

1995; Sternberg et al., 2000) according to three key features matching to the conditions under which it is acquired, its structural representation, and the conditions of its use. In other words, the person is not directly instructed as to what she or he should be taught, but rather must extract the important lesson from the experience even when learning is not the prime objective. Formal training environments facilitate certain knowledge-acquisition processes, which consist of selective encoding (sorting relevant from irrelevant information in the environment), selective combination (integrating information into a meaningful interpretation of the situation), and selective comparison (relating new information to existing knowledge) (Sternberg, 1988). When these processes are not well supported, as often is the case in learning from everyday experiences, the likelihood increases that some individuals will fail to acquire the knowledge.

The first study to explore tacit knowledge acquisition was an experiment conducted by Okagaki, Sternberg, and Wagner (cited in Sternberg et al., 1993), which focused on methods of facilitating the acquisition of tacit knowledge. The study scrutinized three key acquisition processes: selective encoding, selective combination, and selective comparison. An assortment of cues were presented to participants to help them (a) to differentiate relevant from irrelevant information (selective encoding), (b) to integrate information according to rules of thumb (selective combination), and (c) to relate the information to prior experience or knowledge (selective comparison).

Today many organizations are looking for quick fix solutions in eliciting tacit knowledge from its employees. Of those discovered in literature are the concept mapping process, which can create meaningful diagrams and is regarded to be highly efficient at scaffolding experts in eliciting their domain knowledge (Basque et al. 2004; Hoffman 2002). Methods such as critical decision method effectively elicit knowledge about procedures, processes and reasoning strategies. Other knowledge elicitation techniques include knowledge audits, cognitive modelling, storytelling, data analysis, interviews and work pattern analysis among many others.

For the purpose of this study, I will focus on the story telling method to uncover tacit knowledge held by the retiring experts, since stories create foundations of any type of human communication. Storytelling as a tool to elicit tacit knowledge, according to literature reviewed, will need to be activated by factors such as, the need to have a reward mechanism, trust, good leadership, corporate culture that promotes knowledge sharing, organizational structure, work practices borne out of organizational behaviours etc. (Nesan, 2005; Sharrat and Usoro, 2003; Mascitelli, 2000). Humans have been telling stories as not only a form of entertainment, but as a way to make sense of the world for a very long time, probably almost as long as they have had language. So it is not surprising that we continue to use this powerful medium in the corporate environment (Reamy, 2002). Stories give our world meaning and represent norms of behaviour, experience, explanation of reality and basic human values (Mládková, 2007). Stories influence what people accept and what they reject.

According to Mládková (2007) stories are an important part of social processes and store and help to share experience and knowledge. Stories can be told in many contexts. They are partial, structured memories of observed and articulated reality (Davenport et al., 2000). While stories can be considered a nice way to report past experiences, it can also be an essential part of the organization knowledge. The key for organizations to build competitive advantage from storytelling is for the organization to understand not only the activity and nature of storytelling, but also the stories that are being told. If an organization is oblivious to the stories being told within their enterprise, then it is clear that there is no support for transmission of tacit knowledge through stories.

Preliminary research design and methods

The approach taken to collect the data would be utilizing the storytelling method (Qualitative). Qualitative research is where the researcher is an instrument of data collection and gathers words or pictures, analyzes them inductively, focuses on meanings of participants and describes a process that is expressive and persuasive in language (Creswell, 1994). Qualitative research provide an empirical,

systematic strategy for answering questions about people in their own bounded social context, with the researcher interfering as little as “humanly” possible during the enquiry. According to Locke et al. (1993), in this circumstance people make sense of their own experiences and create their own reality.

Along with Eldabi et al., (2002), qualitative research methods are associated with “face-to-face” contact with people in the research setting, jointly with observations and verbal data. According to Powers et al. (1985) a sample is a subset of measurements drawn from a population in which we are interested. Since a qualitative approach will be used which according to Mason (2003) is rich in contextual and detailed data, the sample size will involve 7 participants, which will all be identified by the Human Capital Division as subject-matter experts in their respective divisions. In consideration of the aforementioned, I conclude that qualitative research is by its nature directed by an exploratory descriptive and contextual design. Burns and Grove (1999) verify this as they point out that qualitative research is intended to explore and describe the richness, depth and complexity of a phenomenon or issue.

Expected results

I expect to uncover using the storytelling method, in conjunction with the type of tacit knowledge (embodied, intuitive and social) I would want to acquire, how subject matter experts interpret information, by having them share their personal experience on projects i.e. trials and errors, decision-making, innovation, product launches etc.

I also expect to find ways such as the knowledge sharing culture of the organization, performance measurement and rewards, communication styles, decision making processes, motivation, commitment etc., which would make it possible for these retiring employees to share their dormant tacit knowledge with younger employees or with the entire organization. This could for example be done by means such as the intranet; mentoring, communities of practice etc., to convey their experiences on projects they may have worked on, critical decisions that have had to make for the organization and so forth.

Ethics statement

Consistent with McMillan and Schumacher (2001), ethics in research studies involve considerations of informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, deception, privacy and harm to the subjects. In this study all attempts will be made to consider some of these ethical issues.

Chapter outline

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Introduction

Background to the problem

Problem statement

Research questions

Chapter 2 – Literature review

What is knowledge?

What is knowledge management?

Types of knowledge.

What are the different types of tacit knowledge?

Elements of tacit knowledge.

Knowledge elicitation.

What are the barriers to acquiring tacit knowledge?

What are the benefits of tacit knowledge to the organization?

How can the organization facilitate tacit knowledge acquisition?

Chapter 3 – Research design and methodology

Chapter 4 – Data presentation and discussion

Chapter 5 – Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

References

Appendices



References

Ackerman, M.S. (1994), "Augmenting the Organizational Memory: A Field Study of Answer Garden". In: Proceedings of CSCW'94, The Association for Computing Machinery, New York, Nov, pp. 243-252.

Alavi, M. and Leidner, D. (2001), "Review: knowledge management and knowledge management systems: conceptual foundations and research issues", MIS Quarterly, Vol. 25 No. 1, pp. 107-36.

Ba, S., Stallaert, J. and Whinston, A.B. (2001), "Optimal investment in knowledge within a firm using a market mechanism", Management Science, Vol. 47 No. 9, pp. 1203-19.

Brown, J.S. and Duguid, P. (2001), "Knowledge and Organization: A Social-Practice Perspective", Organizational Science, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 147-167.

Basque, J., Pudelko, B. and Léonard, M. (2004) "Collaborative Knowledge Modelling between Experts and Novices: A Strategy to Support Transfer of Expertise in an Organization," Proc. 2nd Int'l Conf. Concept Mapping, Univ. of Pamplona.

Bontis, N. (1998), "Intellectual capital: an explanatory study that develops measures and models", Management Decision, Vol. 36 No. 2, pp. 63-76.

Bontis, N., Keow, W. and Richardson, S. (2000), "Intellectual capital and business performance in Malaysian industries", Journal of Intellectual Capital, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 85-100.

Burns, N. and Grove, S.K. (1999), "Understanding nursing research", 2nd Edition, Philadelphia: WB Saunders.

Collins, J. D. and Hitt, M. A. (2006), "Leveraging tacit knowledge in alliances: The importance of using relational capabilities to build and leverage relational capital", Journal of Engineering and Technology Management, Vol. 23, No. 3, pp. 147-167.

Cooke, N. J. (1999), "Knowledge elicitation", Handbook of applied cognition. pp. 479-510. New York: Wiley.

Creswell, J.W. (1994) "Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches", Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Davenport, G., Bradley, B., Agamanolis, S., Barry, B., Brooks K., (2000), "Synergistic storyscapes and constructionist cinematic sharing", IBM Systems Journal, Vol. 39 No 3-4, pp. 456 - 469.

Epstein, R.M. (1999), "Mindful practice", JAMA, Vol. 282, No. 9, pp. 833-839.

Eldabi, T., Irani, Z., Paul, R.J., Love P.E.D. (2002), "Quantitative and Qualitative decision-making methods in simulation modeling", *Management Decision*, Vol. 40 No. 1, pp. 64-73.

Goodman, P.S. and Darr, E. D. (1998), "Computer aided systems and communities: mechanisms for organizational learning in distributed environments", *MIS Quarterly*, Vol. 22, pp. 417-430.

Hoffman, R., Shadbolt, N. R., Burton, A. M. and Klein, G. (1995), "Eliciting Knowledge from Experts: A Methodological Analysis", *Organizational Behaviour and Decision Processes*, Vol. 62 No. 2. pp. 129-158.

Hoffman, R.R. (2002), "An Empirical Comparison of Methods for Eliciting and Modelling Expert Knowledge," *Proc. 46th Meeting Human Factors and Ergonomics Soc., Human Factors and Ergonomics Soc.*, pp. 482-486.

Kubo, I. and Saka, A. (2002), "An inquiry into the motivations of knowledge workers in the Japanese financial industry", *Journal of Knowledge Management*, Vol. 6 No. 3, pp. 262-71.

Kyriakos, K. and De Ruyter, K. (2004), "Knowledge stocks and information flows in new product development", *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 41 No. 8, pp. 1469-1498.

Locke, L.F., Spirduso, W.W. and Silverman, S.J. (1993), "Proposals that work: A guide for planning dissertations and grant proposals", 3rd edition, Sage Publications Inc.

Mason, J. (2002), "Qualitative researching", SAGE publications.

Mascitelli, R. (2000), "From experience: harnessing tacit knowledge to achieve breakthrough innovation", *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, Vol. 17 No. 3, pp. 179-193.

Mládková, L. (2007), "Management of tacit knowledge in organization", *Economics and Management*, pp. 803-808.

Neisser, U. (1976), "Cognition and reality", San Francisco: Freeman.

Nesan, L.J. (2005), "Factors influencing tacit knowledge construction", *Australian journal of Construction Economics and Building*, Vol. 5, Issue 1.

Nonaka I. and Konno N. (1998), "The concept of "Ba: Building foundation for Knowledge Creation", *California Management Review* Vol. 40 No. 3.

Nonaka, I. and Takeuchi, H. (1995), "The knowledge-creation company", Oxford University Press, New York.

- Oltra, V. (2005), "Knowledge management effectiveness factors: the role of HRM", *Journal of Knowledge Management*, Vol. 9 No. 4, pp. 70-86.
- Polanyi, M. (1966), "The tacit dimension" Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- Powers, G.T., Meenaghan, T.M. and Toomey, B.G. (1985), "Practice focused research: Integrating human service practice and research", Englewood Cliff, N.J: Prentice-Hall.
- Reamy, T. (2002), "Imparting Knowledge through Storytelling", Part 2. *KMWorld Magazine*, Vol. 11 No. 7, (accessed: 15 January 2010).
- Schön, D. A. (1983), "The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action". New York: Basic Books.
- Sharrat, M. and Usoro, A. (2003), "Understanding Knowledge-Sharing in Online Communities of Practice", *Electronic Journal on Knowledge Management*, Vol. 1 No. 2, pp. 187-196.
- Sternberg, R. J. (1988), "The triarchic mind: A new theory of human intelligence". New York: Penguin Books.
- Sternberg, R. J., and Wagner, R. K., and Okagaki, L. (1993), "Practical intelligence: The nature and role of tacit knowledge in work and at school", In H. Reese and J. Puckett (Eds.), *Mechanisms of everyday cognition*, pp. 205-227. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Sternberg, R. J., Wagner, R. K., Williams, W. M., and Horvath, J. A. (1995), "Testing common sense". *American Psychologist*, Vol. 50, pp. 912-927.
- Sternberg, R. J. (1997), "Successful intelligence". New York: Plume.
- Sternberg, R. J., and Horvath, J. A. (Eds.) (1999), "Tacit knowledge in professional practice", Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Sternberg, R. J., Forsythe, G. B., Hedlund, J., Horvath, J. A., Wagner, R. K., Williams, W. M., Snook, S., and Grigorenko, E. L. (2000), "Practical intelligence in everyday life". New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ward, S. (2002), "Rewarding knowledge sharing at context integration", Inc. *KM Review*, Vol. 5 No. 1.
- Watson, S. and Hewitt, K. (2006), "A multi-theoretical model of knowledge transfer in organizations: determinants of knowledge contribution and knowledge reuse", *Journal of Management Studies*. Vol. 43 No. 2, pp. 141-173.