A STUDY ON KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES IN KUMARAN SYSTEMS PRIVATE LIMITED, CHENNAI

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge Management (KM) is one of the most important and happening concept in the given market scenario, which focuses on processes such as acquiring, creating and sharing knowledge and the cultural and technical foundations that support them. The understanding and use of Knowledge Management initiatives in today's business world aid in producing and conserving new value.Objectives of the study focused on analyzing the level of KM of the employees and as to how effective the KM initiatives are being used by them to gain knowledge. It also aims to find out how effective the knowledge sharing practices are, in addition to identifying how beneficial and important the KM practices are. This research focuses on descriptive research methodology, making the knowledge management practices in the organization clear. The universe in the present study is restricted to the total 1500 employees in Chennai branch of Kumaran Systems. Convenient sampling technique has been used for collecting the primary data from 100 employees. Through this project, one can have a reasonable understanding of the term Knowledge Management, understand what is being done for its effective implementation, and analyze the method of sharing knowledge among various strata of employees, determine how importance it is to implement an effective knowledge management system in the organization. Information was obtained on the response received from the employees of Kumaran Systems, Chennai through questionnaire. It was observed that a relevant but outdated knowledge management system was being used in the organization. The result showed that employees in general were less willing to share their knowledge to others, due to lack of motivation, rewards and recognition for doing the same. The organization could motivate employees to share their knowledge, by rewarding and recognizing them appropriately. Also, a robust and up to date Knowledge management system must be in place, for being a winner in this competitive world, aiding in increasing revenue, opening new markets, improve decision making, lift productivity and efficiency to name a few.

KEYWORDS: Knowledge Management, Kumaran Systems, Knowledge Sharing, Rewards, Recognition, Increase in Revenue, Lift Productivity and Efficiency

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge Management (KM) is one of the hottest topics today in both the industry world and information research world. In our daily life, we deal with huge amount of data and information. Data and information is not knowledge until we know how to dig the value out of it. This is the reason we need knowledge management. In general, knowledge management can be referred to a multi-disciplined approach to achieving organizational objectives by making the best use of knowledge. KM focuses on processes such as acquiring, creating and sharing knowledge and the cultural and technical foundations that support them. The understanding and use of Knowledge Management initiatives in today's

business world aid in producing and conserving new value – such as intellectual property assets, generating new wealth and increasing returns, increasing revenue, open new markets, improve decision making, lift productivity and efficiency to name a few. The ability to manage knowledge is crucial in today's knowledge economy. The creation and diffusion of knowledge have become increasingly important factors in competitiveness. Not all information is valuable. Therefore, it's up to individual companies to determine what information qualifies as intellectual and knowledge-based assets.

PROBLEM OF STUDY

Knowledge Management is very essential for the overall education and competitive advantage of any given organization. Unfortunately not many organizations follow knowledge management initiatives or willing to share knowledge among different strata of employees. Mere name-sake implementation of knowledge management in organizations would not suffice, but keeping the data or the information accurate is very essential, valuable data generated by a group within an organization should be validated before being harvested and distributed. Although knowledge management is considered to be very important for effective functioning of any organization, when it comes to sharing knowledge, there seems to be barriers. The knowledge exists at a very deep level and it is strongly bound up within self. There is often little perceived personal benefit in sharing the result of hard-won experience. Knowledge is very internalized that people are often unaware that they have it. In many cases, there is little or no encouragement to share knowledge. Knowledge management encompasses every individual in the company – cutting across departments, functions and business units. A robust knowledge management system is indispensable to extract the useful knowledge. Being able to leverage one-another's knowledge should be seen as strength for the company. With knowledge comes empowerment and by having a successful knowledge management practice implemented in the organization, a company would be able to empower every employee by the knowledge of every other employee, for which all the employees must be made aware of the significance, importance and the benefits of knowledge management.

SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

This study has helped to get a view on the Knowledge Management (KM) initiatives adopted in Kumaran Systems. Knowledge management is found to improve employee productivity. Knowledge management efforts typically focus on organizational objectives such as improved performance, competitive advantage, innovation, the sharing of lessons learned, integration and continuous improvement of the organization. KM efforts overlap with organizational learning and may be distinguished from that by a greater focus on the management of knowledge as a strategic asset and a focus on encouraging the sharing of knowledge. It is seen as an enabler of organizational learning and a more concrete mechanism than the previous abstract research. But the levels and the extent of knowledge sharing are still a matter of concern. This finding was taken into consideration; therefore it is outcome oriented.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To understand the level of Knowledge Management of the employees in the organization.

- To assess the effective utilization of Knowledge Management initiatives by all the employees

- To find out the method of knowledge sharing by the employees

- To analyze the importance and benefits of Knowledge Management.

METHODOLOGY

It was a quantitative study and descriptive research design was adopted to describe the Knowledge Management (KM) initiatives at Kumaran Systems, Chennai. Convenient sampling technique was used. Structured questionnaire was used for collecting the primary data from 100 employees among two categories of respondents namely Managers and Employees of different departments such as Software Developing, Software Testing, Programming Analysis, Technical Writing and Graphic Designing. A total of 5 managers from each department (Software Developing, Software Testing, Programming Analysis, Technical Writing and Graphic Designing) and around 19 employees from each department (Software Developing, Software Testing, Programming Analysis, Technical Writing and Graphic Designing) were included in the study. The secondary source of information was obtained from journals, text books and websites. The Research was conducted from the month of January 2014 to April 2014.

COMPANY PROFILE

Kumaran Systems is a leading IT company providing high-end IT services that include migration support, system integration and infrastructure management solutions, providing one-stop solutions for all the IT demands of this age. Kumaran Systems was found in 1990 as a product development company and it soon developed a twin focus on legacy migrations. With ground-breaking solutions to offer, Kumaran Systems achieved instant success and went forward to become a world leader in ORACLE migration solutions. As of now, Kumaran Systems has a tally of 2000 successful projects including legacy migrations and deployment of enterprise management solutions. After completing successful migration projects in ORACLE, Kumaran Systems expanded its services to newer technology platforms. By the end of 1990's Kumaran identified and carved a niche in the industry by developing semi-automated tools like Accell *Converter and GUI* report converter. Kumaran Systems repositioned themselves in 2007 to cater to the demands of their clientele in Web 2.0, SOA, WOA, Web Services and Mobile2.0 Space. Soon, Kumaran also entered the market of Open source Market development and has been a strong promoter of open source development and usage. Diversifying further, the company also developed proficiency in realms of application development, software testing, application development and production support. With the increasing demand and raising requirement from the client end, Kumaran Systems have reconstructed their functions into domain specific SBU's, such as Banking, telecom, insurance and IT.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Current Status of Knowledge Management

Particulars	Frequency	Per Cent
No existence	3	3
Nascent stage (Just started)	2	2
Introduction stage	46	46
Growth stage	55	55
Total	**100**	**100**

More than half the respondents (55%) felt that the knowledge management initiatives were in the growth stage in the organization, while 43 per cent of the respondents felt that the KM initiatives were still in the introductory stage. On the other hand, least per cent of the respondents (3%) replied back saying there were no KM initiatives existing in the organization and almost negligible per cent of the respondents (2%) observed that the KM initiatives were just started.
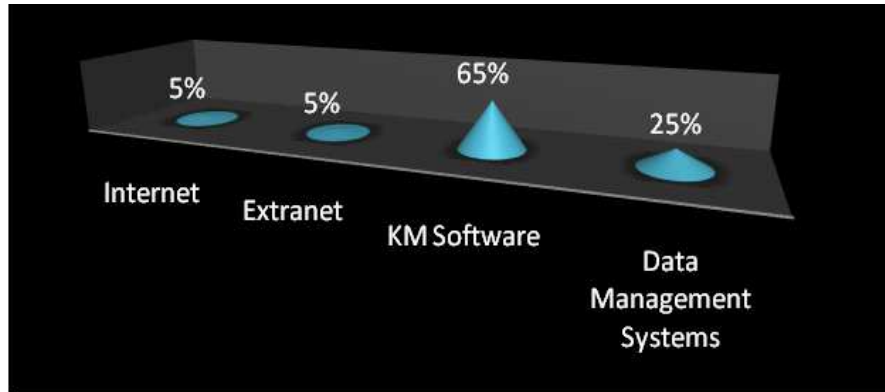
Chart 1:Technology Implemented for Knowledge Management

Sixty five (65) per cent of the respondents said that that the organization uses KM software, and 25 per cent of the respondents were of the opinion that data management systems were in use in the organization. On the other hand, about 5 per cent each of the respondents felt that the organization uses just the internet and the extranet facilities for managing knowledge.

Chart 2: Knowledge Sharing According to Respondents

The majority of the respondents (84%) consider knowledge sharing as an intangible asset for creating and sustaining competitive advantage. On the other hand, 16 per cent of the respondents were of the opinion that knowledge sharing corresponds to mere transfer of knowledge.
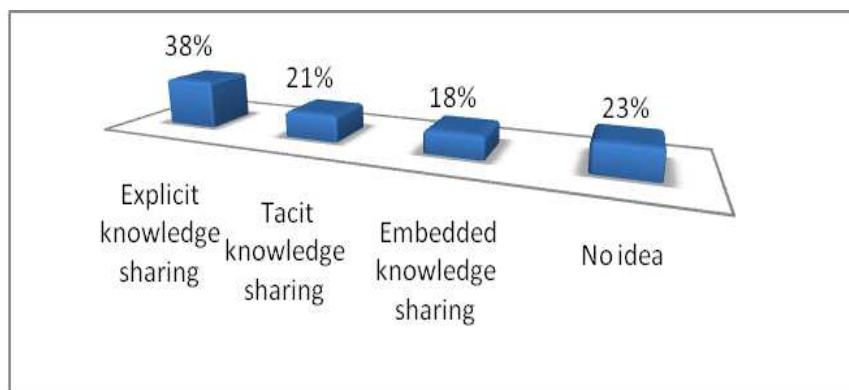

Chart 3: Method of Knowledge Sharing Followed in the Organization

It was found that 38 per cent of the respondents were of the opinion that explicit knowledge sharing method was

used in the organization for sharing of knowledge. On the other hand 21 per cent of respondents were of the opinion that tacit knowledge sharing method was followed and around 18 per cent respondents opined that embedded knowledge sharing methods were used. A total of 23 per cent respondents did not have an idea about the knowledge sharing method followed in their organization.
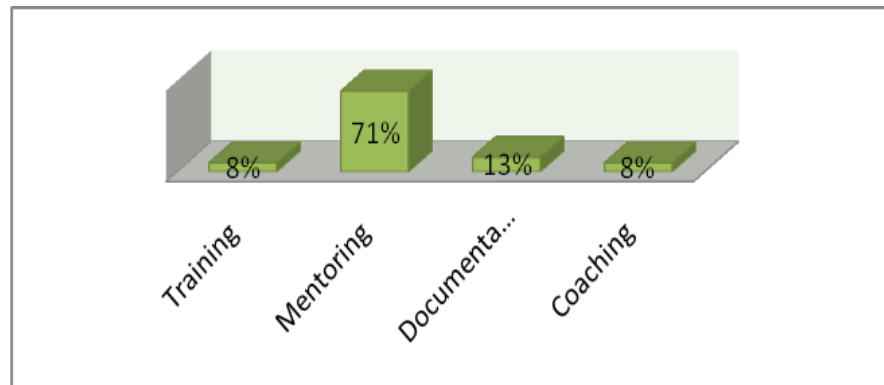

Chart 4: Ways of Knowledge Sharing

It was made clear that mentoring was the main way of knowledge sharing in the organization, according to nearly three fourths of the respondents (71%) followed by documentation (13% of the respondents) and coaching and training respectively, comprising of negligible 8 respondents each.

Table 2: Key Benefits of Knowledge Management

Particulars	Frequency	Per cent
Unleash new ideas and creativity	42	42
Help create a more adaptive, responsive, dynamic and flexible organization	38	38
Use knowledge to build virtual networked business	11	11
Avoid Waste and Duplication by encouraging Knowledge Reuse	9	9
Total	**100**	**100**

According to 42 per cent of respondents, knowledge management helps in unleash new ideas and creativity, whereas 38 per cent of respondents felt that knowledge management would help in creating a more adaptive, responsive, dynamic and flexible organization. A total of 11 per cent respondents responded that knowledge could be used to build virtual networked business and 9 per cent of the total sample population was of the opinion that knowledge management would avoid waste and duplication by encouraging knowledge reuse.

MAIN FINDINGS

Current Status of Knowledge Management

It showed that KM initiatives were introduced and implemented successfully in the organization and was in the growth stage, according to the majority of the respondents (55%).

Technologies Implemented for Knowledge Management

It was made clear that most of the respondents (65%) were aware of KM software implemented in their organization.

Knowledge Sharing According to Respondents

Majority of the respondents (84%) have a clear understanding of the advantage and benefits of sharing

knowledge. They believed that sharing one's knowledge would serve as an asset to create and sustain competitive advantage.

Method of Knowledge Sharing Followed in the Organization

It was evident from the response of the 38 per cent respondents that explicit knowledge sharing method was the widely used method, used in the organization for sharing knowledge amongst the respondents, followed by tacit knowledge.

Ways of Knowledge Sharing

Nearly ¾ of the respondents said that mentoring stands out to be the most widely practiced way of knowledge sharing in the organization.

Key Benefits of Knowledge Management

Nearly half the respondents (42%) were well aware of the key benefits of the application of knowledge management in one's organization.

SUGGESTIONS

- It is recommended that the organization updates the knowledge management system on a timely basis, as majority of the employees were of the opinion that a relevant knowledge management system was in place, but it is outdated.

- It is suggested that the organization provided a clear idea of what communities of practice is, as many of the employees were unavailable to comment on the same.

- It would be of great help to the employees and for the overall development of the organization as well, if knowledge management initiatives and existing knowledge sharing practices were improvised in the organization.

- Kumaran Systems could provide appropriate training on the different methods of knowledge sharing adopted in the organization as the almost half the study population were not sure of the knowledge sharing methods adopted in the organization, to aid in effective knowledge sharing and reuse.

- Employees are the most important contributing force for any organization to function. Therefore, the company could make clear to the employees of the point that knowledge sharing is a matter of trust and it is important to share critical information only with few assigned employees. Encouraging and supporting knowledge sharing initiatives is a healthy attitude but not at the cost of losing confidential and critical information.

- It is recommended that the company should conduct meetings and workshops more often to promote effective knowledge sharing and utilization than just making use of the intranet site of the organization, as meetings and workshops would facilitate more interaction between the employees thus helping in the achievement of effective knowledge sharing.

- Higher employee contribution towards knowledge sharing initiatives could be attained if the employees were recognized in terms of monetary benefits too, in addition to motivating them by symbolical recognition through newsletters or websites.

- It is suggested that the company considers maintaining proper documentation, which could lead to be one among the top knowledge sharing methods, as at any given day proper documentation would aid in recovery and reuse of knowledge by the organization.

CONCLUSIONS

When embarking on a Knowledge Management (KM) strategy, the organization should primarily define the value that it wants to achieve from the KM initiative and establish at the outset metrics that will prove the organization's success. A KM program should not be divorced from a business goal. While sharing best practices is a commendable idea, there must be an underlying business reason to do so. Without a solid business case, KM is a futile exercise. The KM project is much more likely to succeed if it addresses an actual business goal or specific pain point, like improving collaboration in order to bring a product to market faster than the competition. Finally, in cases where knowledge management is in the introductory stage, starting small is definitely less risky than taking a big-bang approach. With smaller projects, the organization would have more control over the outcome, and small-scale failure won't doom the entire effort. In addition, getting funding for a series of smaller projects is more feasible than getting funding for an enterprise wide initiative, especially if the benefits are hard to quantify. Starting small also helps in aiding the organization build on its success.

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