

Chapter 1

Knowledge Sharing From Employee's Perspective: Social Relationship, Contextual Performance, and IT Competence

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ABSTRACT

This chapter combines three less-studied factors on employee knowledge sharing, namely, social relationship, contextual performance, and IT competence. Using a survey study that was targeted to professional employees in a R&D department, we reveal that both social relationship—which incorporates degree of centrality of employee's social network and frequency of interpersonal interaction—and employee's contextual performance have significant positive impacts on knowledge sharing. This association, however, is found to be further positively moderated by employee's IT competence. Our work extends the literature pertaining to knowledge sharing by, not only providing an enhanced approach to measure social relationship, but also emphasizing that social relationship or contextual performance can magnify the impact on knowledge sharing through a high level of IT competence. The findings provide managerial and future research insights pertaining to promoting knowledge sharing by enhancing social relationship, rewarding contextual performance, and improving IT competence of employees.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7214-5.ch001

INTRODUCTION

An organization's core competitiveness often results from its ability to innovate (Higgins, 1995; Kandampully, 2002). Employee knowledge sharing plays an essential role in promoting sustained innovation (Spencer, 2003; Lin, 2007). It has been well documented in literature that knowledge sharing is critical to improve organizational problem-solving ability as well as generating creative responses (Carmeli et al., 2013). More recently, Dong et al. (2016) use a multi-level model to validate a positive effect from knowledge sharing to organizational creativity. Hence, it is important to encourage and foster knowledge sharing for organizations.

There are abundant research examining various enablers of and barriers to knowledge sharing in organizations, including organizational structure, technology adoption, culture, management style, synergy, employee's closeness to colleagues, business strategy, among others (e.g., Lilleore & Hansen, 2011; Phang & Foong, 2006). On an operational level, several research projects study the technology platform hosting knowledge sharing activities. Majchrzak et al. (2000) investigate the effectiveness of how to share knowledge among different organizations using a virtual collaborative system.

Indeed, knowledge sharing is often regarded as a key aspect of human relationships (Chang & Liou, 2002) and a selective interpersonal process (Coming, 2004). Knowledge givers not only choose with whom to share their knowledge, but they decide what knowledge to share based on who the recipients are. Individual characteristics, such as five-factor model of personality, have great influence on knowledge sharing (Wang et al., 2011). Furthermore, interpersonal interactions are a necessary condition for knowledge sharing. Such interactions are based on a certain degree of interpersonal closeness (Connelly & Kelloway, 2004; Makela et al., 2007). In fact, Lilleore et al. (2011) show that personal closeness to colleagues is a key enabler for knowledge sharing in organizations. Hau et al. (2013) also investigate the effects of personal motivation and social relationship on knowledge sharing. They use social ties, social trust, and social goals to model social capital construct, and find positive impact on knowledge sharing. Hence, personal relationships have a profound connection to knowledge sharing. In this study, we specifically capture the personal social relationship among employees using social network analysis (Wasko & Faraj, 2005).

Individuals tend to hoard knowledge (Bock & Kim, 2002; Bock et al., 2005). Accordingly, knowledge sharing is principally a voluntary act; virtually no one can make a person share knowledge. Knowledge sharing can be perceived as voluntary actions of individuals who are motivated by the returns—such as exchanges of favors, concessions, assistance, and courtesies—that they are expected to bring (Lee, 2001). Furthermore, knowledge transfer can demonstrate employees' image of competence and identity (Konstantinou & Fincham, 2010). Tagliaventi and Mattarelli (2006) view employee knowledge sharing as part of organizational citizenship. Hence, knowledge sharing can be considered a behavior that is *beyond* an employee's normal job requirements. Those individuals with high levels of job dedication and organizational commitment are those who are more likely to share their knowledge in order to help others. Such individuals are said to display elevated *contextual* performance. According to Borman and Motowidlo (1997), contextual performance can often be evaluated by "traits of persisting with enthusiasm, volunteering to help others, willingness to take additional duties," among others. Bozionelos and Singh (2017) even validate the nonlinear relationship of emotional intelligence with contextual performance. With all of these literature study, we believe it is important to include contextual performance as a study object in our research toward its impact on knowledge sharing.

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