KNOWLEDGE SHARING PRACTICES AND TOOL IN A LOGISTIC COMPANY

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Dedicated, in thankful appreciation for support, encouragement and understanding to my beloved mother, my beloved father, my beloved brother and sister, my beloved husband and beloved friend.

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ABSTRACT

On a global basis, organization recognizes the importance of knowledge sharing (KS) as a means to gain or sustain the knowledge in individual thoughts. To sustain and gain knowledge, the individual has to know, adapt and share it with others. In the past, there was a knowledge gap that happens among the community in organizations. This issue arises due to a few factors such as insufficient information and knowledge, no communication, not enough expertise to supply important knowledge and no suitable platform or tool to support the knowledge gap problem. Similar to Tiong Nam Logistic Group (TNLG) in this research study, these problems happened due to lack of specific tools that can capture and share all the knowledge especially in solving daily and recurring issues. TNLG employees do not know the specific knowledge that they have and they do not know which knowledge that may be important for them to share with their colleagues. The main aim of this research is to develop a KS tool for the purpose of developing knowledge workers. The KS tool is a proof of the concept of the KS structure that has been proposed by this research. This study applies the single case study approach using survey and interview method for collecting data. The data collection aims to identify the group of knowledge workers involved, to identify and structure the knowledge for TNLG which formed the KS tool for TNLG. Social Network Analysis and four criteria of knowledge worker have been used to evaluate the KS tool to confirm the development of knowledge workers. From the usage of the KS tool in TNLG, researcher found that the knowledge workers are able to share their knowledge with the right person at the right time. The KS tool enables knowledge sharing among TNLG employees which is hoped to lead towards the development of successful knowledge workers which are able to adapt a better KS practices in the future.

ABSTRAK

Pada peringkat global, organisasi telah menyedari akan kepentingan perkongsian pengetahuan merupakan salah satu cara untuk menimba pengetahuan dalam fikiran individu. Untuk menimba ilmu, individu itu perlu tahu, menyesuaikan diri dan berkongsi pengetahuan dengan yang lain. Pada masa lalu, masalah ini telah berlaku di Tiong Nam Kumpulan Logistik (TNLG). Permasalahan utama yang berlaku adalah organisasi tersebut tidak mempunyai alatan tertentu yang boleh membantu komuniti dalam berkongsi segala ilmu terutama apabila ia melibatkan masalah harian dan juga berulang dan hal ini akan menghadkan perkongsian pengetahuan di kalangan pekerja. Komuniti di TNLG tidak mempunyai kemahiran untuk mengetahui jenis-jenis ilmu yang diperlukan untuk kegunaan di masa kini dan juga masa hadapan. Mereka juga tidak tahu pengetahuan yang mungkin penting bagi mereka untuk dikongsi dengan rakan-rakan. Tujuan utama kajian ini adalah untuk membangunkan satu alat perkongsian pengetahuan yang menyokong persekitaran kerjasama bagi tujuan membangunkan pekerja berpengetahuan. Alatan ini adalah bukti konsep perkongsian struktur pengetahuan yang telah dicadangkan oleh kajian ini. Kaedah kajiselidik dan temubual telah digunakan untuk mengumpul data bagi mengenalpasti kumpulan pekerja berpengetahuan yang terlibat dan juga untuk mengenalpasti dan menyusun pengetahuan untuk TNLG. Analisis Rangkaian Sosial dan empat criteria pekerja berpengetahuan telah digunakan untuk menilai alatan untuk perkongsian pengetahuan di TNLG bagi mengesahkan pembangunan pekerja berpengetahuan. Dari penggunaan alatan ini di dalam TNLG, penyelidik mendapati bahawa kumpulan pekerja berpengetahuan dapat berkongsi pengetahuan mereka dengan orang yang tepat pada masa yang tepat. Kesimpulannya, alatan perkongsian pengetahuan yang mampu memenuhi manfaat dan keperluan permintaan organisasi logistik akan menyumbang kepada pelbagai faedah. Ia termasuklah mempunyai persekitaran yang baik bagi mempraktikkan perkongsian pengetahuan dan juga peningkatan keterampilan komunikasi yang boleh melancarkan lagi perkongsian pengetahuan dikalangan rakan sekerja, melahirkan lebih ramai pakar dengan berkongsi pengetahuan secara berterusan dan sebagainya. Kebaikan ini boleh membawa kepada pengembangan pekerja berpengetahuan yang sukses dan boleh mempraktikkan perkongsian pengetahuan yang lebih baik di masa hadapan.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

KS	-	Knowledge Sharing
OL	-	Organizational Learning
OM	-	Organizational Memory
KM	-	Knowledge Management
APQC	-	American Productivity and Quality Center
TNLG	-	Tiong Nam Logistic Group
KEM	-	Knowledge Entry Map
KW	-	Knowledge Worker
ONA	-	Ontology-Based Network Analysis
SNA	-	Social Network Analysis
MOS	-	Mento Operation System
HOD	-	Head of Department
IT	-	Information Technology
HR	-	Human Resource
FG	-	Focus Group
KSN	-	Knowledge sharing network

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Knowledge sharing (KS) has become an important activity in organizations. In recent years, there is more discussion of the logistical planning and the possibility of using knowledge in logistic area. The KS has been applied in logistics area only in small scale. In year 2002, Baumgarten and Thoms has identified whether the KS in logistic area champions (with supply chain networks as the special focus on those companies who are involved), they also have to determine challenges while applying KS in daily logistic business. Besides, the KS in the logistic area is very important since it involves many stakeholders and they do not know how to share and transfer knowledge to others in a proper way. Consequently, it will affect the knowledge sharing practices in the organization and it may impact the productivity of the staff's daily job.

The KS has been adapted in many of logistic companies in Malaysia. There are few giant logistic companies which implement KS in their daily tasks such as Schenker, Green Peninsular and many more. They had implemented the KS practices few years ago by using existing tools and methods such as phone, discussion and small training attended by small group of knowledge receiver. It is important to have a good knowledge repository system as for now and future so that all knowledge are well captured and easy to retrieve in near future. A knowledge gap normally happened to those companies who do not possess enough knowledge repositories and knowledge resources. The resource from the right person is important to ensure the knowledge gap between employees is successfully filled. Same goes to the

environment in Logistics Company, the knowledge gap normally happened due to a few factors. It does include not enough knowledge resource, lack of good interaction to transfer any knowledge among employees, lack of awareness on the knowledge demand in company, insufficient tools of transferring and receiving the knowledge and improper knowledge structure. The knowledge structure is another important factor of the knowledge gap issue. When the organization is having a good knowledge structuring, they can obviously see the knowledge demand among them. A good knowledge structure can help the company to understand more on their needs and requirement. Furthermore, according to the previous research, there is no proposal of research for studying the framework which supports KS. Hence, the knowledge of studying the available framework for KS is limited and hard to be retrieved.

1.2 Background of problem

There are several problems faced by many of logistic company while conducting the KS practices. It includes lack of coordination; experience in managing group to implement KS, lack of tools and lack of exposure to the behavior of KS in the employee's daily job which will conduct to the failure of getting any required knowledge needed. Beside of that, communication factor also plays an important role towards the KS practices in logistic companies. When the company is having a good tool to let them communicate each other, the KS practices will be easier to be implemented. Most of the problems faced by many logistic companies are similar to this case study. A case study of Tiong Nam Logistic Group (TNLG) has been chosen in this research area. This is because there are many problems experienced by this company in order to be implemented the KS practices. It includes:

(i) Lack of coordination experience. Employees in logistic company are having problem in coordinating and disseminating their knowledge to others. This issue is caused by lack of knowledge sharing exposure to each of the employees.

(ii) Communication experience. No communication exposure among the employees in logistic company.

(iii) Analyzing required knowledge. Basically the employee in TNLG is not aware on the knowledge requirement that they currently need for supporting their existing knowledge. They prefer to use existing knowledge. From there, no knowledge improvement will be developed among the employees.

The major problem was identified by researcherwhile studying the KS implementation in TNLG is:

(i) insufficiency of details on knowledge requirements,
(ii) time restrictions,
(iii) insufficient of knowledge structuring,
(iv) poor presentation of knowledge that needs to be shared,
(v) no suitable platform and guides for knowledge sharing practices
(vi) methodical misconception of expressing knowledge sharing towards the organization.
(vii) problem in gathering all types of knowledge since the logistic area involves many directly or indirectly stakeholders. These stakeholders are holding their own knowledge and do not know how to acknowledge others regarding explicit and most importantly, tacit knowledge that they have.
(viii) do not have any specific tools that can capture and share all the knowledge.

The aforementioned problems have led to the failure of developing KS practices in the company. This is because the knowledge which moves between members is delayed and distorted. It occurs because the complete information is not shared between the members in the network.

Besides, the management itself is having problem in measuring the success of knowledge worker. KS is important in TNLG is because it includes important stakeholders, vendors, supply chain and the knowledge needed to be shared among them for current and future usage. The knowledge must always move between employees in TNLG. A complete knowledge and important information need to be shared and must always flow in order to have a constant KS practice for the development of knowledge workers in the future.

If the KS practice was implemented to the right person at the right time, it will increase the motivation of each person since one is able to acquire more knowledge and more tools which can be used for KS practice purpose. From there, employees are able to use suitable tool for communicating to each others. Thus, this research has been conducted to provide a solution to ensure employees are able to adapt the KS practices among colleagues by using a right tool. By that, it is also to enhance ways of communication between all employees to become successful knowledge workers.

1.3 Statement of the problem

After going through current problems in TNLG, one main question can be interpreted which is, “How to develop a KS framework for knowledge workers in a logistic company?”The initial research of existing knowledge sharing practices is very significant towards the development of KS tool. The current problem in TNLG has been discussed earlier in the problem background. Thus, a knowledge sharing is important to be implemented in this company for knowledge and skills enhancement and the effectiveness of practicing knowledge sharing in a proper way. For achieving the main question, the researcher has studied and developed a suitable KS tool which supports the KS practices in TNLG.

1.4 Project objectives

There are a few objectives that are determined in order to solve this knowledge sharing problem. The objectives of this project are:

(i) To identify knowledge sharing practices in a logistic company
(ii) To design a tool that can facilitate knowledge sharing in a logistic company towards the development of knowledge workers

1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study

In this project, there are few scope and limitation that are being followed in order to ensure that the objectives of the project can be achieved. The scopes in line with this project are:

(i) TNLG in Johor Bahru branch only.
(ii) A single case study is used in this research study.
(iii) Survey has been used as one of the research methods and questionnaire as the instruments.
(iv) Stratified sampling method is used for choosing respondents for questionnaire.

TNLG is chosen as a single case study because this research is based on logistic company. Researcher found that there are many advantages of using logistic company as case study since it can help them to have a good KS practices. Furthermore, TNLG is one of the biggest logistic companies in Malaysia. With branches set up in entire Malaysia, the KS practices can be used not only within one branch, but can be expandable to other branch as well. However, for the constraint of

this research, the research aims will be related to TNLG in Johor branch only.

1.6 Chapter Summary

Since all work need to be completed effectively in logistic sector, knowledge sharing is very crucial in order to manage work efficiently. Knowledge sharing can play an important role in term of real practice since the need to identify what knowledge it has, where it is, how it is being used and how the knowledge can be improved. Existing research regarding knowledge sharing will be explored to determine the systematic steps that can be applied when using the knowledge sharing approach in real environment. Appropriate questions will be created based on the core processes to identify required, available and future knowledge in organizations. From the questionnaire, researcher are able to study what is the current problem happened in the organization and from there, researcher are able to identify which knowledge are required to be shared among colleagues in the organization

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