
**OVERCOMING CULTURAL BARRIERS TO INNOVATION AND KNOWLEDGE
SHARING: AN ORGANIZATION PERSPECTIVE**

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ABSTRACT

Organizational culture is described as the norms and value systems that are shared among the employees of an organization. Also is a collective programming of mind that distinguishes one group from another. Culture is seen as mental programming patterns of thinking and feeling, and potential acting. As culture is often seen as the key inhibitor of effective knowledge sharing the changes organization experience results to transformation, absorption and adaptation of new ways of doing things which ranges from technologies and structure. Knowledge sharing is basically the act of making knowledge available to others within the organization. Knowledge sharing between individuals is the process by which knowledge held by an individual is converted into a form that can be understood, absorbed, and used by other individuals. This study intend to achieve the following objectives, to identify the best understanding and internalizing approach of the practice and concept of knowledge sharing, to determine the barriers of knowledge sharing in organization (both visible and invisible dimension) and to ascertain the best practices of overcoming the cultural barriers of knowledge sharing and innovation in organization. Then the study reiterates that the process of sharing may result in knowledge acquisition by other individuals within the organization. Knowledge sharing between individuals thus results in individual learning, which in turn may contribute to organizational learning. And to share knowledge is to solve practical business problems and employees has to be assured that even if they share their very specific or tacit knowledge with others, their position in the not endangered. Organization can share knowledge through making it directly part of the business strategy, piggyback, and routinely as the way they work. And the discovered barriers include cultural wall, lack of trust, lack of absorption capacities in recipients, individual and social barriers. Other barriers are technological, and failure to develop a transactive memory system. However, overcoming the barriers demands the organization building trusting relationships, link and transfer of

knowledge in a centralized repository and its accessibility. The study recommends that organization should endeavour to link sharing knowledge to widely held core values. By linking with core values of the organization values, they will make sharing knowledge consistent with peers' expectations and managers' considerations.

Key Words: Cultural Barriers, Innovation, Knowledge, knowledge sharing, Knowledge management, Organizational culture,

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge management involves the canopy of procedures and techniques used to get the most or best from an organization's tacit and codified know-how (Teece, 2000). A key challenge emerging for such organizations is how to encourage knowledge sharing because, knowledge is the organization's intellectual capital of increasing importance in promoting competitive advantage. For such capital to exist; individual members of the organization must make this knowledge available; share their knowledge with co-workers. One of the challenges of knowledge management is that of getting people to share their knowledge. Why should people give up their hard-own knowledge, when it is one of their key sources of personal advantage? In some organizations, sharing is natural. Though the old dictum "knowledge is power" reigns or stands. Knowledge sharing is the most important critical success factor to all knowledge management strategies. Therefore, innovation in another vein entails changing procedure, creativity, recreation and improvement from an existing origin. In the sense, effective knowledge sharing practices allow individual to reuse, advance and or regeneration of knowledge at individual and organizational level (Chaudhry, 2005). However, at the heart of knowledge sharing, two types of bottleneck exist: individual and organizational barriers. Individual barriers include internal resistance, trust, motivation and a gap in awareness and knowledge. While organizational barriers consist of language, conflict avoidance, and distance bureaucracy (Disterer, 2001). Effective knowledge sharing occurs when appropriate solutions are built in an organization.

Despite the wide agreement that knowledge sharing occurs within a social context, current efforts of knowledge sharing continue to put a heavy emphasis on knowledge delivery and technology. However, knowledge sharing is basically about people's interaction and its byproduct. This requires a change in focus from technology-driven to people-driven approach of knowledge management (Chatti, Klamma, Jarke, and Naeve, 2007). That is to say, with technology evolving, the paradigm of knowledge management is shifting from a conventional

approach to a communicational approach. With technology acting as an enabler of innovation, new conversational knowledge management is characterized by the combination of formal and informal knowledge sharing within a social context. The communicational approach to knowledge sharing can be implemented within organization practice.

The inclusion of knowledge management as an organization's best practice is meant to ensure that collaboration is institutionalized and that knowledge sharing occurs. Organizational culture refers to the norms and value systems that are shared among the employees of an organization. Culture is defined as a collective programming of mind which distinguishes one group from another. Also culture is seen as mental programming patterns of thinking and feeling, and potential acting. Culture is the integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes thought, speech, action, and artifacts and depends on man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary). Culture is often seen as the key inhibitor of effective knowledge sharing. In this vein, linking knowledge sharing to solving practical business problems or trying sharing knowledge to a preexisting core value; introducing knowledge management in a way that matches the organization's style; building on existing networks people use in their daily work; and encouraging peers and supervisors exert pressure to share.

Culture does play an important role in the success of a knowledge management effort. Many examples where well designed knowledge management tools and processes failed is because people believed they were already sharing well enough. According to Stanford (2006), cultural change then relies on leaders' communication techniques that cross sub-cultural boundaries and carry messages about ideologies, values and norms that can be internalized by all employees. Memos and vision statements cannot achieve all of these objectives. Leaders, however, have a variety of sophisticated cultural communication techniques at their disposal to link subcultures to overarching cultural objectives of their organizations. Cultural differences still play a very important role in achieving success in a business relationship. They may impact positively by facilitating communication between employees and business partners. However, these differences may also inhibit knowledge transfer and as a result deter the competitive position of an enterprise. Thus, it is important to recognize that culture influences meaningfully the will to share knowledge within organizations.

In today's organization, the knowledge sharing practice have witnessed a tremendous barriers that affects the transferability and internalization of the knowledge from one person to

another. Because of the impending constraints, every organization makes a frantic effort to unleash the barriers to maintain optimal and competitive advantage. The overcoming ability of the organization to its culture and contextual barriers appears on how the organization manipulates and creates an enabling environment of harmony or transferability within their setting.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The most challenging problem organization faced is not having the requisite knowledge to share but the expertise's who possessed and have the will power to transfer the knowledge. The cultural walls or problems that affect the innovation and knowledge sharing are atimes categorized to individual and social barriers. The individual barriers include, loss of power, fear from revelation, uncertainty, illusion of reward deprivation, single culture elements, difference between awareness and knowledge and conflict of motives. The social barriers include language, conflict avoidance, bureaucracy and hierarchy, incoherent paradigms, underestimating of lower levels, bad appraisal of the co-worker knowledge base, emotions and pseudo innovators. However, the organizational barriers to innovation include undefined goals and objectives, financial and environmental, lack of resources and bad resources allocation, structural, insufficient communication, lack of or bad leadership, lack of preparation for new roles, and cultural issues. The individuals barrier to innovation include fear, and lack of input into the change.

The will power concerns the willingness and the expected ability or medium to share it. The effective knowledge sharing is benefit to the individuals and organization. But the ineffective knowledge sharing is a defect and loss to the entire organization. Thus, the defective knowledge sharing occurred as a result of the militating barriers that mastermind the organization not achieving the required outcome or goal. There are visible and invisible dimension to knowledge sharing that conform to its usability and transfer in any given environment. How can we overcome such barriers? Certainly this can be done by address the issues of organizational structure and inadequate technology. And the uniqueness of an organization to outperform among its competitors is to turn their threats into strength and opportunity. This can be attained using the best motivating practices and formalization to overcome the barriers of culture and innovation in knowledge sharing to boost organization performance.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the guiding objectives for this study

1. To identify how the organization perceive innovation and knowledge sharing in their activities.
2. To determine the cultural barriers to innovation and knowledge sharing in organizations.
3. To ascertain how to overcoming the cultural barriers to knowledge sharing and innovation in organizations.

LITERATURE

Knowledge Sharing Practice in Organizations

Bradley (1991) defines knowledge as the mixture of experience, values, expert and contextual information that help the people or organization in the evolution and absorption of new experience. Knowledge can be characterized as the ability of the enterprise or agency to raise productivity and develop new products and market for easy competition against other organizations. It can be represented as intellectual capital. It could be argued that good knowledge transfer and a culture promoting knowledge sharing among employees and co-operators are crucial in reaching competitive advantage by an enterprise.

Nonaka and Takeouchi (1995) stated that knowledge creation should be viewed as a process whereby knowledge held by individuals is amplified and internalized as part of an organization's knowledge base. In this view, much of organizational knowledge is accumulated and managed at the individual level (Staples and Jarvenpaa, 2001). Members in the organization capture, store, use, and modify the knowledge that they have in their daily activities at work (Lam, 2000). Thus, knowledge is created and shared through the interaction between individuals at various levels in the organization. In other words, organizations cannot create knowledge without individuals and group, and, the knowledge is likely to have limited impact on organizational effectiveness unless individual knowledge is shared with other individuals and group.

Ackerman, Pipek and Wulf (2003) study considered the following three types of knowledge sharing within organizations: knowledge retrieval, knowledge exchange, and knowledge creation. First, knowledge retrieval means that the main purpose of knowledge sharing from the organization to the individual is retrieving existing organizational knowledge. Second, knowledge exchange describes that the purpose of knowledge sharing from an individual to

other individuals is exchanging existing individual knowledge. Finally, knowledge creation explains that the main goal of knowledge sharing among individuals is generating new knowledge, resulting from new combinations of existing individual, shared, or organizational knowledge.

Knowledge sharing is basically the act of making knowledge available to others within the organization. Knowledge sharing between individuals is the process by which knowledge held by an individual is converted into a form that can be understood, absorbed, and used by other individuals. Knowledge flow is concerned with developing channels or networks between knowledge provider and seeker (Shin, Holden, and Schmidt: 2001). Knowledge flow in organization is fundamentally driven by communication processes and information flows.

Knowledge sharing between individuals in its ideality is a process that contributes to both individual and organizational learning (Nidumolu, Subramani and Aldirch, 2001). Huber (1991) further identified four knowledge concepts that contribute to organizational learning: knowledge acquisition, information distribution, information interpretation, and organizational memory. The concept knowledge sharing presented in this article is linked to both knowledge distribution and knowledge acquisition. The voluntary act of sharing knowledge by an individual contributes to knowledge distribution. The process of sharing may result in knowledge acquisition by other individuals within the organization. Knowledge sharing between individuals thus results in individual learning, which in turn may contribute to organizational learning.

Share knowledge to solve practical business problems and employees has to be assured that even if they share their very specific or tacit knowledge with others, their position is not endangered. At the best-practice companies McDermott and O'Dell (2001) studied saw that sharing knowledge as a practical way to solve business problems. They repeatedly emphasize that databases, knowledge systems, and knowledge initiatives need to have a clear business purpose. Best-practice organizations could easily describe how sharing knowledge contributes to business goals. In fact, they overwhelmingly said that, in their survey is that the main reason knowledge management programs fail is as a result of lack of a clear connection with a business goal. There are three different ways they tie sharing knowledge to the business:

(1) Make sharing knowledge directly part of the business strategy. Several companies integrated sharing knowledge into their business strategy and brand identity. American

Management Systems (AMS) also makes sharing knowledge an explicit part of its business strategy. Sharing knowledge is the way AMS plans to meet one of its overall business goals: to operate as one firm.

(2) Piggyback sharing knowledge is another key business initiative. Some companies approach sharing knowledge implicitly. E.g Ford's product development group, it organized the company into three product centers: Small cars; large cars; and trucks.

(3) Share knowledge routinely as the "way we work". Some companies approach sharing knowledge in an even lower key manner. In this approach sharing knowledge is simply part of how the company solves specific business problems, such as reducing time to market or developing innovative software solutions. Several of the organizations that took this approach do not even speak internally of sharing or managing knowledge. They simply build sharing knowledge into the overall business solution, E.g Lotus Development.

Rather than prescribing whether knowledge management efforts should be led from the top, measured, or built into rewards, our findings suggest that it is most important for the style of organization effort to match how things get done in their organization. In aligning reward and recognition to support sharing knowledge of the best practice companies thought reward and recognition systems could effectively motivate people to share knowledge. But reward and recognition is another way to make the importance of sharing knowledge visible. It is worthy to highlights the things the organization feels are important and demonstrates that the time and energy people spend sharing knowledge "counts" in their performance and career. While all the best practice companies felt that aligning reward and recognition is important, only those that integrated sharing knowledge into their business strategy and held knowledge sharing "events" actually did build specific line items on sharing knowledge into reward and recognition.

Cultural Barriers to Knowledge Sharing and Innovation

Knowledge management has become much easier to use attaining higher productivity and effectiveness with technology support. But technology has confronted with the problem sometimes called the "cultural wall" (McDermott and O'Dell, 2001) in organization. Cultural factors are considered to intrinsically inhibit knowledge transfers. They include a lack of trust, different cultures and vocabularies, a lack of time and meeting places, a lack of absorptive capacities in recipients, belief that knowledge is prerogative of particular groups,

etc (Davenport and Prusak, 1998). The main problems are made of cultural restrictions that can divide into individual and social barriers (Bures, 2003).

We can regard an internal resistance, trust, motivation and a gap in awareness and knowledge as the main individual barriers. And passing on knowledge to colleagues or putting working results into a knowledge database may be felt to be and considered as a revelation, because it announces that this knowledge has a certain value and uncommon. Also trust influence on both the receipt and the propagation of knowledge. If an individual does not trust the information or knowledge they will receive they are clearly improbable to make full use of it (Barson, 2000). At the same time, some employees do not anticipate reciprocal benefits from transferring their knowledge since they do not accept these benefits or they do not experience it (Disterer, 2001). Also some workers are large only awareness of the trouble, but they do not know anything more. It influence that they do not want to listen again on things they already know (Bures, 2003).

While the main social barriers identified are language, conflict avoidance, bureaucracy (Disterer, 2001) and distance. Sometime certain language used in one section, department or division is unintelligible for others (Bures, 2003). The result, in some companies at a certain lack of an authentic language is perceptible. Sometimes we can acknowledge effort to avoid changes and do not risk too much. That influence new knowledge and approaches containing new ideas or innovative points of view can be lost (Bures, 2003). Also, high level of bureaucracy and organizational institution type often use procedures and approaches get worse knowledge sharing. As well geographical separation may also result in the companies working in different cultural, legislative or linguistic environments. Face-to-face communication as the most efficient methods, but the geographical location of the organizations may mean that this is not possible (Nonaka, 1991).

Skyrme (2002) identifies the following as barriers of knowledge sharing:

- "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. Additionally, knowledge derived for one need may be helpful in totally different contexts; or it may be a trigger for innovation - many innovative developments come from making knowledge connections across different disciplines and organizational boundaries.

- 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, I suspect, 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.

Other barriers discovered on the course of this study include functional silos, individualism, poor means of knowledge capture, inadequate technology, internal competition and top-down decision making. Generally, a mix of structural and infrastructure barriers is exacerbated by the predominance of human ones - social, behavioural and psychological. The main problems are made of cultural constraints that can be divided into individual and social barriers. As the main individual barriers we can identify:

- 1) Loss of power – by providing knowledge (about customers, competitors, suppliers, procedures, methods, processes, etc.) to the colleague the exclusivity of influence is reduced, which can ensure some certainty of work or respect.
- 2) Fear from revelation – by providing knowledge we show, that this knowledge has a value. If this assessment is not shared by other repository users, embarrassment may happen.
- 3) Uncertainty – especially younger and less experienced employees can feel uncertainty, because they cannot judge if their working results represent valuable knowledge for others. It may be difficult for junior staff to estimate the worth of their knowledge for other members of staff or the company as a whole.
- 4) Illusion of reward deprivation – some employees see in knowledge sharing the way how they can lose their work rewards, because they give their knowledge and experience to someone else who may be rewarded by salary increases. Alongside knowledge sharing is understood as additional work. Therefore some employees expect “something more”.
- 5) Single culture elements – employees are not able to concretely name basic corporate values, needs and goals although they know a lot about the company.

6) Difference between awareness and knowledge – some employees have mostly only awareness of the problem, but they do not know anything more. It affects that they do not want to “hear again things they already know.

7) Conflict of motives – separate part of the article is dedicated to this barrier.

To the social barriers are:

1) Language – in some companies the language used in one section, department or division is unintelligible for others. Therefore the main rules of one language should be respected. In frame of individuals there can be better understandable tacit knowledge, mental models, opinions, beliefs, etc.

2) Conflict avoidance – sometimes we can recognize effort to avoid changes and do not risk too much. This affect new knowledge and approaches containing new ideas or innovative points of view can be lost, (“do not rock the boat” attitude).

3) Bureaucracy and hierarchy – high level of bureaucracy and administrative institution type often use procedures and approaches worsening knowledge sharing.

4) Incoherent paradigms - the difference between personal intents and paradigms of company (values, strategy, mission, vision, etc.) makes difficulty in expressing and justifying opinions, which do not fit with the ruling paradigms of company.

5) Underestimating of lower levels – in most cases top management pursue “traditional” KM based on storing of information from past with the assumption, that the future information will need to be the same. This attitude takes knowledge workers as passive information receivers only.

6) Bad appraisal of the co-worker knowledge base – communication plays an important role in knowledge sharing. This means idea transmission to the language understandable by the receiver. If the sender is not able to estimate the state and size of receiver’s knowledge base, knowledge sharing does not have to be fecund even when the communication process happened;

7) Emotions – emotions affect upon the willingness of employees to share knowledge with anybody. It is not easy to compel two employees to share knowledge with unfriendly and spiteful relationship;

8) Pseudo innovators – pseudo innovators are people who play up their opinions as “necessary” improvements of others ideas, pieces of knowledge or proposals, to stress their importance and dispensability.

Approaches to Overcoming Barriers of Innovation and Knowledge Sharing

Disterer (2001) describes various individual and social barriers that hinder people to share and transfer their knowledge. From analysis he draw some suggestions how to overcome these impediments. In detail, organization needs to strive for a culture of accepting mistakes and not to penalize errors and develop a common set of pattern and values for an organization to solve trust problem; informal and face-to-face communication reduce the distance between workers and executives. But it is just conceptual approach and is not easy to find real case how to share and practice the knowledge among organization members.

McDermott and O'Dell (2001) identified that culture is often seen as the key inhibitor of effective knowledge sharing. So they proposes that linking knowledge sharing to solving business problems; introducing knowledge management in a way that alliances the organization's way; building on existing networks people use in their daily work. But it just focuses on link and collection of knowledge in a centralized repository and its accessibility.

As the barriers to knowledge, Rosen, Frust, and Blackburn (2007) assigned constraints on building trusting relationships; time constraints and deadline pressures; technology constraints on knowledge sharing; failure to develop a transactive memory system; cultural constraints on knowledge sharing. And as a best practice solution for overcome barriers, he mentions that overcoming time constraints and deadline pressures; adapt technology to virtual team needs; building a transactive memory system; educate team member. Yet it is notional approach and is difficult to find real case.

Cantoni, Bello, and Frigerio (2001) focused on culture and localization. So they argue that training, web technologies and variety of organizational structures can lower the barriers to knowledge transfer. But it just focuses communication technology and it is not explain how make social network in the concrete. The barriers of knowledge sharing can certainly occur on the issues of organizational structure and inadequate technology. But giving a focus to the three Cs of Culture, Co-opetition (a blend of co-operation and competition), and Commitment. The concern of 3C's in knowledge sharing is to enable the organization handle their activities to help them achieving better result. They are:

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. Here are some activities that might be used to plan and induce change:

- A culture audit - conducting questionnaires, interviews and team sessions with a cross-section of the organization.
- Challenge 'improper' behaviour - if you identify people hoarding knowledge unnecessarily: challenge them; though avoid knowledge rage.
- Involvement - some of the best knowledge sharing cultures are where everybody (even novices and newcomers) believes that their knowledge is respected, valued and used to inform decisions.
- Use of role models - identify those people whose behaviours 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; too many meetings are task and output focused, but fail to address the means of achieving successful outcomes.
- Align rewards and recognition to support appropriate behaviours - too many schemes are based on seniority or individual expertise, rather than team effectiveness.
- Change people - move the knowledge sharers around; get industrial psychologists and behavioural experts on board; perhaps fire some bosses (seriously!) - after all, it is quality of leadership that will enable all the other culture change techniques to achieve their aims.

Challenging Through Co-opetition: Human beings are at the same time social cooperative beings and have a competitive streak. We all like to do better than our peers and excel in something. In an organization, lack of competition - both for individuals and teams leads to complacency. But competition must be done in a healthy manner. However, the apparent losers of such competitions share in success, celebrate what they have achieved, and make them feel part of the winning team (the wider organization). In one organization whenever a competing development project was wound up, the best people were almost universally attracted to the winning teams.

Commitment: This builds on the other two Cs. Organizations need to create a commitment to culture, to change, to challenge, to compete and cooperate. If, as is often the case, time pressure leads to poor knowledge sharing, then there must be a commitment to allow time for it to happen. Include time to contribute to knowledge development and sharing in people's job

goals (and in the accompanying reward system). Build commitment into team processes. Commitment to knowledge sharing must be demonstrated throughout the organization. It is apparent through what the leaders of the organization say and do. It is shown by commitment in the organizations' processes, reward systems, development programmes etc. Skyrme (2002) equally prescribe the seven incentives for sharing viz: hire people who will share, develop trust; vary motivations; show public recognition; reorganize for sharing; create communities; develop leaders.

CONCLUSION

In organizations, there are several barriers that affect their capability in carrying out the daily activities. Specifically, this study targets cultural barriers that hamper innovation and knowledge sharing in it applies to organization processes. These inabilities are prominent because the era of transformation and globalization demand more acceptability than rejection. But due to the cultural differences that are inherent in various organization i.e. value, rules, and way of life (perception, behaviour and attitude) result to resistance in the rate of adhering to innovation and knowledge sharing. Because sharing knowledge is tied to a core value, an unwillingness to share is seen as more than just resistance to a new approach. The influx of changes (innovations) and knowledge sharing often receive hard crack before employees should get acquainted to it. Knowledge sharing in organization is constrained by knowledge power, do-it- yourself/trial and error syndrome, and lack of trust. While innovation affected by both individual and social barriers in the organization level. The individual barriers include loss of power, fear from censor, uncertainty, and the social are language, bureaucracy and hierarchy, incoherent paradigms, etc. all these barriers undermines the expectation of the process and practice. But they can be overcome through the organization action of linking it to a lay down rule and in solving problems as the organization internalize them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The suggestions to revamp these barriers of knowledge sharing include.

1. Organizations should endeavour to link knowledge sharing to widely held core values.
By linking with core values of the organization values, they will make sharing knowledge consistent with peers' expectations and managers' considerations.
2. Organizations should use reward and recognition to motivate employee to share their knowledge to one another.
3. The organizations knowing fully well that human networks are one of the key vehicles for sharing knowledge and effecting change should build a sharing culture; enhance the networks (structure) to enable them with tools, resources and legitimization of the process.

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