

## Chapter 5

# Affective Factors for Successful Knowledge Management

**Peter A.C. Smith**  
*The Leadership Alliance Inc., Canada*

### ABSTRACT

*The article proposes that any effort to successfully manage knowledge must be concerned not only with relevant technology, but also with the plethora of affective factors present in the workforce. The aim of this article is to heighten awareness of the impact of these affective factors on KM implementation, and to offer practical approaches that it is contended will assist in “getting the affective factors right”.*

### INTRODUCTION

For more than a decade Knowledge Management (KM) has been vigorously proposed as a means to optimize enterprise performance and sustainable competitive advantage in the face of the rapidly increasing complexity and ambiguity of our modern global business environments (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Choo & Bontis, 2002; Marqués et al, 2006; Karaszewski, 2008).

During the early ‘90s KM essentially referred only to information systems (I/S) technologies related to informational databases, artificial intelligence, and Internet/intranet applications where information is shared across I/S networks. An understanding emerged during this period that to derive actionable meaning from information it was essential that the explicit and tacit dimensions of organizational knowledge be developed in a complimentary and dynamically reciprocal manner (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

By the late-90s there was emphasis on treating KM in a more systemic organizational sense to include the social as well as the I/S technological aspects of any attempt to manage organizational knowledge. The work of Davenport and Prusak (1998) led the way in emphasizing that any effort to manage knowledge must be concerned not only with the I/S technology, but also the associated social issues. Wiig (2000; p. 14) cited a number of authors to support his contention that “*Overall KM will become more people-centric because it is the networking of competent and collaborating people that makes successful organizations*”. Since that time a broad-based acceptance of the inclusive nature of KM has developed, together with a more practical appreciation of the perils of KM (Chua & Lam, 2005; Dufour & Steane, 2007).

In parallel there has been increasing acknowledgement of the impact of organizational culture on the success or failure of KM initiatives (Guzman & Wilson, 2005; Pyöriä, 2007) including the constructive or detrimental influences of the more personal affective, sometimes unconscious, factors such as beliefs, emotions, attitudes, and instincts (Gabriel & Griffiths, 2002; Scherer & Tran, 2003; Smith & McLaughlin, 2003; Malhotra, 2004; Lucas, 2005; Figler & Hanlon, 2008).

The aim of this article is to heighten awareness of the impact of affective factors on KM implementation, and to offer practical approaches that it is contended will assist in “getting the affective factors right”. First a tried-and-true model for optimizing KM performance is reviewed that has been utilised successfully with a broad range of organizations for almost two decades (Smith & Sharma, 2002a; p. 767). Next this model is used to frame descriptions of initiatives that shape various affective factors for successful KM implementation. In exploring and defining the drivers for successfully implementing KM, the concept of a Personal Knowledge Management System (PKMS) is described.

## BACKGROUND

Most managers will agree that their organization’s capability to act is heavily dependent on its knowledge assets and how they are managed. In this regard, information technology (I/T) may be used to create, capture, organize, access and use the intellectual assets of the organization; however as Davenport and Prusak assert (1998; p. 123) “Knowledge management is much more than technology, but ‘Techknowledge’ is clearly part of knowledge management”. In other words I/T is an enabler (Allee, 1997). Coakes (2006; p. 581-582) tabulates the several roles and ways that I/T may support KM, but counsels “Successful knowledge management continues to need a socio-technical approach where the social aspects of knowledge creation, storage, and sharing need to be considered alongside the technical” (Coakes, 2006; p. 591).

As understanding of KM has become more sophisticated, the traditional notion of knowledge as the assets of strictly defined “professional” groups has become untenable when compared to an organization’s wide-ranging knowledge requirements (Heiskanen, 2004), and the awareness that knowledge-bytes must be shared and distributed has gained ground in the past decade (Nosek, 2004; Kafai & Resnick, 1996; Resnick et al, 1993).

At the same time there has been a growing interest in the dynamic aspects of knowledge husbandry. Nonaka and Konno (1998) model the acquisition and construction of knowledge as a cyclic process based on socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization. Socialization includes the essential social interaction needed to learn new knowledge; externalization converts tacit knowledge to explicit; combination facilitates transfer of explicit knowledge to explicit knowledge; and internalization converts the explicit knowledge back to tacit knowledge.

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