

Knowledge Management System

What, Why & How?

A volley of information is being handled by the employees of the organization in running a business or rendering a service. Larger the organization and more the number of business processes, complexity in managing the information and knowledge increases. It becomes essential to implement a system for employees in my organization to capture, store and disseminate information.

Useful information usually resides in various documents, email messages, chat transcripts, projects, processes, and most of the time in people's heads. Most of the time this knowledge isn't stored and therefore difficult to retrieve when necessary. Information about processes and practices are usually resident in a particular individual's head and they are even more difficult to capture and use.

People tend to work within silos of information that don't get shared across an organization easily. People are forced to indulge in repetitive work when they could actually tap into a knowledge system and work in a more innovative manner. A knowledge management system should afford an easy-to-use interface and allow access to information based on the role the user plays. This system would connect to all kinds of documents like web pages, text documents, spreadsheets, emails, PDF docs, images and more. Information also exists in people's heads and this system should provide an impetus for people to document or share knowledge that is resident in their heads.

The Knowledge Management System ought to capture all the different kinds of information existing in your organization and also make it easy for all your employees to capture, store and disseminate information. The knowledge stored in this system must be accessible to search parameters and operate in the same manner that the human brain does. It should collate, organize, store and retrieve information in an effective manner.

Once created the system will manage itself. From an easy-to-use interface it should help collaborate workflows and harvest employee knowledge, both of the tacit and explicit kind. A workflow process library, a document management system and an event management system are some of the essential parts of a knowledge management system

Benefits.

When employees possess the requisite knowledge or information and are able to use it at the right moment, relationships with customers, dealers, suppliers and distributors generally improve. Such knowledge workers can make better decisions by increasing the amount of relevant information that they have access to. A knowledge management system introduces the elements of expertise and experience through collaboration capabilities and shortens the time it takes to make better decisions.

Free flow of ideas encourages innovation and improves efficiency. Sales-effectiveness

and customer service can be improved by streamlining response times. And within the organization, employee retention rates get better. In general, benefits gained include streamlined operations and overall cost reduction.

Companies today have to learn faster than anyone else, share the results across the enterprise and constantly foster the development and sharing of new knowledge. This should begin at the managerial level. Company leaders need to take a serious look at how knowledge flows within the organization, how it meets other knowledge and how it combines with other flows and so on. Is this a case of pure sharing of information? Today's IT infrastructure allows us to share information readily, but are we talking of the surface knowledge or something more? Isn't there a deeper structure to knowledge that requires an adequate portrayal here? We are talking about the difference between superficial information and deeper knowledge. Explicit knowledge that lies in our heads and documents is the one kind while the other is tacit knowledge, the plain know-how that resides in processes and practices that people follow. A knowledge management system that is able to capture both kinds of knowledge to the best capacity is what will eventually help an organization.

An efficient knowledge management system will function just like the human brain does. Map information. What can it do for an organization?

Beneficial Features

Knowledge capture and creation – bringing a structure to unstructured information.

Capture tacit knowledge from an individual or group.

Create a rich view of information captured.

Build and innovate from this knowledge – brainstorm, apply tacit knowledge to existing problems, develop new techniques, processes and products.

Help individuals and team members work intuitively – by capturing a great deal of information at one time, see what individual members are thinking, link and associate packets of information, create reusable views of information.

Present all ideas and information through a common interface.

Knowledge repositories, e-learning applications, discussion and chat technologies, search and data mining tools, synchronous interaction tools are all part of a knowledge management system.

A successful knowledge management strategy happens only when a culture of knowledge sharing is inculcated in the organization. No system or technology, however efficient will help unless every prospective knowledge owner understands this fact.