for viability and success at any level include:

1. **Knowledge assets** -- to be applied or exploited -- must be nurtured, preserved, and used to the largest extent possible by both individuals and organizations.
2. **Knowledge-related processes** -- to create, build, compile, organize, transform, transfer, pool, apply, and safeguard knowledge -- must be carefully and explicitly managed in all affected areas.

Knowledge management in organizations must be considered from **three perspectives** with different horizons and purposes:

1. **Business Perspective** -- focusing on why, where, and to what extent the organization must invest in or exploit knowledge. Strategies, products and services, alliances, acquisitions, or divestments should be considered from knowledge-related points of view.
2. **Management Perspective** -- focusing on determining, organizing, directing, facilitating, and monitoring knowledge-related practices and activities required to achieve the desired business strategies and objectives.
3. **Hands-On Operational Perspective** -- focusing on applying the expertise to conduct explicit knowledge-related work and tasks.

Historically, knowledge has always been managed, at least implicitly. However, effective and active knowledge management requires new perspectives and techniques and touches on almost all facets of an organization

**In the view of Karl E. Sveiby**, At a meta-level, Knowledge Management has two **tracks of activities - and two levels**. They are

**Track 1** = Management of Information. Researchers and practitioners in this field have their education in computer and/or information science. They are involved in construction of information management systems, AI, reengineering, groupware etc. To them knowledge = Objects that can be identified and handled in information systems.

**Track 2** = Management of People. Researchers and practitioners in this field have their education in philosophy, psychology, sociology or business/management. They are primarily involved in assessing, changing and improving human individual skills and/or behaviour. To them knowledge = Processes, a complex set of dynamic skills, knowhow etc, that is constantly changing. Level: Individual Perspective. The focus in research and practise is on the individual.

**Level 1:** Individual Perspective. The focus in research and practise is on the individual.

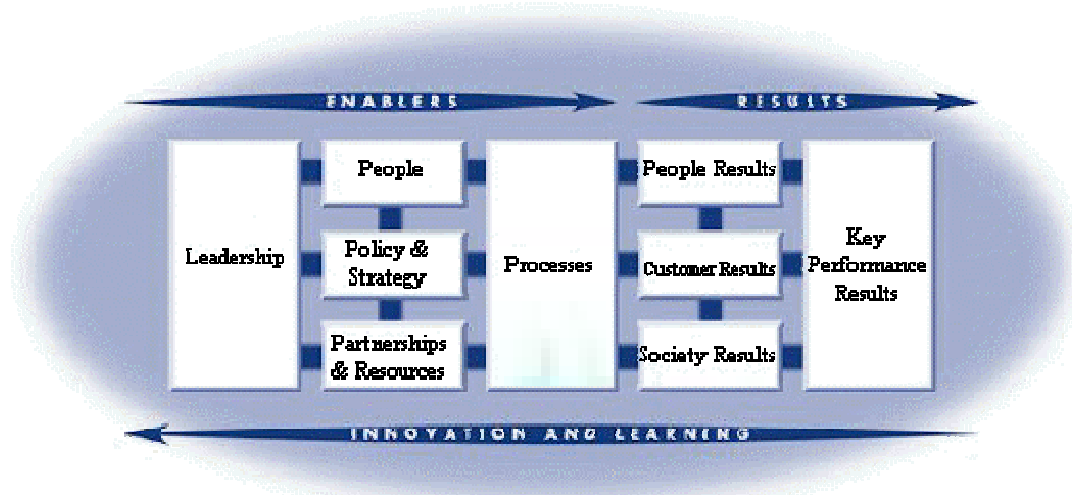
**Level 2:** Organisational Perspective. The focus in research and practise is on the organisation.

### EFQM Model

European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) has developed a Model (fig 2) which is being widely adopted by thousands of organizations.



FIG 2



The EFQM Excellence Model is a non-prescriptive framework based on nine criteria. Five of these are 'Enablers' and four are 'Results'. The 'Enabler' criteria cover what an organization does. The 'Results' criteria cover what an organization achieves. 'Results' are caused by 'Enablers'.

ENABLERS - how we do things include

1. Leadership
2. People
3. Policy and Strategy
4. Partnership and Resources
5. Processes

RESULTS – are those what we target, measure and achieve and include

1. Customer Results
2. People Results
3. Society Results
4. Key Performance Results

The Model, recognizing there are many approaches to achieving sustainable excellence in all aspects of performance, is based on the premise that:

Excellent results with respect to Performance, Customers, People and Society are achieved through Partnerships and Resources, and Processes.

The arrows emphasize the dynamic nature of the model. They show innovation and learning helping to improve enablers that in turn lead to improved results.

## CONCLUSION

Cultural and process issues are critical for KM success. Implementing an Intranet, although important in itself, is not sufficient. As it was not developed in the context of business objectives or staff needs. Most likely, it does not address the way people work and/or the processes that should be implemented to support the Intranet. This may be a simplistic conclusion and the reasons for failure are probably far more complex, but the point being any implementation MUST address people, processes and technology NOT in isolation to each other but holistic.

KM by definition is complex and dynamic; it requires great attention to detail, and attention to the dynamics of change. Unexpected changes will occur, education will be slower than anticipated, new working practices will be foreign to many. KM implementation is an art form.

Holistic strategy is suggested which will embrace all aspects of the organization towards the transformation into a knowledge-centric organization. The change will be less painless if KM is inherently adopted as part of the business model. It should not be implemented in isolation or as a silo function in the company. In the end, it all means one thing: arm people with the right information, so they are able to make better judgements, smarter decisions and create environments in which to encourage innovation, in order to be able to provide a high quality service to its customers. All this, by implication, means a KM-centric company is a successful company.

KM is not a fad; we have been doing it for years, but now the focus has changed. Knowledge is a valuable asset and one needs to use it to gain that edge. Even if the company does a lot to change cultures and foster knowledge sharing, in the end it comes down to one thing: unless the knowledge is put into action, there is no reward, only pain.

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