

Chapter 2

Expliciting Tacit Knowledge: Exploring an Uncharted Path for a Questionable Trip

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ABSTRACT

Organizations are still confused about tacit knowledge principles, conceptualization and applications. In this chapter, authors approach how tacit knowledge can be valuable for practical decisions and implementations, from theoretical and practical points of view. Approaching from the theoretical view, tacit knowledge definition was discussed, as it results from a conceptual development already adopted for several decades. From practical analysis, actual and future trends arise, as its applications and influences were consolidated, in the perspective on associating tacit knowledge with explicit, for planning, designing and implementing real businesses solutions. Modern competitive features and propositions, such as big data, information technology insertion and startups entrepreneurs are also discussed, serving as an orientation for new studies, as tacit knowledge plays a differential role for new ages of value-aggregation arrays.

INTRODUCTION

Living in a competitive world, always surrounded by ambitious and sometimes ferocious propositions to achieve challenging goals and continuous improved results, organizations fight to structure their working environments, along with precarious business processes definitions. Not only corporations, with economic, social, financial and performance must achieve levels that are negotiated with anxious stakeholders, but also social groups, governments, NGOs, and any group of members, face the challenge to communicate their results, producing images with optimal and aggressive outcomes. After that, in a continuum, these organizations are pressured to propose new achievements for new periods or scenarios.

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This usual arena is demanded also by requirements for fast time-to-market decisions and implementations, introduction of new technologies and technology-based production platforms (as social media, mobile applications and services, big data contents, etc.), changes in economic and legal regulatory codes, among several other factors. This competitive, turbulent, fast-changing and demanding picture results in a dynamic and even chaotic, sometimes establishing informal processes and relations, setting a grueling context for managers who want to plan, in any level, actions and overall coordination among value-offering partners and external economic agents.

As in any academic or scientific organizational study, it is interesting, provocative and opportune to add, along with several other conceptions and propositions, the understanding of how knowledge can be managed in the researched cases. Knowledge, as it can be built from data and information, is regarded as a critical organizational component for several usual and infrequent tasks, plans and actions such as strategic planning, monitoring, innovation management, project design, effective customer interactions, among many others (Jamil, 2014). Paying specific attention to knowledge creation, sharing, retention, valorization and strategic application can result in an increased perception when investigating any case, allowing a manager to have a clearer evaluation around typical or uncommon decision-taking definitions and its related unfolding (Brockman & William, 2002; Choo, 2005; Sandhawalia & Dalcher, 2014).

The purpose of this chapter is to motivate, as a basic approach, to promote the debate on how tacit knowledge can be generated, applied and shared in one organization with a special focus on its perspectives to be formalized, through the explicitation process. In an initial perspective, this conversion, that seems to be desirable in all cases, can become impossible, or excessive resource-consuming (too long or expensive), or even inadvisable (Stenmark, 2001; Schoenherr, Griffith & Chandra, 2014). This chapter intends to address some common-sense beliefs around tacit knowledge, as the considerations of it always being inferior, less valuable when compared to explicit, not directed for reasonable, planned application, to be mandatorily explicitated, and so forth.

This study was conducted with a conceptual background research, where the basic concepts were discussed and its relationships with other essential fundamentals evaluated. In the following, an observation of processes, methods and other aspects regarding knowledge management, specifically regarding tacit knowledge, is done allowing the focus for the proposition of generic cases, which will be analyzed in the next section. Finally, a real study case is detailed, regarding a Banking institution, where tacit knowledge was considered in a new proposition of telecommuting, as a major aspect when this new working method was introduced.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

It is clear, from the Introduction, that a new, complex and evolving world is in front of us. Regarding business applied research, as proposed for this chapter, a conceptual background plays a significant and risky role, where some concepts, discussed from decades, are still being debated, considered inconclusive (Davenport & Prusak, 2000; Tuomi, 2000; Stenmark, 2001). This way, here, the conceptual background approached is clearly a defined, limited and oriented view, a restricted (but intended) to be solid part of the discussion, where authors and previous researches are presented with the principal goal of a background definition, although it is not regarded as a final conceptual base. Debating this way, we understand that our ideas and conceptions serve to affirm this initial point, allowing to develop our main proposals and

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