

# Chapter 6.15

## Knowledge Management Practices in Temporal Knowledge-Intensive Organizations

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### INTRODUCTION

This chapter is designed to serve as a comprehensive introduction to a few aspects of knowledge management (KM) practices of particular relevance for temporal knowledge-intensive organizations. The aspects considered are the contribution of KM practices to value creation, the dissemination and adoption of KM practices and the enabling role of KM practices in the interpretation of states of affairs. The value creation aspect focuses on the impact of KM practices in temporal knowledge-intensive organizations creating value for their customers/users. The behavioral nature of KM practices is of critical relevance for temporal knowledge-intensive organizations as there are attitudes that will be very influential in individuals' intention to adopt such KM practices. Finally, because the individuals in a temporal

knowledge-intensive organization should share the same interpretation on a given state of affairs or about the data at hand, the interpretative aspect of KM practices focuses in the enabling role of KM practices in reaching common understanding.

### BACKGROUND

Temporal organizations exist for a limited period of time, often have a project orientation and are characterized by frequent changes of team membership, depending on the skills needed at any particular point in time in the project (Turner & Müller, 2003). A caveat should be noted here, temporal organizations might exist under the umbrella of permanent organizations (e.g. a stable/permanent IT consulting organization might create a temporal organization for one project). Likewise, a temporal organization might not exist

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-60960-783-8.ch6.15

under the umbrella of permanent organizations (e.g. a joint venture).

Examples of temporal organizations can be found in law firms, strategy consultancies, information technology consultancies and research labs. They can be both in the private and public industries. They can vary in size from small to huge organizations and their budgets can also range from small to big budgets. They can be geographically concentrated or dispersed with relevant cultural differences.

A knowledge-intensive organization is an organization within which intellectual capital (e.g. Edvinsson & Malone, 1997) makes up a large part of the market value of the organization (e.g. Sveiby, 1997). A key characteristic of knowledge-intensive organizations is the capacity to solve domain specific complex problems (e.g. Hedberg 1990). If we shift the unit of analysis from the organizational level to the individual level, the literature refers to the individuals in knowledge-intensive organizations as knowledge workers. Based on Sveiby (1997) we define a knowledge worker as an individual whose work consists largely of (1) using his/her own knowledge, (2) using organizational knowledge (Abril *accepted*) and (3) contributes to the acquisition of organizational knowledge.

Nobel prize-winning scholar Herbert A. Simon stated in his seminal work (Simon, 1960) and other subsequent works (Simon 1962, Simon 1965, Simon & Newell, 1971, Newell & Simon 1972, Simon, 1976) the extent to which understanding and solving problems involves the collection of information relevant to the problem and the reliance upon analysis of this information in enacting a problem statement. In this literature problem solving includes problem statement enactment, solution building, choosing, solution building, implementing and controlling (Abril, 2005).

## **KEY ASPECTS OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN TEMPORAL KNOWLEDGE-INTENSIVE ORGANIZATIONS**

In this chapter we are interested in organizations in a scenario (Abril *in press*) formed by temporal knowledge-intensive context in problem solving situations. This situation according to the literature (e.g. Gottschalk, 2007) is very usual for temporal knowledge-intensive organizations.

Knowledge management practices in our scenario have three key aspects that are of our interest in this chapter: The contribution of KM practices to value creation, dissemination and adoption of KM practices and the enabling role of KM practices in the interpretation of states of affairs.

By appending the term “practices” to knowledge management we highlight the utilitarian aspects of applying knowledge management in temporal knowledge-intensive organizations. In Schwartz (*in press*) there is a comprehensive variety of practices used in knowledge management like communities of practice, environmental scanning, data and text mining among many other.

### **The Temporal Knowledge-Intensive Organization as Value Shop**

Value of a product/service in marketing (e.g. Kotler and Keller 2008) is generally considered as the ratio between the utility perceived by the customer/user of the product/service and the actual amount paid for it. Permanent organizations create, deliver and capture value via a value chain configuration (e.g. Porter, 1985). However, temporal knowledge-intensive organizations create, deliver and capture value in a value shop configuration (Stabell & Fjeldstad, 1998). The temporal knowledge-intensive organization becomes a “value shop” that creates, delivers and captures value by solving unique problems for the principal. In this value shop configuration knowledge is the most important resource (Gottschalk, 2007) and project

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