Chapter 10
Knowledge Worker Profile:
A Framework to Clarify Expectations

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ABSTRACT

One of the major reasons for economic crisis of 2008-2009 is determined as value delivery. Major resource of value creation is the knowledge worker who works at different levels of an organisation. This study analyses knowledge worker studies in diverse disciplines, in order to determine the requests. The goal of the study is to propose a framework to clarify the skill requirements by integrating the requests at operational, team, organisational and inter-organisational levels with drivers provided by educating, attracting, motivating and retaining strategies. The framework facilitates employing the right employee for the right post while balancing the requests and the performance measures. This new vision will be beneficial for managers, human resource experts, and educators.

INTRODUCTION

Global economic crisis in 2008-2009 hit the service companies as well as the manufacturing enterprises. One of the major reasons of failure is seen as the lack of full-value delivery from the existing resources expressed in finance and intellectual capital (Hsiao & Lee, 2008). Politicians, CEOs and Managers are warned to have new mechanisms to institutionalise organisational systems and are invited to be rational on the critical resources rather than following the footprints of brand owners (Arvidsson, 2009). Economists suggest solutions by focusing on system innovations instead of technology and product innovations (Mavrotas et al., 2007). The attention is drawn to knowledge workers who are accepted as the major resource of innovation and competitiveness (Chen, 2008). Contrary to cost-focused approach to employ less skilled but increasingly global and virtual knowledge workers (Tucker et al., 2005), the skill revolution is observed while moving into a more demanding cognitive age (Brooks, 2008). New economic models are in process for proposing sustainable frameworks, guardianship of intellec-

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tual property, impact of intellectual quality, more knowledge production based on more reliable performance of knowledge workers.

Wider range of skills is to be recognised and supported for knowledge workers in new business models. The challenge of developing sustainable models in value chains request more than just higher education and more company-based training. The impact of intellectual quality is to be enhanced (Cope & Kazantsis, 2009); person-to-person skills or soft skills are to be developed (Warhurst, 2008). Individual knowledge facilitators are to be motivated and retained in order to achieve effective collaboration (Garcia, 2007). As an impact of all these improvements, not only individuals will be more innovative but the entire system within a company, within a city, a region or nation as Helbrecht (2004) has stated. Besides, knowledge workers are the main organizational asset that cannot be imitated and therefore create a sustainable competence (Livanage et al., 2008).

This study aims to propose a conceptual framework to define realistic expectations from a knowledge worker within the new business models. The proposed model will integrate the achievements of the previous research in diverse fields and complete a vision of a whole. The study is based on analysis of expectations in operational, team, organisational and inter-organisational work levels driven by education, attraction, motivation and retention. Requests and contributions are combined to determine the competence created in terms of personal, relational, technical and professional skills.

This chapter is so organised that next section will define the knowledge worker and summarise expectations and drivers in different dimensions. The third chapter will present the proposed framework. Final section will be the conclusion and suggestions for further studies. This new vision will open a new dimension for managers, human resource experts and educators.

BACKGROUND

Studies on knowledge worker take place mainly in information technology and management fields. In order to define a new profile for the knowledge worker, analysis in education, epistemology, psychology, economics and political science fields are reviewed as well. Previous research will be analysed grouped in common focus.

Definition of Knowledge Worker

The term Knowledge Worker was first used by Peter Drucker in his 1959 book, *Landmarks of Tomorrow* to identify the workers in the information technology fields. Today, anyone who works for a living at the tasks of developing or using knowledge is named to be a knowledge worker. Davenport has summarised the background and the operations of the post: "Knowledge workers have high degrees of expertise, education or experience, and the primary purpose of their jobs involves the creation, distribution or application of knowledge. One third to two thirds of any company workforce are included in this definition" (McKellar, 2005). This definition includes tasks of planning, acquiring, searching, analyzing, organizing, storing, programming, distributing and marketing goods and services in addition to transformation and commerce of data, information and knowledge. Hence, the term includes lawyers, teachers, scientists of all kinds in addition to programmers, system analysts, technical writers, academic professionals, researchers.

A knowledge worker is a participant of the knowledge economy where intangible products are as important as the tangible objects with raw material and physical goods. To create, produce and disseminate intangibles, knowledge workers are expected to have high level skills and high technology literacy. Greene (2006) adds characteristics like high cognitive power and abstract reasoning as well as new perspectives and insights. Gurteen (2006) mentions the responsibility feature in the