Book reviews

Designing a Successful KM Strategy: A Guide for the Knowledge Management Professional

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Knowledge management (KM) involves getting the right knowledge to the right person at the right time. This necessitates a strong tie to corporate strategy, locating and understanding knowledge, creating processes that span organizational functions and making sure that the KM program will gain organizational support. To develop an effective knowledge management program, a systematic strategy is needed to help employees share knowledge. However, for whatever reasons, many such plans fail and result in wasted time, energy and budget. This makes the case for designing a well-defined, skillfully planned KM strategy even more crucial. To help resolve this issue many titles have been published in the past few years, but this book written by two experienced professionals in the field wins hands down.

The book has been designed to serve two purposes: to give an understanding of how knowledge managers may implement KM successfully in their organization, and how having a KM strategy can provide for a well-thought-out plan. To that end, the book has 20 chapters starting with What Exactly is Knowledge Management and Why Do We Need it; a description of basic principles for successful KM implementation. Chapter 2, The Knowledge Manager's Role, discusses the key elements of the KM leadership role as well as several other individual and group roles critical to the success of a KM program. Chapter 3, Making the Case for a Knowledge Management Strategy, is about helping senior managers see it as important to invest in KM, as it might be able to change a firm's current management of knowledge from suboptimal to optimal. Chapter 4, The Ten Principles Behind Your KM Strategy, is about the foundation of KM strategy and program. These have been identified from the experience of the authors and are normally acknowledged as best practice in an organization.

Chapter 5, Strategy Structure and Strategy Input, describes how a KM strategy document should be created. This document, the chapter suggests, will include 11 sections, which will be described in the next 11 chapters. The chapter also recommends interviews and workshops as two approaches one may apply to gather the input required to create the contents of the document. Chapter 6, Identifying the Underlying Business Imperatives and Drivers, deals with organizational imperatives as KM needs

to be driven by business needs such as operations, excellence, customer support, innovation or growth and change. In Chapter 7, Knowledge Management Vision and Scope, the authors discuss *the vision*, why KM is being introduced, and *the scope*, what knowledge management will cover, of KM. Chapter 8, Strategic Knowledge Areas, provides guidelines for determining the strategic knowledge areas on which the strategy will focus. The chapter introduces two approaches for finding strategic topics: a top-down approach and a bottom-up approach.

Chapter 9, Assessing the Current State of KM in the Organization, as the name indicates, presents a framework consisting of 16 questions and a methodology for such an assessment. This seems mandatory in that it can reflect not only how far an organization is from the vision already determined but also what sort of things need to be fixed. Chapter 10, Knowledge Management Framework, introduces a framework for management of knowledge consisting of a matrix of four enablers (people, process, technology and governance) by four components of knowledge (socialization, externalization, combination and internalization). Chapter 11, Information and Content Management, presents methodologies and templates for defining technology, the information architecture and documented knowledge life-cycle, which are all necessary for successfully incorporating the information and content management element into your strategy framework.

Chapter 12, Knowledge Management Technology, looks at the technologies available to support the KM strategy and discusses the process of understanding the requirements of picking the right technology from among so many accessible technologies, based on organizational objectives and user requirements. Chapter 13, Change Management, takes up the strategic principle of change management as a key component and contributor to the success of a KM program. The chapter considers both individual behavior change and organizational culture change as the areas that change management should address. Chapter 14, Stakeholders, takes into account the "who" of change management. The chapter presents a useful template for mapping out stakeholders based on their influence and interest, and gives hints as to how to prioritize managing them in the best possible way.

Chapter 15, Pilot Projects, deals with the important issue of piloting a KM program before actually implementing it, especially in areas that are called pain points. The chapter makes the case for pilots that have organizational support, measurability, scalability and feasibility. Chapter 16, Making the Business Case and Developing ROI, deals with finalizing the business case and determining the return on investment (ROI). The chapter discusses some of the benefits of KM and considers how to determine the return on investment, which determines and even justifies the scale of the investment required.

Chapter 17, The Guerrilla Strategy, takes up those cases where a business case is not mature, big or convincing enough to gain high-level backing for KM. In such cases, a useful strategy can be adopted, termed guerrilla strategy, and involves working at lower levels in an organization using whatever sponsors can be found until enough valuable evidence is created through which high-level support may be obtained. Chapter 18, A Retention-Based Knowledge Management Strategy, discusses another special-case strategy that may prove appropriate in certain cases with the risk of knowledge loss, such as when experienced staff retires. The strategy involves identifying the critical knowledge areas at greatest risk of loss that deserve the highest priority. Chapter 19,

Building the Implementation Team, takes the reader through the steps following the completion of a strategic plan involving assigning the KM team, appointing a team leader, setting up a steering team and planning and implementing the strategy. Chapter 20, The Final Words, reiterates the importance of creating a well-thought-out and skillfully designed KM strategy, which unlike many such strategies that fail, will guarantee success.

All in all, the book covers a wide range of topics that give the reader useful insights for designing and implementing a KM strategy. Because it is based on 20 years of experience and practical knowledge in the field, it should successfully account for every organization's unique needs and goals. This, however, does not mean the book leaves no places for improvement. One of these is the introduction, which skips some of what is normally very helpful to newcomers to the field: e.g. describing the content of the chapters in a way that the whole picture is made. Another caveat is with the outline of the KM strategy document on page 43: the outline is meant to reflect the sequence of the chapters that follow, but I was not able to see why it fails to do so. My last reservation is with Chapter 15: the chapter talks about piloting a KM program; however, it does not provide a practical example of how to do so. Despite these doubts, the book is a must-read in that it takes the reader through a well-designed, step-by-step, easy-to-understand procedure for defining and implementing a successful KM strategy.

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Marketing the 21st Century Library: The Time is Now

Every information manager knows that the growth of Web-based information services is providing a major challenge to the use of libraries and similar more conventional information providers. Many customers prefer the ease of Google and the like, and do not seem to see the value of carefully selected physical and online resources, plus the dedicated space and expert assistance that the library can offer. This book is written with the intention of showing librarians what can be done to market and otherwise promote their libraries. The focus is on academic libraries though much of the content is relevant across the sectors.

It is a slim volume with less than 100 pages of text, but that might appeal to busy practitioners who want guidance on marketing without too much theoretical or other "distractions". Which makes it a little bit surprising that the initial 20 pages are given over to introductory and historical material, though there is no doubt it serves to set the rest of the book in its intended "modern" context. In the first chapter, the author