Chapter 3
Social Media:
A Potential Technological Tool in Fostering Knowledge Sharing in Government Agencies

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ABSTRACT

Information sharing via social media has become stylish, fashionable and unavoidable in all walks of life to date. Through Social media tools people can share information quickly and widely within a very short period of time. From desktop research and documentary review, the chapter establishes how effective use of social media can enhance knowledge sharing within government organizations in a bid to generate new possibilities and opportunities for their efficiency in business operations. The chapter concludes by proposing issues to be considered by modern governments as they embrace the proliferation of social media technologies for effective knowledge sharing which is of vital importance for their success. It has however been emphasized on the necessity of developing and implementing social media policies and procedures.

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is the ability of people and organizations to understand and act effectively. Knowledge management is a set of tools, techniques, methods, ways of working, even behaviours that are all designed to help public sector organizations be more effective (Jain, 2014; Gaál, Szabó, Obermayer-Kovács, & Csepregi, 2014). With the advent of social media tools including online social networks, blogs, and wikis, several researchers argue that social media can provide good opportunities that can facilitate knowledge sharing among individuals and organizations. This chapter explores the potential contributions of social media technology in supporting knowledge sharing organizations in a bid to generate new possibilities and opportunities for their businesses with specific focus on Government agencies. The chapter is divided into three sections. Section one covers the conceptualisation of key terms, in which key concepts including

knowledge, knowledge sharing and social media are defined and discussed. Section two discusses the potential contribution of social media towards knowledge sharing. The section before conclusion and recommendations provides suggestions on how employees with different professions can utilize social media technologies for work purposes and knowledge sharing. Similarly, the author proposes issues to be considered by modern governments and public servants as they embrace the proliferation of social media technologies for effective knowledge sharing which is of vital importance for their success.

This chapter is guided by the following objectives:

- Identify the potential contribution of social media tools in knowledge sharing; and
- To highlight the challenges of managing social media records resulting from business transactions via social media tools; and
- Provide a guide to manage social media records in Government agencies.

CONCEPTUALISATION OF KEY TERMS

This section defines and discusses the key concepts including knowledge, knowledge sharing and social media.

Knowledge

Knowledge in this modern world has proved to be a strategically important resource and a significant driver of organizational performance (Yesil & Dereli, 2013). In the author's definition, knowledge can be referred to as the individual's ability to know, understand and believe on issues surrounding him through experience, trainings (formal or informal), observations and intuition, all of which can develop personal skills for managing his environments better and improve his activities' performance. Knowledge as an understanding gained through experience, a "know-how" or familiarity with how to do something that enables an individual to perform tasks can be shared within government organizations for improved performances of businesses. In this world of science and technology, employees with expertise in different fields can easily share knowledge through social media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and many others in order to develop new competencies with which to improve their competitiveness. Organizations are nowadays utilising social media to share and interpret situations hence generating activities and solutions. A detailed discussion on the use of social media in knowledge sharing is provided in sections below.

Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing refers to the process by which knowledge of individuals is converted into a form that can be understood and used by other individuals (Ipe, 2003). It is about helping others with knowledge, and to collaborate with others to solve problems, develop new ideas, or implement processes (Cummings, 2004). Knowledge sharing activities depend on the habit and willingness of the knowledge worker to seek knowledge sources. It is however worth noting that, the process of knowledge sharing can be ineffective should some employees resist sharing their knowledge with the rest of the organization. Effective Knowledge sharing may involve important steps including but not limited to: identifying and managing

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