

CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

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Abstract: Knowledge management is the process by which the organizations generate wealth from their intellectual assets putting both tacit and explicit knowledge into action. Nowadays having access to data and information is something ordinary and easy to be done thanks to the advancements in IT and communications; still this is not enough when it comes to solving a problem: having the tools does not imply that one has the knowledge of how to use them.

Keywords: data, information, knowledge, knowledge management, tacit and explicit knowledge

1. SOCIETY AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Nowadays, we have at our disposal a huge quantity of information on every subject we are interested in but, this is not enough. For example, having a computer connected to the internet is not enough if you want to use the information existing there, you also need to know how to use the computer, how to connect to the internet etc.; and for all these you need knowledge. Since our society relies so much on knowledge a new type of management appeared: knowledge management. There's no universal definition of knowledge management, just as there's no agreement as to

what constitutes knowledge in the first place, this is why the best way is to look at knowledge management in the broadest context. Succinctly put, knowledge management is the process through which organizations generate value from their intellectual and knowledge-based assets. Most often, generating value from such assets involves sharing them among employees, departments and even with other companies in order to spread best practices. It's important to note that the definition says nothing about technology; while knowledge management is often facilitated by IT, technology by itself is not knowledge management.

Knowledge management efforts typically aim to reach organizational

objectives such as improved performance, competitive advantage, innovation, the sharing of lessons learned, integration and continuous improvement of the organization. Knowledge management 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. Knowledge management efforts can help individuals and groups to share valuable organizational insights, to reduce redundant work, to reduce training time for new employees, and to adapt to changing environments and markets. [1]

What is characteristic for the knowledge society is not the great amount of information within easy reach for everybody but, the knowledge everyone has to have in order to manage the data and information. Information is something exterior which is at our disposal and we can make use of it but, knowledge is interior, something we develop, it relates to our operational capacity. Information is valuable only if we know what to do with it and for this we need knowledge; knowledge is what makes information valuable, we need to know where to look for it, what to choose and how to use it. When we talk about knowledge management it is very important not to mistake some terms: *data*, *information* and *knowledge*. Collins Concise Dictionary says that *data* refers to “a series of observations, measurements and facts” [2], *information* refers to

the act of informing, the condition of being informed and *knowledge* signifies the facts or experiences known by a person or a group of people; the act of knowing or understanding gained through experience or learning. Analyzing these definitions we could say that information refers to data organized in a certain way, placed in a certain context and which acquires a certain meaning. Knowledge is information having a supplementary encoding. When referring to knowledge management Nonaka and Takeki were talking about a spiral going up from the individual level to the group level, then to the organizational and interorganizational level; so now, we have the data which is taken out of the context and has no meaning by itself; data becomes information when we understand its meaning and we can integrate it in a context. Information is data put at work, information becomes knowledge when the person who uses it understands the models existing in the information, how they work and will be able to use them in the future. Even if information means seeing and understanding the relations between data, it does not say anything about the changes data might undergo, the significance of the information being given by the context. Information refers more to a description, a definition: *who*, *what*, *when* and *where* and knowledge includes strategies, practice, methods: *how*. The Japanese point of view upon knowledge management says that knowledge is not only a

set of data or information, it also comprises emotions, values, hunches; a company does not only manage the knowledge but should also create some. Each employee of the organization is involved in creating the organizational consciousness and middle managers are those who analyze and interpret knowledge to add meaning to it and to create knowledge. [3].

There are two types of knowledge: implicit/ tacit and explicit. Tacit knowledge is the knowledge we each carry in our heads about how to do things, who to call and the lessons learned through experience. It is that knowledge which is understood implied; it is informal, experimental and difficult to be communicated, it is the knowledge existing within the minds of the individuals. Explicit knowledge is that which is stated in detail and doesn't leave anything implied, it is the knowledge that can be recorded, encoded and transmitted; it can be organized or stored, it is definite and most of the time objective. Explicit knowledge creates rules and sets limits, e.g. and technical specifications or capabilities of equipment (field) manuals, unit standing operating procedures, operation orders etc.

Nonaka and Takeki say that organizational knowledge is created when knowledge is converted from tacit to explicit and through the interaction of these two types of knowledge innovation takes place.

Starting from the premise that knowledge is personal and most

of it will remain tacit, the tacit knowledge approach typically states that the dissemination of knowledge in an organization can best be accomplished by the transfer of people as "knowledge carriers" from one part of an organization to another.

Learning in an organization occurs when individuals come together, share their ideas and develop new insights together that will lead to the creation of new knowledge.

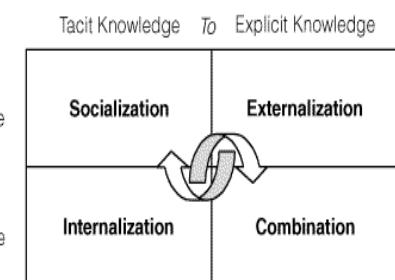


Fig. 1 Knowledge creation cycle

As we can see in the figure above knowledge creation occurs in a dynamic and continuous cycle. First of all it begins with socialization, phase in which the individuals share experience and mental models. Then it continues with the externalization stage in which people use metaphors and images to turn tacit knowledge, which otherwise would be difficult to communicate, into words. Next, it goes into the combination phase where knowledge will be articulated, shared and presented. The last phase is internalization; this is how individuals learn and put into practice the new knowledge.

A modern organization should be prone to learning and training, its employees should be taught

how to learn and develop new ideas. Generating new ideas is not an exclusively formal process, knowledge generation and transfer can take place during a brainstorming session but also during a coffee break or an informal session. Managers should be aware that the individuals are those who possess knowledge, who can create it or use it.

Knowledge management differs from information/data management in the way managers/leaders make their personnel apply, use, communicate and develop already existing knowledge. Knowledge is useless unless it helps the development of the company. There are many organizations which have large data bases and information stocks which were used only for the present activity and never as generators of new ideas. Putting knowledge into practice requires that it should be communicated from person to person thing which cannot be done easily; this is why managers should be the facilitators of knowledge transfers and they should stimulate those who generate and disseminate new ideas.

2. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT FOR THE MILITARY

The changes that have taken place in the 21st century environment required transformation in the doctrine and organization. In the new warfare it is very important to have a knowledge advantage over the adversaries. Good knowledge

management is essential for the military. “Knowledge superiority in military operations requires dominant battlespace awareness and visualization. As the battlefield changes and the tempo of war increases, the pace of information creation and decision-making also multiplies” [4].

For every warfare information is essential but, for the modern warfare, which relies on information from many sources, it is very important that it be assessed quickly and compiled for immediate use. The military live in an environment where timelines are shorter, an environment which requires situational awareness tools superior to those of the opponents in order to anticipate their reaction, an environment for which knowledge, and here we can speak about both tacit and explicit knowledge, is of the greatest importance. Explicit knowledge that contained in field manuals, unit standing operating procedures, operation orders, etc. is used during operations in order to support understanding and decision-making. Tacit knowledge is also important to solve a problem or explore an opportunity. Intuition is an example of tacit knowledge. So is being able to understand the critical factors on which to focus in a complex situation. During a mission leaders need to create and get the knowledge needed to accomplish it. And at the same time they need to involve each military’s tacit knowledge to increase their awareness and understanding of the situation. Knowledge, both

tacit and explicit, helps leaders make better decisions and conduct more effective operations

Globalization is present even in the warfare context. Warfare and all the other component elements of peacemaking and peacekeeping take place on a global scale, they have exceeded the area of local or regional conflicts. This is why, situational awareness and decision-making rely more than ever on sources beyond the immediate theater of operations; even more, the information should come instantaneous from every corner of the world. For this reason, the military, like their corporate counterparts, understand and recognize the importance of the intellectual capital and knowledge management.

Unfortunately all the social and demographic changes that affected the work force also affected the military. The military personnel perform two major functions: First, they carry out functions for commanders that commanders could not perform alone or that require specialists, such as engineers, artillery, and logistics.

Second, military personnel develop and manage information. The information is gathered, organized and analyzed to create knowledge which later will be applied in planning and decision-making. The personnel take care of the information transfer to the commander, other staff members, and higher, subordinate organizations. At the same time commanders guide and help with the understanding and decision-making of the personnel and

share their knowledge through formal or informal meetings. Knowledge management can be used for several purposes:

- Facilitating;
- Situational understanding;
- Decision-making;
- Transfer of expertise and experience;
- Enhancing organizational learning during operations;
- Enhancing collaboration among personnel at different places;
- Incorporating simulations and experiential learning into training;
- Influencing doctrine development.

Integrating knowledge management in the organization improves sharing of observations and lessons before, during, and after a mission.

Knowledge management integrates the lessons needed for organizational improvement and later these lessons, observations and insights will be included into modified tactics, techniques or procedures and will be disseminated them within the unit(s). These lessons will be stored in official lessons learned databases for others' use. Knowledge management tools help leaders research doctrine more effectively for tactics, techniques, and procedures to help solve tactical problems. KM also connects operational units with subject matter experts and peers with relevant experience to obtain their assistance, both before and during an operation.

To conclude I can say that

knowledge management principles can be brought to situational awareness, sense making and decision-making in the military context. As a strategic approach to achieving defense objectives, military knowledge management will play a valuable role in leveraging existing knowledge and converting new knowledge into action.

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