

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract

This paper highlights the process of knowledge management in a learning organization. The arguments are based on theoretical construct of that of a relationship between Knowledge Management and gaining competitive advantage. Certain case studies have been the basis of the development of the assumption of this research study. The process of knowledge management has been discussed in the light of Senge's model of learning organization. According to the basic concept of learning organization, these organizations are able to effectively sustain themselves by using information to adapt to the ever changing environment. In the light of this characteristic of a learning organization knowledge management becomes imperative for them. The paper identifies the knowledge need of learning organizations and Knowledge Management Process using Chun's Model. The last part of the study identifies the use of knowledge management for gaining competitive edge in the market and recommends certain strategies that could effectively support in gaining such competitive edge.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, Information management cycle, Learning Organization

INTRODUCTION

Information use is the bedrock of the concept of learning organization. The learning organization survives on total awareness of the individuals about themselves and their environment. In order to discuss the Knowledge Management in learning organization we will consider the knowledge need and process in the light of five basic concepts of Senge's Model. According to Armstrong (2006b) knowledge Management is about transforming knowledge from resources into a usable form which facilitates learning. According to Powers (1999) Xerox developed a knowledge

management initiative based on the understanding that it will improve its business performance, customer relations and financial performance.

The theoretical construct of this paper is based on the results of some such case studies as Xerox where Knowledge Management has been taken up as to improve profitability and business processes. According to Buckman Laboratories Case study- “Overall, since the inception of our knowledge sharing system, K’Netix, we’ve experienced a 50 percent rise in sales from new products, which indicates a dramatic rise in profitability from innovation. Sales per associate have increased 51 percent, while operating profit per associate has gone up 93 percent. The payoff is clear” (Ellis *et al*, 2002).

This paper takes up the same relationship of using Knowledge management for gaining competitive edge considering this process as imperative for the learning organizations and not an optional intervention like others. The deliberations presented in this paper are based on the assumption that- *If a Learning Organization is committed towards gaining competitive edge in the market then its dependence on knowledge management increases.*

To identify the information need of the learning organization the following five ruling concepts of Senge’s Model(1995a) are taken into account-

Personal Mastery- It is the total awareness of the individual about himself and his environment

Mental Models- It is the cognitive system of individuals based on certain concepts which he/she has developed over a period of time through experience or exposure to different kinds of knowledge

Shared Vision- It is the creation of the common vision between the individuals of the organization and the organization as a whole.

Team Learning- It is the establishment of such type of coordination and cohesion of the team members, where the development and performance of these individuals is articulated in such a way that each member facilitates the work of other.

System Thinking- the ability of looking at any activity or any process as an integrated part of the whole system where it exist and to which it contributes i.e individuals’ performance is viewed as an activity taking place towards the accomplishment of the bigger targets set by the organization. The processes are not analyzed as snap shots, instead they are seen as part contributing to a bigger system (Senge, 2006b)

If we look at the Senge model for a learning organization we find that the five basic concepts of Personal Mastery, Mental Models, Shared Vision, Team learning and System Thinking are all related to the cognitive process of individuals. It will not be incorrect to say that major part of the process towards realization of the learning organization takes place in the minds of the individuals. All the five processes of learning organization revolve around the

institutionalizing learning and knowledge sharing. This strongly supports the fact that the Learning Organizations thrive on continuous learning and knowledge dissemination.

Following Senge's model for learning organization, Garvin, D.A cited in a review by Circk(1996) discusses the information need in a learning organization in-depth in his book Building a Learning Organization. Business Credit, 96. He says on Learning Organizations- "an organization skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights" (Garvin, 1996).

Here Crick has identified five basic activities in which a learning organization must be sufficiently skilled so as to be able to implement its strategies. These include systemic problem solving, experimentation with new approaches, learning from experience and histories, learning from past performance of others and to be able to develop the quickest and effective way of transferring knowledge within the organization (Circk; 1996). According to Circk all these processes are indicative of the type of management system that a learning organization needs. These processes highlight a system where the focus is mostly on the learning process that takes place inside the human mind. At this stage it is worth mentioning that when we discuss about Knowledge Management, we are in fact referring to the Human Resource of the Organization where most part of this system exist and can make effective contribution to it. Armstrong says that "Knowledge Management Strategies promote the sharing of knowledge by linking people with people, and by linking them with information so that they learn from documented information" (Aramgrong,1992a).

In human mind (where an articulate complex of concepts already exists) the cognitive processes is the key factor that immensely affect the shaping up of the Knowledge System of a specific organization. According to Ausuble (1963) two type of phenomena trigger learning among the individuals- Subordinate Subsumption and Superordinate Subsumption. When the information received by the individual matches the existing system of concepts the result is that by accommodating that new concept system of concepts is modified and hence, individual learns as Subordinate Subsumption takes place. In the concept of Personal Mastery (Senge's Model) where the focus is on the individual himself, he/she attains the stage of personal mastery after acquiring sufficient information about himself (i.e- strengths, weaknesses, attitude, responses that may be voluntary or involuntary). In the light of such a process of knowledge absorption Choo has explained its utility for organizations as-"the intelligent organization has mastered a fourth class of knowledge - a higher order or meta-knowledge - that it uses to create, integrate, and invigorate all its intellectual resources in order to achieve superior levels of performance." (Choo, 1995).

The arguments presented by Choo (1995) on the information need of the learning organization, mostly relates to the concept that organizational learning takes place only when unlearning about the past occurs. The past concepts are erased so that framing of new concepts are not influenced by the previously developed concepts. Ironically, we see that erasing the past information from human mind is not possible or in other words unlearning is not what is experienced under the normal circumstances. The individuals' cognitive system may be molded by the assimilation of new information and that in certain cases may deflect the deductive process in human mind about certain pre-existing experiences. In the process, new perception about the environment may occur leading to adaptation in response to the new kind of information confronted thereof. Such type of adaptive learning takes place after an insight is developed into the future, where the benefits drawn from such an adaptation could be clearly envisaged.

During all this process the organization not only interpret or react to the environment, or struggle for finding a matching fit (i.e solution). Armstrong highlighted this as (knowledge Management is about getting knowledge from those who have it to those who needs it in order to improve organizational effectiveness)(Armstrong, 2006b, pp. 176). This means that it not just to learn about the information but also to utilize the information. Hence, in addition to this the organization with its in-depth understanding of the environment, works towards developing a matching fit (a solution that will address the problems confronted by the organization). This whole process of adaptive learning cannot take place with acquiring sufficient information from our environment. In this context Choo highlights the basic purpose of information system saying that-"The basic goal of information management is to harness the information resources and information capabilities of the organization in order to enable the organization to learn and adapt to its changing environment" (Choo, 1995).

Adaptive learning is not all about just acquiring new knowledge but it also aims at conservation of existing information valued by the organization and expanding the knowledge base already available to it. Understanding the need for the realization of the balance between conservation (the existing norms and beliefs) and entrepreneurship (using first hand data in exploring new alternatives), Choo has given a cycle showing information management in a learning organization.

The flow of information is the essence of acquiring adaptive nature by the organization. The frequent adaptation of the organization in response to the continuously changing environment is what actually makes it a learning organization and enables it to be effective during the period of change. As analyzed by Davenport the Manager at HP is using workshops

to understand what specific kind of information is needed by whom and how to develop a system for the transfer of knowledge.

INFORMATION REQUIREMENT IN ORGANIZATION PROCESS

Gautham *et al* (1995) while discussing the nature of the organizational process has chosen some of the main processes including decision making, communication, coordination and control. Our discussion on information need of the organization will be focused on these four processes when the organizations require to be aware of facts and use of information for effective management.

Decision Making

Decision making is the process that reshapes the course of action of other processes within the organization. According to Gautham *et al* (1995) decision making is three phased processes including intelligence, design and choice. By intelligence we mean understanding the decision scenario and examining the overall environment, whereas by design we mean generating a set of feasible alternative solutions to a situation and by choice we mean choosing any one of those alternatives. Now if we look at all the three phases of this process we find that the quality and successes of each of these phases is based on the availability of sufficient information.

At the first phase when the environment is scanned and information is collected is actually for the purpose to carry out a situational analysis. The second phase is possible due to the information collected in the first phase and again in the third phase the right choice of any alternative would only be possible when the decision maker is fully aware of the reaction to his/her decision. The third stage referred to as choice is again based on the information acquired about the environment where the decision is implemented. Gautham *et al* (1995) has put this fact as-“Information helps in structuring the complexity of the decision scenario and thus facilitates generation of alternatives which can deal with such complexity. Obviously, 'informed' decisions are superior to decisions made in a hurry with little back up information to enable a true justification of the decision”(Gautham *et al*, 1995).

As decision making is decentralized and almost all the individuals are involved in decision making at different levels so information dissemination becomes

Communication

Another important process for information distribution is communication. Communication means transmission of information from one point to another. It is a vehicle through which decisions are made known to all the concerned personnel (Gautham; 1995). Again we see that

the process of communication is possible on part of the sender when prior information is available to the sender. In a learning organization the process of continuous adaptation is only possible when quality information is efficiently disseminated to the users. But before dissemination of information, the acquisition and organization of that information important otherwise the information over flow can make it confusing for the individuals. Communication is an important source through which information flows within the organization. If the communication source is effective and efficient, then the required quality information could be made available to the user in order to facilitate the improvement in the quality of his output or work. Today knowledge worker's concept is based on the availability of information to these workers, who use this information to conduct the analysis of their work and the work process. They identify gaps and weaknesses in the light of the information available which enables them to take work related decisions. Highlighting the role of effective communication Gautham *et al.* say- "Effectively communicating to each individual his role and his relationship to the roles of others in the organization enables the individual to work smoothly with his fellow employees." (Gautham,1995, pp. 56).

It is further added that transmission of information to the general staff is another important role of the management. Keeping this in view the complex nature of the processes, the communication sources and systems should be simple enough so that all the relevant staff feels comfortable in using them. Considering the complex type of information to be communicated to the staff, simplicity of the communication system becomes a need. Gautham *et al*(1995) has identified the kind of information that is transmitted to different people. According to them these types are- "There are generally four kinds of information communicated to the various audiences of an organization. These are information on policies, procedures and practices, news of current activities and progress, review of past results and organizational plans and objectives" (Gautham *et al*, 1995, pp. 56).

Creating an environment of understanding, communication must be clear and should transmit information. This would help enable the person who is communicating and the person who is receiving to develop the same understanding of the information being shared. This would further help understand the non-verbal communication as well. Gautham *et al* states this fact as- "Communication is successful when it establishes total resonance and the fullest understanding amongst the person communicating with each other." (Gautham *et al*, 1995; pp. 54)

Coordination

Coordination within the organization is alignment of different processes and working of different units of the organization. Coordination is essential to achieve the targets of the organization.

Coordination is achieved through exercise of power or authority which makes it possible to link different activities in an order required to achieve the desired output (Gautham et al, 1995)

According to Gautham et al(1995), in addition to standard procedures, rules and policies, coordination is also based on some analytical models that provide basic rationale for coordination. In other words, part of the process of coordination is based on analytical skills of the individuals responsible for conducting the process.

This means that coordination is dependent upon individual capacity of understanding the situation which helps in alignment of activities and therefore, requires a great deal of information about the activities as well as the environment. The process requires frequent interaction with other staff to acquire information and thus develop design that minimizes resource waste and conflicts at different stages of implementation. In this process prior availability of the information is required before individuals' interaction which can be done through effective information dissemination.

According to the Director of Xerox a shared vision among the employees was important to create about the importance of Knowledge Management (Power, 1999), otherwise the use of Knowledge resource would become redundant for them or any other organization.

Control

It is a regulation mechanism of the organization. Control is usually understood as the ability of influencing the behavior of other members of the organization in accordance with the organizational need. Control requires to insure that the performance of the organizational staff is directed towards achieving the set targets. As the exercise of control requires continuous monitoring of performance and activities which means collecting information and feedback about all the constituents of the process. Without monitoring control would have little effect as a corrective technique. Gautham *et al* has signified this as—"Information is a key parameter for exercising control. A typical control situation involves a feedback loop where in the actual outcome of certain organizational actions is compared with the desired outcome and the resultant gap is used to trigger changes in the organizational actions"(Gautham *et al*, 1995).

In the same context while discussing the feed forward mode of control Gautham *et al* highlights that the part of the process involves changing organizational strategies to minimize the gap between the anticipated and planned results (Gautham *et al*, 1995). Further fortifying this concept, "Both these modes control require information on the results of typical organizational actions, in terms of actual or likely degree of goal achievement" (Gautham *et al*; 1995; pp.61).

The above comments reflect that during the different processes of the organization a vast variety of information is required at every stage for different activities. The processes also show that the flow of information is not only from top to bottom but also from bottom to top. In a Learning Organization the source of control lies mostly with individuals and a small part with the management. The individuals are expected to control their behaviors, tasks and output in coordination with the whole process of task flow. This could only be achieved when they are aware of the process, the role of other individuals and the final out of the process. Armstrong highlights the importance of people in the process of Knowledge Management as “it is among such communities that much of the organization’s tacit knowledge is created and shared”(Armstrong, 2006b, pp. 182).

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND LEARNING

Knowledge management is for the purpose to expedite the learning process among the individuals and at the same time they remain focused on the purpose of their learning. “Knowledge management is an emerging set of processes, organizational structure, applications and technology that aims to leverage the ability of capable, responsible, autonomous individuals to act quickly and effectively” (Rao and Jain, 2002, pp. 95).

Holbech (1999) identified the organizational need for knowledge management in the light of three main objectives for organization management. These are-

1. It is basis for organizational effectiveness.
2. The financial models used by the organizations for business purposes are unable to reflect upon the dynamics of knowledge.
3. IT alone cannot support in strategic management within the organization

In this respect further explaining the technological capital, human capital and structural capital Holbech establishes the link of all these to organizational requirement to effectively cope with the change process. Holbech establishes that-“Technological capital consists of techniques, copyrights, patents and other technological innovations developed over time. Human capital is the capabilities of the individuals required to provide solutions to customers.....Structural capital is the resources, infrastructure and capability of organization to meet market needs to pre-empt innovations and societal change processes”(Holbech,1999).

Explaining the importance of Knowledge Management System Holbech says-“Any organization operating in the current turbulent business environment would require robust intelligent systems. The internal systems are sometimes not enough. External intelligence systems which usually get overlooked could be an important source for capturing and synthesizing industry reports, business trends, market information, etc. All this could be highly

valuable to an organization. Internet, news-clipping services, clipping services for providing articles” (Holbech, 1999).

The different types of knowledge are embedded in different sources of the organization and require to be linked in a way that will support in development and implementation of the organizational strategies.

Types of Knowledge

There are two major categories of knowledge that need to be managed for effective utilization.

These types are-

1. Tacit Knowledge
2. Explicit Knowledge

Explicit knowledge is the one that exists in the form of recorded data/information. It could be accessed and understood easily. It provides hard facts for decision making or planning. The tacit knowledge is the undocumented/unrecorded information that exists in the minds of the individuals. It is based on individuals’ perceptions, beliefs, values and intuition in combination with their experiences of events (Holbech, 1999). Such type of knowledge, though cannot be apprehended easily by others, is the major driving force in decision making. The explicit knowledge provides the hard data where as the tacit knowledge helps to select the options for decision-making. Both these knowledge types contribute to the effectiveness of the process within the organization.

“I have Tacit Knowledge when I know how to do something, but would have trouble describing *how* to another person. I have Explicit Knowledge when I tell or write down the important how-to information. Clearly, viewing knowledge as the ability *to do*, then our organizations are rich in Tacit Knowledge. We would like them to be richer in Explicit Knowledge” (Karash, 1995).

Knowledge in the tacit form mostly exist among the individuals. To make use of such information the management must have the knowledge that a certain individual possesses a certain kind of knowledge so that at the time of assigning tasks contribution of such type of knowledge could be considered making it effective for the organization. Explicit knowledge could be easily recorded and disseminated within the organization.

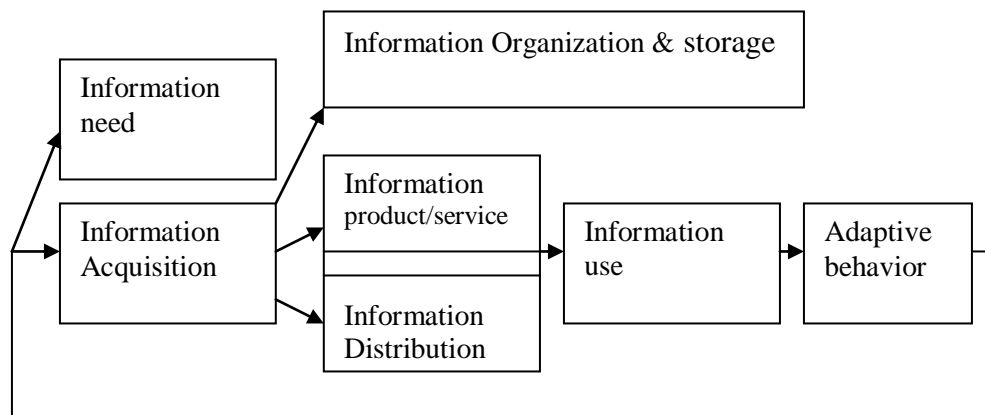
Tacit knowledge is not merely the assimilation of information and understanding it, but it also includes the practical use of that knowledge (Karash, 1995). Karash says that tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge is not totally separate from each other but, in fact both of the knowledge types combine and work together when an individual is involved in some sort of creative activities.

Nonaka and Takeuchi (in Karash, 1995) comment that the processes of knowledge creation and expansion is primarily based on social interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge. Further supporting this he pointed the conversation is tool that ensures such interaction between two individuals and becomes a source of expansion.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT CYCLE

Chun Wei Choo has developed a model presenting information management cycle within the organization. The model highlights the step by step systematic approach towards information management in the organization. Taking each step of the model we will discuss its role in the process of knowledge management within a Learning Organization. According to Power(1999) in Xerox Case study, effective Knowledge Management needed the support by the top management of the company.

Figure1: Model_Information Management Cycle



Source: Choo (1995)

As explained in figure: 1, the model begins with identification of information need leading to information acquisition and then to organizing and analyzing the information. Finally the model highlights the stage of utilization of the information products leading to adaptive behavior of the organization. The cycle is repeated over and over again and adaptation continues. Highlighting the importance of information management Chun Wei Choo says- "The intelligent organization is able to mobilize the different kinds of knowledge that exist in the organization in order to enhance performance. It pursues goals in a changing environment by adapting behavior according to knowledge about itself and the world it thrives in" (Choo, 1995).

Knowledge Management Steps

In the light of Choo's Information Management Cycle we will discuss the knowledge management process in learning organizations in the following steps-

Step-1:

In the Information Management Cycle the major thrust is upon the accurate identification of the information need for initiating a particular process. This stage is usually overlooked, assuming that the existing communication system (including paper and data flow within the organization) would provide sufficient details (Choo, 1995). Sometimes such type of need identification is considered as a specialist's job only and the manager overlooks the fact though he is from inside the organization. The specialist being an alien to certain process does not possess an in-depth knowledge of the felt need for information by the end user.

Ignoring the vitality of this step may result in developing an inappropriate information generation system rendering it of little use to the end user whose performance may be affected with such a loop hole in the system. Whereas the fact remains that the process of adaptation within the organization can only be accomplished when every individual of a learning organization contributes fully to the process. Choo has supported the fact as-"The intelligent organization is therefore a learning organization that is skilled at creating, acquiring, organizing, and sharing knowledge, and at applying this knowledge to design its behavior" (Choo, 1995).

Discovering the information need of the individuals working within the organization, require a great deal of efforts on the part of the information specialist. Factors like complexity of the need, fuzzy communication and difficulty of expression are all those factors that could easily lead to misunderstanding of the facts. According to the model identification of the information need is the stepping stone towards the accomplishment of the ultimate adaptation process. Therefore, any distortion at this stage would mean deviation from the plan that leads to the set targets.

Step-2:

Information acquisition is the second step of this model. It has highlighted that selection and use of the information sources at this stage has to be planned properly and then monitored and evaluated continuously during the process. Strengths and limitation of these sources should be well understood. In support of this step Choo says-"the range of sources used to monitor the environment should be sufficiently numerous and varied as to reflect the span and sweep of the organization's interests. While this suggests that the organization would activate the available human, textual, and online sources; in order to avoid information saturation, this information variety must be controlled and managed" (Choo, 1995).

Information acquisition is a tedious and time consuming task. At times even though the individual collecting information is focused, still the information providers may not be that accurate because of the human factors. Firstly, the information provider may be sharing information from his/her point of view, giving facts a slightly different shade of reality. Secondly, the information provider may not be giving complete information due to various reasons. Any misleading information may negatively affect the impact of such practices.

In the light of these facts the Knowledge Management system should develop processes that enables the system to verify and cross check the information collected thereof. The information collection process should be more transparent so that trust level of the information provider could be enhanced minimizing the affect of Human factor.

Step-3

According to the Choo's (1995) Model the third step of this process is Information organization and storage. At this stage the use of Information Technology and Information system for the purpose of organization of information is usually resorted to (Choo, 1995). At this stage it is crucial to highlight the problem of inability to find vital documents or loss of important information due to damages to the electronic system that may become a discrepancy to make effective use of the system.

In order to overcome such a discrepancy, the installation of a backup system that connects to the existing Information System may be created, where a duplicate of the information is stored automatically. The backup system will not only ensure the safety of the important documents against damage or loss but would also ensure uninterrupted information flow, in case any problem arises with the existing system.

Step-4:

The next stage is the information products/services and its distribution. At this stage the user need for that product or service should not be the only focus but also increase in usability of that product or service should also be attended to. As a learning organization is engaged in a higher level of intellectual adaptation, therefore, it needs a high quality and a broad spectrum of information services/ products so as to keep it well informed on the basis of a broader knowledge base.

Creativity and innovation is part of all practices and hence require the final information product is of multiple use which could also trigger the processes of creativity and innovation. User access to the information source should also be ensured through efficient IT and IS and eliminating restriction on access for all those who needs it. These systems should be such that

they reduce the difference and the distance between the information provider and Information User (Choo, 1995).

Step-5:

In the information management model the phase before initiating the adaptation process is highlighted as the use of information products. At this stage the use of information leads to either analysis of a situation or decision making. The assumptions and deliberation provided by different individuals of an organization are challenged and discussed through the support of the existing reservoir of knowledge available to the organization.

Definition of the problem statement is formulated and a solution is proposed based on the meaning fully organization sequence of information. Effectiveness of all depends on the extent to which the information need of the user has been satisfied. This has been argued by Choo as- "The guiding principle is that each information product must be of value to the end user. Information products or services should not rely only on information that happens to arrive in 'convenient' packages "(Choo, 1995).

New beliefs and ideas are developed in the light of the information unveiled. In certain stages molding of the old concepts occurs (mostly referred to unlearning) and development of new concepts takes place (learning).

During this whole process the development of the perception about the whole (complete integrated system of different processes and entities) and parts (a portion or a single process) takes place and then their interconnections are established. The need of the system thinking of the organization is addressed at this stage. Such kind of perception from individual point of view could be different from that of a collective or community point of view, therefore the experience is analyzed from both the aspects. In this case such an analysis is possible when the final product of information is able to provide a broad spectrum of the issues covering individual and collective aspect.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS TECHNIQUES

The above processes explain the vitality of the information management within the organization during different processes of management. Variety of techniques could be practiced in order to maximize the impact of knowledge management. Among these two important techniques highlighted by Holbech are the sharing of existing knowledge and encouraging innovation (1999). Holbech deliberates as -"The more information is used, the more it develops and grows. One of the ways of achieving this is by providing people with the conditions in which information can be shared, and letting them work out the benefits for themselves" (Holbech, 1999; pp.424).

Though these seem to be very simple processes but these are not easy to accomplish. Knowledge sharing needs an environment where the employees has a trust level and are confident that such type of sharing would not jeopardize their professional existence in that organization. According to Holbeche (1999) creating such conditions require to take up three main activities which include; motivation for sharing knowledge, establishment of a proper system for managing and storing information and encouraging people to use that knowledge. If the people see little use of information sharing or the processes is not formalized then the processes is less effective. In order to make the process of information sharing more systematic and more effective the information available is first converted into explicit knowledge for easy comprehension rendering it usable for others. If the individuals are able to understand the purpose of that knowledge then they can easily apply that at their work. “Knowledge tends to generate knowledge when ideas are shared and collaboration is in evidence. Flatter structures, with their emphasis on teamwork and smart ways of working should be ideally suited to the generation and sharing of knowledge” (Holbech, 1999, pp.426).

In most of the cases it happens when information sharing for development purpose is encouraged among the employees, it is ignored how this process should be taken up. As a result the employees are laden with unnecessary information and its use is not clear to them.

Innovation is another technique of making effective use of knowledge management. In whatever form innovation takes place, result is a quantum improvement as compared to the impact of other sources which is steady and slow. Encouraging innovation involves higher risk and cost because of which the management is hesitant but in the long run proves to be more profitable bringing competitive edge to the organization.

GAINING COMPETITIVE EDGE THROUGH KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The sustainability of a Learning Organization is linked with Knowledge Management as for continuous adaptation information about internal and external environment is must. Another aspect and a major attraction in Knowledge Management is to gain competitive edge in the market. According to Wilson(2005), competition is about doing things better, cheaper and faster. Adding to this he further states that doing things in a smarter way by creating, acquiring and applying knowledge. Buckman case study highlights that- “The Learning Center also re p resents a continued demonstration of our belief from our first days in 1945 that our competitive advantage resides in the collective knowledge and capabilities of our associates. And that in order to sustain that advantage” (Ellis *et al*, 2002).

As knowledge has a high tendency to leak and could serve the same purpose to other organizations or competitors, Barney (1991) quoted by Wilson(2005) proposed some distinct

features of knowledge that could effectively counter this issue. According to Barney(1991) these are Valuable knowledge, Rare Knowledge, Imperfectly imitable knowledge and no substitution of knowledge (Wilson, 2005).

According to Ellis et al (2002) their experience and expertise at Buckman is actually what can bring competitive advantage to their business by showing them opportunities that they would not have known otherwise. HP case study has repented for not organizing and not using their huge knowledge source in time (Davenport).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Keeping in view the four distinct features of knowledge the organizations should consider the following strategies can be recommended for gaining competitive edge-

1. Continuous up-gradation of knowledge for informed decision-making
2. Highly specialized and situation specific patterns of information organization and use
3. Information directed facilitating strategic forecasting by showing patterns of change

CONCLUSION

Knowledge Management may not be a very different process in a Learning organization but is a basic requirement of all the process going on in such organizations. As one of the main attribute of a learning organization, individual freedom is intensely promoted which require more self management on part of the individuals. To properly take charge of their work and manage it effectively, individuals need to be informed of the situation, and the role and contribution which their colleagues can make.

In a Learning Organization employees should have access to all the relevant information and hence, the Knowledge Management system should be able to generate simplified information which can be understood and utilized by the individuals whenever required. It should take into consideration that information mostly exists among the individual and the organization should make efforts to motivate them to utilize such information effectively.

Frequent adaptation- the distinct feature of a Learning Organization that enables it to survive and respond effectively to the changes occurring in the environment, makes it more dependent on Knowledge Management System. Adaptation to the environment is mostly dependent on the learning capabilities of the individuals and their ability to use the knowledge gained in the learning process. Organization can help in enhancing such capabilities to certain extent by adopting certain measure through Knowledge Management.

To develop an effective information base, while passing through different steps of Knowledge Management it should be ensured that all the details of relevant information should

be extracted carefully. The information extracted should be cross-checked so as to avert any possible wrong decision making for which that specific information may be used. The information should be disseminated in a simplified form so that all the users are able to comprehend its purpose and are able to make maximum use of it.

Finally information that could add value to the output could be used as a tool to gain competitive advantage in the market.

WAY FORWARD

As continuous adaptation is the key to survival in the current business trends, therefore, knowledge management becomes imperative for all kind of businesses. Learning organization is the philosophy strongly connected with the knowledge management process which warrants a future probe into the knowledge levels and its end users. This is because sometimes over flow of the knowledge could confuse the end user and may slow down or detract their decisions. Furthermore, the prospects of Intra-organizational knowledge sharing may also be an interesting area for future research.

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