Getting the Message across with Communicative Knowledge Management

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Knowledge Management: Movement or Fad?
- Is KM a consulting fad?  
- Many ‘KM’ technologies are just old applications re-badged.  
- To offer new benefits to organisations, KM must be different from previous movements such as TQM, BPR, DM and IM.

The Two Schools of KM
- Much confusion over what is meant by KM  
- Defining knowledge is an important step in understanding the nature of KM and how it can benefit organisations  
- There appear to be two schools of thought on the nature of knowledge management derived from two different views of knowledge

The ‘Externalisable’ View
- Knowledge can be reified in artifacts.  
- Little difference between knowledge and information - it’s just more refined and ordered.  
- Knowledge can reside in knowledge bases, documents, expert systems, etc.  
- Leads to a technocentric view of KM.

The Anthropocentric View
- “To conceive of knowledge as a collection of information seems to rob the concept of all of its life... Knowledge resides in the user and not in the collection”
  
The Anthropocentric View

- Knowledge requires a conscious 'knower' - understanding
- Knowledge does not reside in artifacts like books, libraries etc.
- Artifacts do not ‘understand’ their contents
- Externalised ‘knowledge’ is information: a stimulus to knowledge
- Knowledge is unique to the individual, personal and subjective.

Which view is right?

- From a purely pragmatic standpoint - the anthropocentric view.
- Technocentric view is not substantively different to information or data management.
- The anthropocentric view of knowledge leads to a view of KM which can provide new benefits to organisations.

Communicative Knowledge Management

- A consequence of adopting the anthropocentric view is that we are faced with the challenge of managing something intangible. (How can you manage something you can’t measure?)
- We are left with being able to manage the knowledge processes, rather than knowledge per se.
- At its core, this view of KM is about managing the communication process.

Models of Communication

- The original process model:

A Model of Communicative Knowledge Management

- A semiotic model:

Jakobson's Constitutive Factors of Communication.
Adapted from Fiske(1990). p.35
People and Communities

- Need to try to anticipate who is going to communicate to whom.
- Individuals communicate with individuals and groups, and vice versa, as well as groups to groups.
- Should not restrict people, though, from communicating if they want to.
- **Flexibility**

Media and Codes

- Need to anticipate types of media, without restricting people from communicating in any (creative) manner they desire.
- Different media communicate different messages better.
- Need to make sure people are talking the same 'language'.
- Technology has a role to play here, but not necessarily the 'latest thing'. Low-tech solutions can sometimes be the best.

Messages and Contexts

- Message storage and delivery should largely be the concern of IM.
- KM needs to be concerned with the kind of message - leads to different media.
- Need to anticipate frequent contexts (topics), but not restrict people from discussing any topic they want.
- What about 'slackers'?

Socio-Cultural Environment

- The most important aspect!
- People will not share knowledge unless a sharing culture pervades the organisation.
- Culture should encourage small, frequent and informal sharing events as well as large formal ones.

Socio-Cultural Environment

- The culture also needs to encourage creative knowledge creation (innovation), as well as encouraging individuals to experiment, apply knowledge, and learn from the experience.

To Sum Up

- KM needs to provide flexible support to known individuals and groups as well as unanticipated communicators.
- KM needs to provide a variety of media without restricting the creative use of other media - again flexibility is key.
- KM needs to anticipate possible topics without restricting sharing to just those topics - flexibility again.
- Hardest of all, implementing KM is largely about changing an organisation’s culture.