



Just A Moment...
IT Commentary

Knowledge E-economy?

by Leon A. Enriquez

In simple terms, knowledge management is defined as “creating value through the transfer of knowledge.” For senior management, the definition can be further refined as “the disposition of people, policies, resources and systems so as to enhance value through more effective knowledge transfer.” These definitions highlight the need for knowledge transfer to be on a two-way basis. It needs to be valuable and beneficial for both the knowledge workers within, as well as adding value to the company itself.

Being up-to-date

Coming to terms with the knowledge-based e-economy can be a daunting task. One of the characteristics of the knowledge age is the rapid rate of change. Yes, often at lightning speed brought about by new and disruptive technologies, and the struggle to keep pace with such change dynamics.

Yet one common message rings clear: Keep up-to-date or perish because you’ll be overwhelmed by rapid obsolescence. Note that the casualties of the knowledge-based economy (KBE) will not only be left behind, but will be unable to catch-up with the momentum of the change process that is growing more sophisticated.

There is therefore an urgent need to set our sights right in the first place. Thus, the primary focus must be to provide the knowledge worker with the skills necessary not only for survival but to succeed in the knowledge age. Here, education is the key element to cope with the change process. And, this requires a new mentality, attitude and mindset. This can be very painful for some. Yet, it promises to be rewarding for all.



Consider, that in the knowledge age, the most important resource is the human element. It is a fact that the human being is capable of continuous learning provided the motivation and incentive prove to be worthwhile. Because the KBE will place a strategic value in the right information available at the right time and in the right way, the knowledge worker must be adept at transforming massive data to refined knowledge. This yields strategic advantage that can be exploited to yield profit.

One such local initiative is the Critical Enabling Skills Training (or CREST) which has a modest aim – to put the workforce through seven identified enabling skills necessary for a knowledge economy. These seven skills are: Learning to learn; Information handling; Communication skills; Creativity skills; Personal effectiveness; Organisational awareness; and Leadership.

This simple scheme is targeted at all echelons of the workforce, and should involve both senior managers as well as frontline workers in the knowledge management cycle. For starters, this involves the design and delivery of training to organisations and companies as they struggle to re-align their activities to become “knowledge-ready”.

The obvious start is with a “technology-first” approach. This is due obviously to the need to scale vast amounts of knowledge within companies to help them become successful in a global marketplace. One way to enable collaboration on a larger scale is to install common networks with hardware and software infrastructures.

Creative collaboration and not just competition – will set the tone for business in the new millennium. As such, collaboration will be a key initiative experienced in the knowledge management space.

For technological knowledge capture to be successful, what is needed is an appreciation that the work is almost completely expertise- and tacit knowledge-based. For instance, open communications and a transparent organisational culture are needed to capitalise on the human dimension in order to make knowledge management a working reality.

Tacit knowledge capture is an extremely challenging goal, and faces two barriers. The first involves the somewhat obvious allocation of time for collaboration outside the frontiers of everyday work activities. The second barrier involves the political factors inherent in the company culture.



For example, workers' views on priorities and their activity stream identity versus the organisational identity. These disparate views often clash with the awareness of a knowledge management initiative. This is aggravated by the low priority given to knowledge management – which will probably not be ranked in the top ten “To-Achieve” list of the company.

Often, collaboration means expanding resources across a network. This may be somewhat contradictory to an organisation that may, by default, be conservative and secretive. With senior management support, this can be overcome by initiating a programme for cross-network awareness-raising and training. This opens up multiple channels of informal communications and collaborative activities.

Awareness of what is happening throughout the company will bring a significant contribution – from a “need-to-know” to “here’s-what-we-are-up-to” communication culture. One easy way to implement this is to utilise the electronic mail messaging system that is, presumably, already in place in the organisation.

A passion for knowledge management should be both organisational as well as personal if this new mindset is to become ingrained in the collective culture. Only then can the knowledge worker blossom in the knowledge age and bear a bountiful harvest in the e-economy.

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