

Chapter 13

Factors Influencing Effective Knowledge Transfer in Organizations

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ABSTRACT

Today, advances in information technology have increased the importance of knowledge day by day. Possessing knowledge and managing knowledge effectively are very important for firms to gain competitive advantage in rapidly changing environment conditions. Knowledge management helps to a firm to achieve its organizational objectives by making the best use of knowledge. It includes many processes. Knowledge transfer as one of the important processes in knowledge management, is defined as the transfer or dissemination of knowledge from one individual, group or organization to another. Effective knowledge transfer has many benefits to the firms. It increases the benefits that firms gain from knowledge. This study examines 11 factors based on literature review. Determining the factors influencing knowledge transfer will lead to a better understanding of the process and these factors can be used in other researches.

INTRODUCTION

Today, knowledge is the most strategic resource for the firms. The values of the firms have started to be measured by the amount of knowledge they have. Therefore, acquiring and managing knowledge effectively become obligatory for firms to compete in a rapidly changing environment. The effectiveness of knowledge management depends on the capacity of organizations to produce new knowledge and transfer existing knowledge. Knowledge transfer as one of the important process in knowledge management is defined as the transfer or dissemination of knowledge from one individual, group or organization to another. Effective knowledge transfer has many benefits to the firms. It increases the value that firms

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gain from knowledge. It enables employees to access the knowledge they need as quickly and easily as possible. Unlike other production sources, knowledge value increases when it is shared and transferred. Successful transfer of knowledge enables employees to access knowledge they need in an easy and fast manner. Thus, the firm performance increases.

The purpose of this study is to understand the factors influencing the transfer of knowledge between employees in organizations. First, a general description of knowledge transfer, its benefits and types will be mentioned. Second, the factors that are important in explaining the knowledge transfer will be examined. The factors that are examined in this study are: trust, information technology tools, self-efficacy, time, transactive memory system, management support, reciprocity, organizational rewards, organizational structure and personal characteristics.

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

There are various definitions of knowledge transfer in the literature. Knowledge transfer (KT) is a communication process between the source and the recipient (Cummings, 2003). When knowledge is transferred, it is learned, absorbed and applied by recipient that may induce changes in behavior or the development of new knowledge over time (Pham, 2008; Ko et al., 2005). In another definition, knowledge transfer is the process of applying knowledge acquired in one situation to another (Singley & Anderson, 1989).

Systematically organized information and skills are interchanged between parties (Duan et al., 2010). Some researchers use knowledge sharing or organizational learning as synonyms of knowledge transfer (Duan et al., 2010). According to different definitions of knowledge transfer, knowledge movement and its application by the recipient that leads to creation of new knowledge or changes in behavior are key aspects of knowledge transfer (Pham, 2008).

Current society is turning into knowledge society. Knowledge is shared between geographically messy individuals and organizations and through various national and cultural boundaries. In this regard, understanding how knowledge can be transferred from one organization or sub-unit to another is very important. Organizations should develop awareness of using the knowledge and should value transferring of knowledge (Yapar, 2010; Duan et al., 2010).

A fundamental area in knowledge management literature is to spread and make knowledge accessible and usable within or between organizations (Paulin & Suneson, 2012). Knowledge creation and codification are needed processes in knowledge management but these processes do not absolutely cause performance increases or value creation. Value is created when knowledge is shared and applied in essential areas of the organization. So firms' competitive advantages mostly depend on knowledge diffusion and its application (Chen & Huang, 2007).

Knowledge transfer is thought as a crucial factor in the creation of new knowledge and the maximization of value gain with knowledge. Knowledge becomes a raw material in knowledge creation for a recipient unit (Kang et al., 2010). Knowledge transfer enables transmission of surpassing solutions from one unit to others and coordination and cooperation between various units (Pham, 2008). It can be said organizations do not benefit from knowledge enough if knowledge remains in database, various documents or employees' mind without sharing. When knowledge is transferred within organization, time and resource wastage of employees in reaching necessary knowledge disappear (Zaim, 2005). Knowledge transfer enables retention of intellectual capital even after employees leave the organization.

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