



Information Overload

Issue 17, January 2004

Welcome:

This month's issue we will be looking at Knowledge Management, is it a fad, or is it here to stay, and the skills you need to have in order to become a knowledge manager in today's information hungry world. And you thought I was going to talk about goal setting didn't you. Well actually I am.

The beginning of a new year is always a good time to plan our projects and work loads. This of course is as true for home and personal matters as it is for work related ones. Most people take the time to set new year's resolutions – lose weight, exercise more, catch up with friends more often, do more professional development and so on. Some people take time to work out what it is they want to achieve during their working year, but a lot of people don't, and because they don't have a set of clearly defined written goals and objectives they don't know where they want to go, or how they are going to get there.

What has this got to do with knowledge management? Actually it has a lot to do with knowledge management. Over the course of the next couple of years we will see the baby boomers start to retire. The question is do you have the necessary skills that you will need to take their place? Do you know what skills you need to have? Do you know how long it will take you to acquire them? We have a look at one organisations' suggestions for what skills a knowledge manager should have, and we ask the question – will you be ready when opportunity knocks? Or are you content to do the same things in the same way and still expect a different result?

As always, if you would like to see us cover any other topics, we would love to hear from you. Just send an e-mail to training@iea.com.au. If you think that any of your colleagues would like to receive a copy of this newsletter, please ask them to send an email to training@iea.com.au and we will add them to the list.

We hope you enjoy reading, have a great week, and a wonderful and productive start to the New Year.

In this Issue we will be looking at:

- What is Knowledge Management?
- Tacit vs. Explicit Knowledge
- Data/Information/Knowledge/Wisdom
- What's in a Name?
- Bridging the Gap – Skills you should have
- A Thought to Ponder

use of knowledge – it focuses on processes such as acquiring, creating and sharing knowledge and the cultural and technical foundations that support them. The aim of knowledge management is to align knowledge processes with organisational objectives.”

Standards Australia HB275-2001: Knowledge Management: A framework for succeeding in the knowledge era.

What is Knowledge Management

Standards Australia define the term as being a “multi-disciplined approach to achieving organisational objectives by making the best

TFPL describes Knowledge Management as: “The creation and subsequent management of an environment, which encourages knowledge to be created, shared,

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learnt, enhanced, organised for the benefit of the organisation and its customers”

TFPL is a specialist recruitment and advisory business with offices in London focussing on knowledge, information, library, records and content management. (www.tfpl.com)

Tacit vs. Explicit Knowledge

There are many ways of looking at what knowledge is. The two most common ways are:

Tacit – this refers to knowledge that resides in a person’s mind and can include culture and ‘ways of doing things’

Explicit – this is often referred to as knowledge that has been recorded onto a variety of formats including electronic and paper, and can include items such as procedures and other documents, images, film and video clips.

Whilst a person’s tacit knowledge - the ‘ways of doing things’ can be captured as ‘procedures’ it does not and cannot capture the information and knowledge a person holds in their mind, if that person does not want to share it. Some people see knowledge as power and will do everything they can to make sure that the information they possess will not be passed on to others who might benefit from it. If this sounds a little “petty” then consider an organisation or a person within an organisation who has taken the credit for someone else’s work, unfortunately in today’s society this is a common occurrence, and the question I have for you is – would you be willing to share information with a colleague who has passed your information off as their own? I would hazard a guess that you wouldn’t, after all you are only human.

Data/ Information/ Knowledge/

Wisdom

At what point does information become knowledge? It is widely accepted that:

Data is the building blocks of information. This is what you collect as you go about your day-to-day business. If you imagine that you are a computer and you are in the

process of collecting bits and bytes without any thought or processing attached to it.

Information on the other hand is data that is being used in context and can be used in decision-making processes. Typically it is arranged as text, but it can also be used to describe an image or a sound or video clip.

Knowledge is the body of understanding and skills that is mentally constructed by people using the information that has been obtained. It is said that knowledge can only grow when it is shared – usually with other people.

Wisdom is perhaps the final stage in the data/ information/ knowledge cycle. Wisdom can only come from in-depth knowledge. Whilst the capturing of data, the use of information and the increase in knowledge can always be improved, wisdom is used to determine which area we should be focussing on in order to achieve personal or organisational objectives.

What’s in a Name?

Information Managers and professionals, information technologists, marketing and strategic planners, librarians and records managers have all laid claim to doing ‘Knowledge Management’

As the correlation of knowledge working and organisational success becomes clearer, and the understanding of knowledge creation processes, management and exploitation improves, so the range of jobs available to people with an informational professional background opens up. Recently advertised jobs include: Knowledge Capture Manager, Content and Taxonomy Director, Content Consultant, Lessons Learned Project Manager, Case Study Authors and Information And Knowledge Manager, the “hot” skills have been identified. We take a look at these in the next section.

Bridging the Gap – Skills you should have.

Whilst most people will argue that they are Knowledge Managers, in reality not everyone has the necessary skills or abilities that they need in order to do the job

effectively. We have been warned by the Government and the Media time and time again (can we believe everything we read?) that there is a skill shortage across the professions. As the baby boomers start leaving the work force, the question is - will you have the necessary skills in order to fill the positions that are likely to become available?

TFPL's knowledge management skills map is one of the key results from an extensive international research project undertaken by TFPL in 1999, updated in the summer of 2000. The project team contacted over 500 organisations involved in implementing KM, and identified the roles that they had created, and the skills that were needed in those roles, and the additional skills that were required across the organisation. http://www.tfpl.com/resources/skills_map.cfm

The skills map identifies the core competencies for knowledge cultures as:

- Ability to think as well as do – with a focus on outcomes
- Ability to learn – curious, seeks new knowledge, takes responsibility for own development.
- Collaborative – team player, must be willing to share information with others, have a positive regard and

respect for others, should not be status driven.

- Intellectual linking.
- Humility – Recognises that other people know things that they do not know, can listen and learn from mistakes
- An appreciation of information management techniques.
- Self-initiation – does not wait to be told.

It also identifies the top skills for the KM team as:

- Business awareness (I would also add – global business awareness is vital).
- Communication.
- IT skills/literacy.
- KM awareness/ experience/ understanding.
- Strategic awareness/ management/ planning.
- Information management skills.
- Leadership.
- Change management.
- Content awareness.
- People management.
- Project management.

A Thought to Ponder:

“The secret of success is to know something nobody else knows”
Aristotle Onassis (1906 – 1975)

Your comments and suggestions on the subject of this newsletter are most welcome. Or if you would like to see other issues covered in future editions, please email training@iea.com.au

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