Journal of Economics and Business Research,
ISSN: 2068 - 3537, E – ISSN (online) 2069 – 9476, ISSN – L = 2068 – 3537
Year XVIII, No. 1, 2012, pp. 160-167

Management Research and Practice

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Abstract
Management is often seen as a necessary but benign component of any modern business organization.
This article suggests that underlying modern notions of management are the far older practices comprising the management prevalent in most spheres of human activity.
Many of these are political in nature and distort and manipulate knowledge to achieve ends which may include criminal activity and fraud, but often merely serve to further the aims of organizational actors.
Keywords: management, research, perspective, quality, practice, methods, analysis, leaders.

Methodology

We chose to explore these questions using qualitative research methods. Qualitative methods are best employed when concepts are not well defined and testable hypotheses have not been formulated.

Since Management is a relatively recent area of research requiring exploration in support of grounded theory development and given the paucity of research addressing the research questions we posed, this was a good fit.

We decided to look at the ways one KM community of practice was engaged in sense making and were interested in answers to:

1. Which topics were covered over time (e.g., five years)?
2. Can we discern changes or patterns in the selection of topics?

3. What were the influences and mechanisms that enabled the group to make its selections?

4. Can we build a useful map of Management domain from these data?

Methods of Analysis

We content analyzed the topic/presentation data using two pre-defined categories relevant to the field of KM. We also ran frequency counts of the entire data set and rendered the results as sorted tables and word association networks.

These techniques are common in qualitative data analysis as the researcher strives to reach both conceptual and empirical coherence.

Content analysis is an effective technique for the analysis of textual material and has been used to analyze both, published and unpublished sources.

Management Research and Practice

It is argued that academic researchers are not looking at the problems of interest to business and are losing credibility from the perspective of practitioners. Researchers argue that basic research will ultimately lead to knowledge that can be used by practitioners but should not be judged on its immediate usefulness.

Many believe this is leading to a relevance gap between practitioners and academics. Doers are looking for solutions to help their specific organizations use knowledge better; they don't care about generic issues unless they affect their organization.

Thinkers are looking at the organization as a unit of measure and interest, but aren't necessarily focused on changing or improving a specific organization. This leads to the need for integrators. Integrators understand the theory and transfer it to the doers using methods such as case studies, action research, actor-network theory and socio-technical interaction networks.

Integrators are focused on improving performance in specific or groups of organizations and on generating generic Management theory.

Thinkers and integrators tend to be academics but with differing philosophies. Thinkers tend to be positivists, academics who validate theory through quantitative methods. The academic world is dominated by positivists. The higher ranking journals tend to publish articles with

heavy quantitative components and more credence is given to theory that has been "proven" through statistical analysis of large populations.

Integrators also tend to be academics but with a differing philosophy from positivism. Management is the practice of selectively applying knowledge from previous experiences of decision-making to current and future decision making activities with the express purpose of improving the organization's effectiveness. Management is really about two issues:

• Leveraging what the organization "knows" so that it can better use its knowledge assets;

• Connecting knowledge generators, holders and users to facilitate the flow of knowledge through the organization Management is a reflection on practitioners considering Management a fad. Some terms being used and their definitions include:

• Business intelligence: using IT to gather and analyze data and information about an organization's processes to better understand how to make the organization more competitive;

• Competitive intelligence: using IT to gather and analyze data and information about an organization's customers, competitors, and business environment to aid the organization in its strategic planning;

• Social capital: the advantage created by a person's location in a structure of relationships, it is used to describe a person's knowledge network;

• Intellectual capital: The advantage created by what a person knows, usually resulting in intellectual property and other intangible assets for the organization. The typical Management may use (all come from our research and the below is not an all inclusive list):

• A Management strategy that identifies critical knowledge, where it is, how it is to be stored and how it is to be made available;

• Technologies such as the semantic web to overcome cultural interpretations or codifications of knowledge;

• Wikis or other collaborative technologies to facilitate the flow of knowledge and the generation of knowledge through collaboration;

• Mapping techniques to facilitate the visualization of knowledge repositories and taxonomy;

• Processes that incorporate knowledge capture and/or use

• Knowledge creators, holders, and/or users working within a knowledge sharing and using culture;

• A Management governance structure that identifies metrics and Management policies and provides management support.

The Relevance of Management

Management is axiomatically a mission-driven, corporatist field. Its focus is not on knowledge, but on management processes that use information resources and related corporate "assets" to enhance innovation and collaboration: knowledge creation, knowledge sharing and knowledge dissemination.

Management as a corporatist practice is in many ways an announcement by the information systems community that it has positioned to move beyond information organization to information deployment; that shift is signaled by the choice of "knowledge" as the target of "management."

Management addresses the supply side of information organization, creation of environments for communication and collaboration, leveraging of intellectual capital and incentives for shifts in work practices, especially those that either impede or facilitate knowledge-sharing, with "knowledge" largely being independent of the individual; it is a corporate asset.

As with total quality management (TQM) and business process reengineering (BPR), knowledge management is driven by two potentially conflicting traditions: thought leadership ambitions among leading consultants and consulting firms and research excellence priorities and practices in the academic community.

Advances in Knowledge Management: Mapping Ideas that Shape Practice

A Management strategy does not have to rely on large investments in technology; it can focus on social processes and the creation of networks and communities. For instance, Nonaka and Takeuchi identify socialization as an aspect of knowledge management in connection with knowledge creation, transfer and use.

Communities and networks of practice can be viewed as an economical means for integrating people and technology around a shared interest; they are a low cost entry into a corporate knowledge management strategy.

From this perspective, knowledge, action and learning are intertwined. People and organizations who seek to capture, transfer and recall ideas, practices, routines and concepts of value to their work are all engaged in some form of knowledge management.

Knowledge Management and Knowledge Management systems

The term knowledge management refers to the activities of knowledge creation, dissemination and utilization. Knowledge is different from information at the individual and organizational level. Individual knowledge is experience and practices that can be captured in diaries, notes or other written form.

Organizational knowledge can be captured in documents, manuals, operating procedures, a repository and so forth and can contain organizational routines, processes, practices and norms.

There are two general types of knowledge: tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is stored in the mind of the knower, such as mental models and experiences. Explicit knowledge is stored in distributable documents, such as manuals and operating procedures. The objective of Management practices at the organizational level is to manage both - tacit and explicit organizational knowledge.

Alavi and Leidner asserted that an effective Management could be viewed as the management of knowledge as a state of knowledge or a process, which focuses on applying an employee's personal knowledge to the organizational needs. In order to effectively share knowledge, Nonaka and Takeuchi proposed a knowledge spiral cycle concept to convert tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge and vice versa.

Many benefits of Knowledge Management practices are intangible. Intangible benefits may include a more trusting work environment, faster turnaround time or improved ability to solve more complex problems that can be translated into a lower operating cost. Specialized and hard-to-copy knowledge can be used as an organizational core competency to compete in today's hyper-competitive business environment.

Management success as Interchangeable

Another perspective is that Management success is interchangeable. Management success can be defined as making Management components more effective by improving search speed, accuracy, etc.

As an example, a Management that enhances search and retrieval functions enhances decision making effectiveness by improving the ability of the decision maker to find and retrieve appropriate knowledge in a more timely manner.

The implication is that by increasing Management's effectiveness, Management's success is enhanced and decision making capability is enhanced leading to positive impacts on the organization.

This is how Management success is defined and it is concluded that enhancing Management effectiveness makes Management more successful as well as being a reflection of Management success.

Management success as a process Measure

This perspective views Management success as a process measure. Management success can be described in terms of the efficient achievement of well defined organizational and process goals by means of the systematic employment of both, organizational instruments and information and communication technologies for a targeted creation and utilization of knowledge as well as for making knowledge available.

Management is a support function to improve knowledge-intensive business processes. An example would be supporting the technology forecasting process in an IT consulting firm by technical components.

Complementary, the effective implementation of knowledge processes (i.e. acquisition, creation, sharing and codification) is seen as a part of Management success. This perspective focuses therefore on measuring how much Management contributes to improving the effectiveness of business and knowledge processes.

Conclusion

Management will change the way organizations and societies operate. Knowledge workers will transform knowledge using

organizations into transnational, distributed enterprises with new governance structures.

Careers will be different and we anticipate that pay and position will equalize across borders. Open source and leaderless Management initiatives will increase the flow of knowledge to the general population. This will allow societies access to all ideas and will allow them to decide truth.

The control exerted by governments and leaders will lessen as people can decide what they want to believe and what causes to support.

Both these outcomes will be incredibly disruptive as we move from "knowledge is power" to "using knowledge is power" and may lead organizations and societies to use security to limit Management.

Security in Management is necessary to protect the value of knowledge to organizations that own it, but it shouldn't be used to prevent users from getting access to content they are entitled to see. The debate will be in how much security should be applied. We hope we will make the right choice.

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