

“When Knowledge Sharing Turns to Knowledge Hiding” strategy + business

One of the challenges of knowledge management is that of getting people to share their knowledge. Why should people give up their hard-won knowledge, when it is one of their key sources of personal advantage? In some organizations, sharing is natural. In others the old dictum "knowledge is power" reigns.

Why Don't People Share?

- **"Knowledge is power"** - but how true is this really? In today's enterprise, where so much depends on teamwork and collective knowledge, it is only a handful of people who have knowledge for which they can hold their peers (and bosses) to ransom. Knowledge is power, but is typically not the primary reason for lack of knowledge sharing.
- **"not invented here"** syndrome - this is more common. People have pride in not having to seek advice from others and in wanting to discover new ways for themselves.
- **Not realizing how useful particular knowledge is to others** - an individual may have knowledge used in one situation but be unaware that other people at other times and places might face similar situations.
- **Lack of trust** - if I share some of my knowledge, will you use it out of context, mis-apply it (and then blame me!), or pass it off as your own without giving any acknowledgement or recognition to me as the source?
- **Lack of time** – this is the major reason given in many organizations. There is pressure on productivity, on deadlines, and it's a general rule that the more knowledgeable you are, the more there are people waiting to collar you for the next task. How can you possibly find time to add your lessons learnt to the knowledge database or have a knowledge sharing session with your colleagues?

Other barriers include functional silos, individualism, poor means of knowledge capture, inadequate technology, internal competition and top-down decision making.

How can we overcome such barriers?



Changing Culture

Culture change is never easy and takes time. But cultures can be changed. Culture is defined in many ways, such as "commonly held beliefs, attitudes and values", "the collective programming of the mind that

distinguished one group from another", and in many other ways that also embrace rituals, artifacts and other trappings of the work environment.

The simple but effective definition "the way we do things around here". There is no one place to start, but most interventions are based on a simple layered model that portrays how people's observable actions and behaviors are influenced by reportable attitudes and values based on more deep-rooted beliefs. Therefore to change people's actions you have to address the more fundamental underlying layers.

- A culture audit - conducting questionnaires, interviews and team sessions with a cross-section of the organization. This is especially helpful in finding out the difference between what is articulated as the desired culture and what is done

(e.g. "we put quality first" but at the same time the organization ships out less than perfect products at the end of a financial quarter to "make the numbers").

- Challenge 'improper' behavior - if you identify people hoarding knowledge unnecessarily: challenge them; though avoid "knowledge rage".
- Involvement - some of the best knowledge sharing cultures are where everybody believes that their knowledge is respected, valued and used to inform decisions.
- Use of role models - identify those people whose behaviors are an example to others. Celebrate and publicize them. Involve them with other groups.
- Team-building / organization development sessions - at regular team meetings, allocate time to understand and improve internal processes
- Align rewards and recognition to support appropriate behaviors.
- Change people - move the knowledge sharers around; get industrial psychologists and behavioral experts on board.
- Remember that culture goes hand in hand with structure (roles and responsibilities). At every level within the organization, there must be congruence between objectives, structures, processes, people and supporting infrastructure.

The most effective way to create a knowledge sharing culture – is first to start to practice it at your own level. The higher up the organization the more effective you will be in changing the culture but even if you are low down the hierarchy – you have an influence.

Second, put in place the knowledge sharing technology and train and educate people in its effective use.

The two together – people with the appropriate knowledge sharing mindset and the appropriate knowledge sharing technology to support them will rapidly bring about a knowledge sharing culture that helps you better meet your business objectives.

Why Sharing Knowledge is important:-



Today, the creation and application of new knowledge is essential to the survival of almost all businesses. There are many reasons. They include: -

Intangible products - ideas, processes, information are taking a growing share of global trade from the traditional, tangible goods of the manufacturing economy. Increasingly the only sustainable competitive advantage is continuous innovation. In other words the application of new knowledge.

Increasing turnover of staff - People don't take a job for life any more. When someone leaves an organization their knowledge walks out of the door with them.

"Our problem as an organization is that we don't know what we know" - Large global or even small geographically dispersed organizations do not know what they know. Expertise learnt and applied in one part of the organization is not leveraged in another.

Accelerating change - technology, business and social - As things change so does our knowledge base erode – in some businesses, as much of 50% of what you knew 5 years ago is probably obsolete today.

"In today's environment, hoarding knowledge ultimately erodes your power. If you know something very important, the way to get power is by actually sharing it."