

# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE, IT & MANAGEMENT

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- Sharma T., Kwatra, G. (2008) Effectiveness of Social Advertising: A Study of Selected Campaigns, Corporate Social Responsibility, Edited by David Crowther & Nicholas Capaldi, Ashgate Research Companion to Corporate Social Responsibility, Chapter 15, pp 287-303.

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- Schemenner, R.W., Huber, J.C. and Cook, R.L. (1987), "Geographic Differences and the Location of New Manufacturing Facilities," Journal of Urban Economics, Vol. 21, No. 1, pp. 83-104.

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## APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN SMALL ENTERPRISES

**T. S. RAVI**  
**ASST. PROFESSOR & HEAD**  
**PG DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**DRBCC HINDU COLLEGE**  
**PATTABIRAM**

**ABSTRACT**

The study is conducted on application of knowledge management practices in small enterprises and concludes that even small manufacturing enterprises, in order to enhance the level of productivity, makes the employees understand the concepts involved in Knowledge Management practices and encourage them to practise the implementation of such knowledge management applications within their organisations towards maintaining a productive and quality business environment for its long-run sustenance.

**KEYWORDS**

knowledge management, small enterprises.

**INTRODUCTION**

In order to serve the customers better, the present-day organisations concentrate on understanding, adapting and managing changes for improving the quality of the products produced, improving the operational efficiency and adopt a fast-track method for delivering their products to markets. For this purpose the organisations capture and utilise the relevant *knowledge* and this indeed calls for a new style of management, generally identified as

**KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT**

Many organisations adopt Knowledge Management and therefore it becomes imperative to know the nature, importance, need, implementations, benefits and its limitations.

Understanding of *true knowledge* towards different firms and people is essential in this present complex business environment. This understanding is essential because it helps to identify the distinction between *data management*, *information management* and *knowledge management*. This type of understanding also helps to observe the relationship between knowledge management and organisational learning and explain the process used to convert data and information into knowledge, describe the knowledge flow and categorise various types and components of knowledge.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

**ARUN O GUPTA**, Senior Director Business Technology, Pfizer Ltd describes "KM as a practice that addresses the need for information that is required for making effective decisions". **SATISH JOSHI**, Senior VP, PATNI Computer Systems Limited says, "KM is a set of processes and tools which give us the ability to leverage and combine the collective abilities of our knowledge workers." **SUNIL KAPOOR**, Head IT, Fortis Healthcare says, "KM is nothing but having customised information tailored to the needs of each user". **M D AGARWAL**, GM IS Refinery Systems, BPCL defines knowledge management as "A practice that encompasses end-to-end processes owned by a department can go a long way toward boosting productivity," According to the **AMERICAN PRODUCTIVITY & QUALITY CENTRE**, "KM refers to the strategies and processes of identifying, capturing, and leveraging knowledge to enhance competitiveness". According to **YOGESH MALHOTA** of [www.brint.com](http://www.brint.com), "KM refers to the critical issues of organizational adaptation, survival and competence against discontinuous environmental change. Essentially, it embodies organizational processes that seek synergistic combination of data and information processing capacity of information technologies, and the creative and innovative capacity of human According to **GARTNER GROUP**, KM is a discipline that promotes an integrated approach to identifying, managing and sharing all of an enterprise's information assets. These information assets may include databases, documents, policies and procedures, as well as previously unarticulated expertise and experience resident in individual workers. **GARTNER** defines Knowledge management as an integrated and collaborative approach to the Creation, Capture, Organization, Access and Use of Information Assets.

**NEED FOR THE STUDY**

E-Commerce and internet in the present-day business scenario facilitates rapid in-flow of information into organisations causing internal and external pressures disturbing their effective operations. The internet provides information about the enterprises' competitors to their customers, though they are in the different parts of the world yet they are only a mouse click away. Further, the employees' turnover rate is high because the employees of the organisation keep moving from one to another because of the information available to them through internet about job—vacancies. While employees relocate from one organisation to another they take with them, the critical knowledge of the company operations, which they learnt when they were in their previous employment.

The contemporary organisations are forced to adopt change management to match with the increasing pace of information technology's implementations of e-Commerce, automated inventory procurement and enterprise resource planning systems (ERP). Changes in government legislations and its regulatory framework make the business enterprises to identify new threats and opportunities ahead of them.

Customers of business organisations, because of their sophisticated life style practices, demand for new products and services, which forces the organisations to develop a new level of customer-oriented personalised interaction.

With such challenges ahead, it becomes imperative for the present-times business houses to filter information from relevant data, develop efficient management methods to accept such information filtered and convert the information into organisational knowledge and from that knowledge generate value-added information.

**STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The study of *knowledge management* is a significant issue of research under *functional management* field of study. Many research contributions in this area show that *knowledge management* establish and maintain a productive and quality environment in an organisation. These contributions observed that adoption of knowledge management practices facilitates better work performance, generates more business, boosts the image of the company, makes office and shop floor operations easier and safer, ensures employee-discipline, contribute to employee morale and productivity. These contributions also reveal that application of knowledge management practices provide for better quality awareness, more efficient way of using resources, low cost of production, better preventive maintenance and high employee-involvement. Hence, it is an empirical challenge to observe whether *knowledge management practices* improve the quality of performance. A large number of literature-review reveals the fact that knowledge management applications are adopted in many areas within the business organisations to establish and maintain a well-organised workplace resulting in a safer, more efficient and more productive operation leading to the following research questions

- Whether knowledge management practices can be adopted in various work areas within an organisation

- How such practices are used within the organisation
  - Whether such knowledge management applications are significant in its value-adding mission
- In order to find a solution, the researcher conducted a study in a small enterprise situated nearby Chennai covered under the SM&ME Act 2008.

## OBJECTIVES THE STUDY

The study has the following objectives

- To identify the areas where Knowledge Management is applied in the small enterprise
- To study how such Knowledge Management practices used in the small enterprise
- To understand the overall significance of Knowledge Management applications

## METHODOLOGY

### Research design

The research design is the blue print of a research and concerned with turning a research question into testing project. This study uses an empirical research design and involves both analytical and descriptive type of methodology. The study mainly depends on primary data.

### Study area

**TIRUVALLUR district** is an administrative district in the South Indian state of TAMIL NADU. The town of TIRUVALLUR is the district headquarters. The district has a mixture of urban and rural characteristics. The Eastern part of TIRUVALLUR district is dominated by urban characteristics while the Southern and Northern part of the district has influence of Andhra culture due to its position. As of 2011, the district had a population of 3,728,104 with a sex ratio of 987 females for every 1,000 males. The district has been divided into three revenue divisions viz, TIRUVALLUR, TIRUTTANI AND PONNERI. There are three taluks under TIRUVALLUR division, two taluks under TIRUTTANI divisions and four taluks under PONNERI division. There are 46 firkas and 820 revenue villages. Likewise, there are 14 blocks, 12 Municipalities and 13 town panchayats, which implement rural development activities. There are 178 Large and 21 Medium Scale Enterprises, 27319 Micro, and Small Enterprises engaged in the manufacturing of various products like Leather/Textiles/Chemical/Engineering. Some of the economic activities undertaken by the rural artisans are manufacturing of jute, coconut shell products, and palm leaf based products, paper cups, leather, rexin works etc.

### Sampling size and design

The research study uses survey method to collect primary data. The survey method employs well-formulated questionnaire and applies multi-range sampling method for generating data. The study adopts a systematic method of selecting samples. The researcher distributed 120 questionnaires to the employees of a medium enterprise (the name of the company not mentioned in the article for the purposes of maintaining confidentiality) situated 40 kilometres away from Chennai in THIRUVALLUR district. It is an engineering company involving high technology dealing with the production of automotive parts. Out of 120 questionnaires, the researcher collected back 106 questionnaires. Out of these 106 questionnaires, 100 questionnaires were usable, rejecting the rest of them.

### Questionnaire design

The research study involved questionnaires as the instrument to collect primary data and divided into two parts. The respondents shared their opinions pertaining to knowledge management applications. The first part of the questionnaire includes demographic profile with optional questions. The second part of the questionnaire uses optional questions relating to the various areas where knowledge management practices apply in the selected enterprise of the study

### Scaling technique in questionnaire

The questionnaire uses both optional type statements and statements in LIKERT 5-iespoint scale. The response from the employees of the selected engineering company, rated in 5-point scale, as: 5- Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Neutral 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly disagree

### Framework of the Analysis

The following are the statistical tools used in the study:

1. **Percentage analyses** to ascertain the nature of responses of the employees about the application of *Knowledge Management practices* in the various areas of operations within the business organisation.
2. **One-way ANOVA** test to test the dependence of variables

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher distributed the questionnaires to the employees of the organisation of the sample unit and collected the filled-in questionnaires from the respondents for analyses and interpretation. The summary of the results is analysed using:

- **Percentage analysis** of the variables in the questionnaire
- **One-way ANOVA** test exhibits the influence of *age of the employees* and *experience of the employees* on various Knowledge Management practices
- **Independent sample t-Test** exhibit the influence of gender of the employees on various knowledge Management applications

### FINDINGS

The study identified the following areas where knowledge management applications used within the small enterprise:

- In framing policies and strategies
- In practising leadership styles
- In training & mentoring
- In knowledge capture and acquisition
- In communication within the organisation

Thirty percent of the optimistic employees of the study unit strongly agree that their organisation applies knowledge management techniques in framing policies and strategies.

All the employees of the sample study unit strongly agree that their superiors use knowledge management applications in their style of leadership.

All the employees of the study unit (optimistic, mechanical and demanding employees) strongly agree that the organisation seeks external sources for obtaining external knowledge and share it amongst the employees within the organisation

Thirty-one percent of the optimistic employees and thirty-eight percent of the mechanical employees strongly agree that the organisation captures and uses knowledge obtained from other industrial sources such as industrial associations, competitors, clients and suppliers.

All the employees of the study unit strongly agree that the organisation regularly updates the databases of good work practices and prepare written documentation such as training manuals, articles for publications etc. thereby providing for organisational memory.

Thirty-eight percent of the mechanical employees of the sample study unit strongly agree that the organisation facilitates collaborative work by project teams that are physically separated encouraging virtual teams.

**Age, gender and experience** of the employees of the sample study unit do not influence the knowledge management practices within the enterprise.

All the employees of the sample study unit agree that the enterprise provides formal training related to knowledge management practices, while sixty-three percent of the employees of the sample study disagree that organisation provides informal training related to knowledge management practices.

Thirty-nine percent of the employees of the sample unit agree that the enterprise uses formal mentoring practices including apprenticeship.

## SUGGESTIONS

All the employees of the country, nation-wide need to understand the significance, influence and effectiveness of *Knowledge Management practices* application within their organisations towards a better operational performance for enhancing the productivity and work efficiency.



### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Considering the time and cost factor the study is limited only to Chennai region. The study domain confines only to manufacturing companies and therefore the findings through analyses need not be the same for other industrial organisations. The study is only with reference to **ONE** selected manufacturing company nearby Chennai and does not include all the manufacturing companies located in Chennai. The study is limited only to 100 responses from the employees of manufacturing company in Chennai and hence the views of these respondents need not be the views of the employees of the entire manufacturing companies of the country. The researcher circulated questionnaires only to respondents who know to read and write. Thus the study confines its circulation of questionnaires only to literate group and ignores illiterate group who do not know to read and write.

### CONCLUSION

The study concludes that even small manufacturing enterprises, in order to enhance the level of productivity, makes the employees understand the concepts involved in *Knowledge Management practices* and encourage them to practise the implementation of such knowledge management applications within their organisations towards maintaining a productive and quality business environment for its long-run sustenance.

### SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study focuses only on the identification of the various areas within the organisation where *knowledge management practices* be applied and how such applications are used. However, this study does not cover the effectiveness of *knowledge management practices*, when adopted in small enterprises, which is left as a topic in the agenda for future research.

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