

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE, IT & MANAGEMENT

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 - All works cited in the text (including sources for tables and figures) should be listed alphabetically.
 - Use (ed.) for one editor, and (ed.s) for multiple editors.
 - When listing two or more works by one author, use --- (20xx), such as after Kohl (1997), use --- (2001), etc, in chronologically ascending order.
 - Indicate (opening and closing) page numbers for articles in journals and for chapters in books.
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ABSTRACT

In the present knowledge era the existence and excellence of any organization merely depends upon its intellectual capital. Knowledge management practices today depend totally on information technology and related tools. This paper is a small attempt to enlighten the usage of information technology in knowledge management practices of business organizations.

KEYWORDS

knowledge management, IT.

INTRODUCTION

A gnaana Thimiraandhasya...
 Gnaanaanjana Shalaakayaath....

Knowledge, the source of development has been well appreciated since from ancient days. The twenty first century is considered the knowledge era where as the previous century was the information era. In the global competitive environment every business organization has to continuously improve its business practices, processes and systems for its survival. Better products or services with more features and innovative approaches are the need of the hour of every company. Managements have to depend on new knowledge to address all these issues. Knowledge is the out come of information. Since information is the base for any form of knowledge, Information Technology plays a vital role in knowledge management.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Knowledge management is the process of identifying, gathering, retrieving, dissemination and further development of knowledge. Snowden (1999), maintains that knowledge management is the "identification, optimization, and active management of intellectual assets, either in the form of explicit knowledge held in artifacts or as tacit knowledge possessed by individuals or communities". Knowledge management has been the ancient practice in different forms like scriptures on stones, copper sheets and leaves. The study of knowledge dates back to ancient Greece. Even before that, knowledge was at least implicitly managed as people performed work. Early hunters, for example learned the best skills and practices for a successful hunt. These skills and techniques transferred from one generation to the next. This illustrates the transfer of knowledge, a knowledge management activity (Wiig, 1997).

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Information technology's role is emerging as an integrator of communications technology, rather than solely a keeper of information. The critical role for IT lies in its ability to support communication, collaboration, and those searching for knowledge and information" (Mc Campbell et al., 1999, 178). Information technology and the advent of the personal computer have greatly enhanced organizational effectiveness, inter-organizational deployment, and cognitive advance (Grover and Davenport, 2001, p. 6). Another area of communication that information technology has drastically impacted is social activity. Computer networks provide a means to break down stovepipes, or hierarchical barriers, that often inhibit the flow of free thinking, knowledge, and innovation, or the creation of knowledge. Thus Information technology has become a key in the implementation of knowledge management.

REVIEW OF RESEARCH LITERATURE

Knowledge management has been a thrust area for research and more than 210 papers were published during the last decade. The papers on impact of IT on knowledge management practices have arrived with very positive findings and conclusions stating that organizations benefit a lot through IT related tools and technology while implementing knowledge management strategies. Even though IT's role in KM is just a supporting one, KM practices could not be imagined today with out information technology especially data bases and networks. Most of the research on knowledge management in relevance to IT has considered knowledge as synonym to information and treated information systems as KM systems. Among the researchers of both Information Technology and management studies the clear distinction between information and knowledge need to be realized.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

"Information technology fosters knowledge exchange among the key parties."

Modest beginnings can be useful; an organization doesn't have to have the latest or the most complex technology. Having a web site and having access to technical personal to assist in planning for technology is important. Visit other organization's web sites. Some organizations being their experience with computers by getting external assistance, sometimes from a donated source. Five years should be forecasted for equipment replacement and three years for software. When considering the purchases of equipment, the organization should prepare a plan that includes identifying the organization's needs analyzing its information requirements, current resources and systems, and developing and circulating a request for proposals (RFP). The most critical elements in vendor selection are its capabilities and the satisfaction of its other users. For creating a contract with vendor, the organization should consult with other organizations and experts. Once the purchases are made, an implementation plan, including staff and user training, must be developed jointly with the vendor. Later an evaluation and an improvement plan will be useful.

In order to have a more clear understanding of information technology for an organization, it can be classified as follows:

1. Hardware
2. Software
3. Groupware

HARDWARE

Hardware can be categorizes as:

Memory
 Storage Devices
 Video Display Unit

Input Devices
Output Devices

INTERNET TECHNOLOGIES

"Internet has helped HR managers to access the organization data from outside locations."

Perhaps the main reason for the current internet popularity is that, because it uses the same technology as the internet, any business or organization, which has internet. The same WWW browsers and E-Mail programs can be used, and this creates a standard format for all on-line documents, whether presets on the organization's intranet or on the wider internet. A WWW server can be configured on a companies existing LAN, and because LANs are much faster than the internet itself, download times to human resource managers PC's are very short, and experimental internet technologies such as real-time audio and video become sensible propositions, if required by the organization.

As most intranets have internet connectivity also, human resource managers can log the network from outside locations, using standard internet dial-up methods, and request information, read their mail, etc. similarly, human resource managers can access the internet without ever leaving their intranet environment.

"Internet can help employees in exchanging their creativity and provide innovative ideas."

Internet "plug-ins" can be acquired for many browsers (Such as Netscape Navigator and MS-Internet Explorer), which enhance its (and therefore the 'nets') capabilities. Microsoft is currently developing plug-ins, which enable the accurate representation of word-processing and spreadsheet files through a browser; capabilities, which are, at present, beyond the scope of what pure HTML (the language of the web) can achieve.

INTRANET

The concept is similar to that of the usage of internet for information about related topics/subjects to the information and data relating to the organizations. There can be several ways the intranet can be implemented in an organization which has already been networked. In order to have a clear understanding of the intranet usage, a simple example of the intranet application helps any human resources managers to understand the underlying need for such a facility for consumption and analysis by executives inside the organization. A simple but relevant example can be the use of electronic travel requisition and settlement from along with the requisite information such as eligibility conditions, financial conditions and the follow through actions.

If the entire application is implemented on a intranet, any executive who is authorized to travel by, can avail of a simple and comprehensive facility built for any human resource manager. One of the major considerations for building an intranet is to have reduced costs and versatile information. The other benefits include:

- Improved productivity
- Quick access to data and information
- Cost effective
- Ease of use
- Requirement of minimum hardware and software.

Intranet components include the development of home page for the organization and providing the necessary hyperlinks to the various subjects' topics concerned. Enlightening, graphic pictures with logically built animal on features.

Another important aspect is the smooth navigability of the entire home page. At the human resource manager and effective, simple and swift browser software needs to be developed. In an human resource information system (HRIS) environment, it is essential that the components of the function links to the home page should be in a sequential manner. Intranet also helps in obtaining updated information or company financial situation, policy

THE ISSUES CAN BE CATEGORIZED IN AN ORGANIZATION AS FOLLOWS

- Managing Content From Multiple Authors Is Complex
- Submitting Content Can Be Difficult For Document Authors
- Human Resource Managers Can't Keep Up With The Information Explosion
- Information Stored In Many Different Places
- Human Resource Managers Need To Be Able To Find And Be Notified Proactively For New Information

IN ORDER TO OVERCOME THE ABOVE ISSUES, IT IS ESSENTIAL TO

- Co-Ordinate Content From Multiple Authors
- Implement Editorial And Approval Cycle
- Enforce common presentation guidelines
- Deploy content across same or different servers(NT or UNIX)
- Find Information Regardless Of Where Or How It Is Stored
- Receive Notification When New , Relevant Information Becomes Available

A separate analysis can be attributed to the use of intranet for HUMAN RESOURCES FUNCTION:

THE CHALLENGE IS TO INCREASE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INTERNAL JOB POSTING PROCESS ACROSS REMOTE SITES

- Job postings change frequently
- Hard for employees to know when jobs open
- Hard for managers to locate and interview best candidates

The Possible Solution to the Above Challenges Is To Develop and Implement on Intelligent Web-Based Application That Matches Job Openings And Employee Interests

AFTER, THIS SOLUTION IS IMPLEMENTED THE RESULTS POSSIBLY CAN BE UNDER THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES

- Improved information flow in fundamental business process
- Managers have more convenience and faster
- Mechanism for monitoring information
- May be easier to hire from within and
- Reduced the initial costs including training costs.

OTHER BENEFITS

Many other benefits of intranets can be summarized briefly:

- Reduced costs- i.e. printing, paper, software, distribution, mailing, and order processing, etc.
- Reduced telephone support expanses.

USE OF AN INTRANET

"Education and Learning Can Be Made Accessible and Effective Through Intranet"

- Communication: An intranet increases the capabilities to communicate with all members of the corporate culture.
- Surveys
- Scheduling
- Event registration
- Employee training via HTML from support

Your intranet provides you with the training tool that can be over used and over, and yet, can be updated with relative ease.

- Software distribution
- Publish company documents
- Provide access to company databases such as the company phone book
- Provide departmental home pages where departments can let the rest of the company know what's going on in their area
- Provide individual employee home pages where they can let the rest of the company know of the special events that have happened in their lives.

The major focus on any organizations 'IT policy will include the prominent and

Updating of the software. A brief scenario of software technologies of today and the near future are discussed below software can be categorized as follows:

SYSTEM SOFTWARE

- OS (operating system)
- Communication
- Utilities
- Other systems software

APPLICATION SOFTWARE

- ASD'S(application software development tools)
- General purpose application
- Development software
- Web based
- Programming
- Case tools

SYSTEM SOFTWARE

- Multi user
- Multi tasking
- Symmetric processing.

APPLICATION SOFTWARE

- Identify your application needs
- Specify minimum requirements for those needs
- Use survey results to identify a software package suitable for your application functionalities.
- Eliminate packages with critical problems.
- Evaluate trade-offs in implementing the package
- Select software suitable for existing hardware.

Choose the right software vendor of repute for further needs of updation, maintenance and training (minimum).

SOME OF THE GENERAL FEATURES OF SOFTWARE

- Ease of use.
- Copy protection.
- Version compatibility.
- Compatibility with other software.
- Network compatibility.
- Portability.
- Cost.
- Licensing policies.

THE SOFTWARE TRENDS ARE LEADING TOWARDS THE FOLLOWING

- Enterprise wide computing.
- Web based applications
- Knowledge management

USING A PACKAGED SYSTEM

Through modeling, users or human resource manager representatives actually can see what happens in systems operations-what screens look like, how tables are accessed, how edits are performed, and so on. By performing model work assignments, human resource managers have a clearer view-from a functional perspective-of the packaged system's actual capabilities, shortcomings, and ability to meet their functional needs. With a packaged system, it's *possible* and usually desirable to conduct user testing and modeling before engaging in any new programming work. This reversal of the traditional sequence of specifications and testing has the following advantages.

- **Actual product training**, by users, begins earlier in the implementation process, and focuses on the existing system. This earlier more detailed view of the package may reduce the need for modifications.
- By completing user **testing in advance** the need for modifications can be determined before new programming begins. This eliminates the piecemeal delivery of proposed changes to the systems, people and the modifications' syndrome
- If user testing at this stage uncovers and unexpected mismatch between systems capabilities and actual human resource manager requirements, much time, money, and agony can be soared by starting anew. If the system is going to require to so many modifications that it's likely to become a maintenance nightmare, or never meet human resource manager needs, the wisest course may be to return to square one and acquire a different system before getting in to costly modifications to the standard software. An effective vendor evaluation process can preclude this problem.

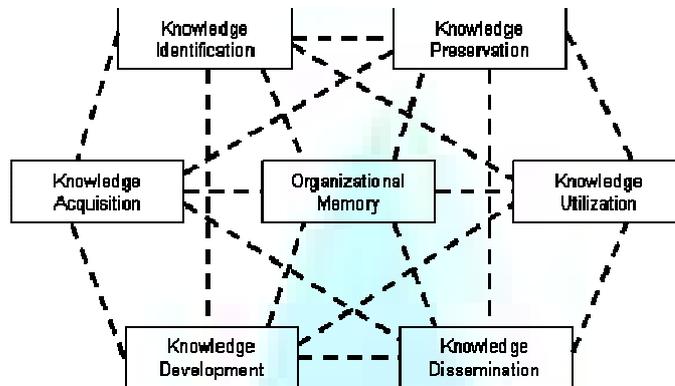
TECHNOLOGY TOOLS FOR REMOTE COMMUNICATIONS

"Team technologies allow team members to share relevant knowledge and world note team tasks effectively"

Thus, groupware is classified here in to two general categories:

1. Synchronous groupware that enables team interactions at the same time. Examples are desktop and real-time teleconferencing, electronic meeting systems (EMS), electronic display video-conferencing with audio facilities, chatting [coleman-1997]
2. Asynchronous groupware that facilitates delayed interaction among team members. Examples are e-mail, group calendars and schedules, bulletin boards and web pages, non-real-time database sharing and conferencing, and work flow applications.

DIAGRAM FOR MODEL OF ORGAINZATIONAL MEMORY WITH KNOWLEDGE MANGEMENT

**FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE USE OF GROUPWARE TECHNOLOGY**

The choice of groupware technology is linked to a number of factors such as whether the team requires a permanent record of the interaction and decisions, the need for symbolic meaning in communication, team members' experience with work virtually, how night the team's schedule is, the team's functional and organizational culture, and the team member's access to technological support and training.

TECHNOLOGY FOR REMOTE COMMUNICATIONS IN A GLOBAL SOFTWARE TEAM

- People become highly dependent on technologies used for maintaining for remote contact. This implies that users need training and support to integrate technology in their work environment.
- Electronic media support only a limited level of interactivity. People engaged in communication activities in order to reduce uncertainty and equivocally, associated with the information requirements of their assigned tasks. Uncertainty reduction refers to the elimination of the lack of information needed to complete tasks. And equivocally reduction refers to reducing ambiguity associated with a task [Daft and Lengel, 1986a]. Equivocally reduction requires a higher degree of information richness as compared to uncertainty reduction. "Richer" media like videoconferencing and phone transmit a more comprehensive communication experience than textual and asynchronous media like e-mail and voice mail. Yet, with all its wonders technology still cannot transmit a persons' social presence" equivalent to that experienced in face to face settings.
- Remote communications require more efforts than face to face encounters because people are expected to transmit and digest communication intentions with in the constraints of the technology in use.
- Remote communications tend to become more task oriented and formal then common in a collective work setting. This reduces the feasibility of building social and, hence, more complex co-ordination process.

Remote electronic communications also result in inclusion problems. On the one hand, local people may not the included in cross-site exchanges.

CONCLUSION

Information technology can provide many benefits. Then benefits include fostering better communication and knowledge exchanges among the key parties. Knowledge management practices today depend totally on information technology and related tools.

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