

Chapter 12

The Project Manager as the Driver of Organizational Knowledge Creation

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ABSTRACT

The areas Project Management and Knowledge Management include studies on the project and project team levels, but a specific focus on the role of the Project Manager in managing knowledge within the team has received less focus. The authors show how knowledge is created within the project team environment, and the specific role of the Project Manager as an individual uniquely situated to drive the creation of knowledge in the environment by facilitating, directing, and controlling team activities through the four SECI model phases. Using a single case study approach, this research shows how the PM acts as a “mixing valve” in the flow of knowledge in a dynamic, multi-directional, process within the project team environment.

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INTRODUCTION

In today's knowledge rich business environments, competitive advantages are gained and maintained through efficient knowledge management; whether creating new knowledge or sharing existing knowledge throughout the organization. Research in the field of Knowledge Management and organization learning includes topics such as explicit and tacit knowledge (Kogut and Zander 1992, Von Krogh 1998, Nonaka and Von Krogh 2009), managing knowledge assets (Despres and Chauvel 1999, Eppler and Sukowski 2000, Baskerville and Dulipovici 2006, Goel, Rana et al. 2010), and organizational knowledge creation (Von Krogh 1998, Nonaka, Toyama et al. 2000). In the field of Project Management, practitioners and researchers have emphasized the importance of well-structured and managed projects for overall organizational success. For instance, researchers have studied knowledge and knowledge management at the project and team level (Bresnen, Edelman, Newell, Scarbrough, & Swan, 2003; Ajmal & Koskinen, 20008; Hanisch, Lindner, Mueller, & Wald, 2009; Hargadon, 1998a, 2013; Todorović, Toljaga-Nikolic, & Mitrović, 2016) and managing knowledge enablers and project success (McKey & Ellis, 2015). The exploration the role of PM in organization knowledge creation has not been as well addressed, despite the crucial role the PM plays.

This this research explores knowledge creation (an aspect of knowledge sharing) within the project team environment and the role of the PM in the process. Authors illustrate the PM's role in facilitating and leading project team members to develop both ends of the knowledge continuum for themselves, their team, and the organization. This research shows how PM's interact with the project team to facilitate the creation and sharing of new knowledge. This research contributes to the current KM literature by building and refining a conceptual model that displays the knowledge creation process as an infinite loop, rather than a linear process. Managerial implications are also discussed.

Organizational Knowledge Creation

Knowledge is more than a static asset; it is itself dynamic, and changing (Spender 1998, Nonaka, Toyama et al. 2000). Nor is it decreased when shared. With each sharing it is enhanced and changed as it is combined with the current knowledge of the receiver. The sharer retains the shared, and subsequently receives new knowledge to add to his current knowledge, thus continuing the creation process. As Spender (1998) points out, we do not possess certain knowledge, but rather are bound by the learning processes. This process is unique to the individual as he/she gains experience. Developing, gaining, or acquiring new knowledge, understanding and internalizing it, and then dispensing it throughout an organization is considerably more beneficial

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