

Knowledge Management

supporting those serving Him



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Knowledge

Proverbs 18:15 teaches us, “The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.” Knowledge is not always wisdom – that is found completely and exclusively in God’s Word, the Bible. For the purposes of this paper, knowledge is information applied within a social context, and Knowledge Management is a way to make better decisions by making the right information available to the right decision makers in the proper context at the right time.

Knowledge Management (KM) is a confluence of Management Science, Information Science, and Social Science (with a bit of the art of communication thrown in for good measure). Enterprise Architecture bridges the gap between the social structures of the organization and the technology tools and infrastructure. Effective enterprise architecture will leverage that which exists within the organization before attempting to create new structures or implement new tools. In the pursuit of effective KM, inefficiency of a part sometimes allows a more effective whole system.

Document Management consists of the identification, organization and provision of electronic files, from author, into a repository, and from the repository, to audiences, in context, as needed. When meaningful content is known to be available in context, people will come to that source for that content.

The challenge of KM requires people to communicate more effectively in an environment that utilizes those technology tools to share and apply local tacit (subjective) knowledge effectively.

Sociology

Knowledge is information that has been interpreted and applied within a social context. Most knowledge is tacit, or subjective. While information is cheap and ubiquitous thanks to Google and the internet, knowledge is much more valuable.

Miscommunications and bad decisions are often the result of poor relationships, where knowledge is retained within groups with varying degrees of isolation, and not shared in an effective and timely manner.

Decisions based on much information with little understanding, or little information with much understanding are suboptimal. KM strives for balanced maximization of understanding and information in decision making.

A Community of Practice (CoP) is a group within the organization, whose members are related primarily by interest in, expertise with, or needs related to a particular body of knowledge. Sharing biographies of individuals can be utilized to encourage organic growth. CoP’s can also be started with gentle outside encouragement by introducing potential members and facilitating communication.

Sharing expertise, insights, and knowledge before work begins or a decision is proposed or made is referred to as Peer Assist. The Peer Assist process draws on Communities of Practice to leverage the knowledge of the organization.

The growth of KM within an organization takes place over potentially significant periods of time, as Communities of Practice grow and creation and sharing of knowledge becomes more robust and widespread within the organization.

When seeking to encourage more effective decision making through KM, reward those team members who create knowledge, share knowledge within Communities of Practice, and utilize that knowledge.

Technology

Process and workflow changes are often best addressed before technology tool changes, as organizations often take up to two years to adopt new technology tools.

Knowledge should not be confused with technology. Buying technology insures only one thing: debt. Finland, Singapore, Israel, Malaysia, Thailand, India are noted for effectively leveraging knowledge. The United States has often been focused on technology. Effective creation and application of knowledge is more a function of the social structure of the organization, and less what tools are used.

Technology tools can provide real benefit to the organization, if those tools are seen as providing immediate benefit to existing work. Quiet KM support as opportunities are identified effectively brings members of the organization into a new social and political environment. Enterprise architects have the challenge to help people see benefit resulting from the new KM driven behavior using available technology tools.

Making simple, unified technology tools available to support the cultural change of the organization will help prevent frustration and loss of momentum.

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