

BARRIERS TO THE KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN THE PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS

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Summary

The paper deals with the definition of the knowledge management and the importance of barriers in this area. The aim of this study was to examine the subject of the research and the information on existing barriers in knowledge management in the public sector.

Keywords: knowledge management, barriers, sectors: energy, light, chemical, public

Introduction

Organizations of our era are no longer organizations, whose power are developed machines, that employ thousands of people. The power of contemporary organizations, regardless of their nature, is knowledge. The skillful management of knowledge is indispensable element, so that it is used in the best and most efficient way. However, in the minds of many people there is a thought that sharing it, makes them less significant, another problem is storage of knowledge and taking care of its resources.

The essence of the occurrence of barriers to knowledge management

Management is not the product of 21st century economy. The relationship between the efficiency and the effects of management were discovered

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hundreds of years ago. An example is the 14th century China, which was overrun by the Mongols, and the first time in the history of that country the foreign government was applied. Mongol dynasty, after adapting to local conditions and the creation of efficient administration (...)ruled the country for many years³. Speaking of knowledge resources we cannot refer only to the present, as it occurred centuries ago. Of course, the knowledge was gained in a much slower way. Information on different cultures were arriving to Europe by the merchants. Of course, we can notice an amazing difference over the centuries, that today seem unacceptable. It is outside the realm of our imagination, that in such a slow way we can gain and increase knowledge, without being able to use the resources of the Internet, or even your phone. Today, in the era of the Internet, such forms are difficult to understand. Today, in spite of all kinds of options of connections, collection and storage of knowledge we still talk about many barriers. The current economy is growing very fast, it would seem that even if something is done now, it may be too late⁴.

Modern economies are evolving in the direction of the so-called economies of knowledge, where knowledge becomes especially important category of enterprise resources. Strategically important nature of knowledge results from the difficulty to imitate and substitute it when compared with material resources, and from its flexibility, ie. its suitability for the creation or improvement of the various elements of the company's offer⁵. It is currently the most important source of competitive advantage, both in the domestic and international arena. In the view of the apparent advantage of the knowledge over the material resources, we should pay special attention to it. First of all, there are numerous barriers to knowledge management on the different background – psychological, economic, financial and even political. Why are there these types of barriers and what they are? I believe that barriers can be called knowledge management factors that maintain or increase resistance to its proper functioning, these are obstacles to knowledge management, both in terms of acquisition of knowledge, as well as the maintenance of the acquisition and creation of innovation. They occur due to the insufficient motivation for a desired action, due to the fear for the

³ Aniszewska G., *Kultura organizacyjna w zarządzaniu*, Polskie Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne, Warszawa 2007, p. 74.

⁴ Białobłocki Z., Białobłocka S., Stiepanow A., *Kreatywny menedżment*, Centr profesjonalnoy orientacji młodzieży, Moskwa 2006.

⁵ Kordel G., J. Kornecki, A. Kowalczyk, K. Krawczyk, K. Pylak, J. Wiktorowicz, *Inteligentne organizacje – zarządzanie wiedzą i kompetencjami pracowników*, Polska Agencja rozwoju przedsiębiorczości, Warszawa 2010.

upcoming changes. The resulting barriers are also related to the mentality of many of those who believe that if you betray what you know, it could be used against them, deplete their resources without considering the possibility of acquiring new resources through mutual sharing.

The problem lies in the organizational cultures, the fact that this approach is practiced largely depends on them. If an employee of an organization of this type feels fear, there has to be a reason to that, either subjective feelings or situation in the company. In order to efficiently manage knowledge, I mean the establishment of programs that will allow for the filing, capturing relevant information and avoiding duplication of resources, easy access to those resources for staff and for those who possess them, by creating maps of knowledge, it is appropriate to have appropriate tools to measure the effects, we first need to create conditions supporting its multiplication⁶.

From our own experience we know that if we perform an action, even the most prosaic, how much more time we need to bring it to the end, if there are difficulties, unexpected turn of events, let alone in such a rapidly evolving field, whose main resource is currently the most tasty morsel for the competition as the modern economy is based on it. Despite the fact that every country, every culture, every organization have their own peculiarities, the part of the barrier seems to be universal. In many places, there are the same problems, although it may vary in their degree of intensity. They depend on the political conditions, applicable laws, stabilization of the country, the stability of the sector or type of business.

The causes of barriers to knowledge management

J. Pfeffer and R. Sutton enlist five main barriers that prevent effective action, exchange of theoretical knowledge into practical. These are⁷:

- speaking replaces the action – often a lot of time in companies is spent on talking, discussing about where they are going, what are their plans and goals to achieve; of course, it is necessary for the proper functioning of the company and at the same time it is motivating for employees, but you cannot get lot in it, i.e. replace the action with speaking.

⁶ Białobłocki Z., Białobłocka S., Stiepanow A., *Kreatywny menedżment*, Centr profesjonalnoy orientacji młodzieży, Moskwa 2006;

⁷ Pfeffer J., Sutton R. I., *Wiedza a działanie. Przeszkody w wykorzystywaniu zasobów wiedzy w organizacji*, Oficyna ekonomiczna, Kraków 2002, p. 87.

- presentations instead of action – a phenomenon even worse, because it means that managers believe that talking, discussion, analysis, which are the basic tasks in the company to be performed.
- producing documents instead of action – there are situations in which the company rather than get to the surface sinks in stacks of documents.
- mission statements instead of action – this is the most serious way of replacing action with speaking. The crux lies in the fact that companies think that if everything was written down, it means that it is used in practice. Posters with the declaration of the mission cannot raise the quality and satisfy customers.
- planning instead of action – the problem connected with the previous one. Plan and planning often tend to be equated with science and its implementation.
- memory replaces thinking – the problem lies in the fact that the workers, and thus, companies do not make use of knowledge.

Relying on the activities from the past without reflecting on them leads to the use of processes or methods which could harm the organization or are meaningless in the face of the current state of affairs. This causes a kind of stagnation, everyone is accustomed to a certain type of action, even if the employee notice the mistake, he probably will not report it. “Holy cows” in the form of useless procedures, activities tend to be so deeply rooted that even their bosses give in⁸.

The problem lies in the lack of rationality, you cannot hide behind the corporate culture, when in fact you do not have desire to improve the performance of the company. Sticking in this kind of lethargy can lead to self-destruction of the company due to the lack of ability to learn. Changes are sometimes perceived as a threat, and as a result employees cling to the old methods⁹.

Fear contributes to the discrepancy between knowledge and its application – in order for someone to use their knowledge in practice, one must be sure that he will not be punished for it, and taking the risk associated with a new concept and new information will meet with reward, rather than reprimand.

In the fear-based management, it is assumed that people who do not suffer from anxiety and pressure will not work diligently, however, it is not taken into account that in such conditions, employees do not use the knowledge resources for fear of dismissal. Here arises the paradox.

⁸ See more: Reško D., Wołowiec T., Żukowski P., *Zasadnicze problemy z podstaw zarządzania organizacją*, WSB-NLU, Nowy Sącz 2010, p. 123-134; Reško D., Wołowiec T., Soboń J., *Podstawy organizacji i zarządzania pracą (wybrane zagadnienia)*, WSB-NLU, Nowy Sącz, p. 230-245.

⁹ Ibidem, p. 98.

In principle, what is important is measured, the evaluation of results affects what employees are doing and what they are ignoring. Therefore, what cannot be measured is ignored. You would think that companies routinely use the assessment systems, which draw attention of employees to the issue which is recognized by the management as important for strategic reasons for the long-term effectiveness of the company, and therefore focus the measurement processes on actually important elements of management procedures, business strategy and organizational culture.

The effects of the presence of barriers of knowledge management

The existence of barriers to knowledge management is not just mentioning them and their actual existence. Barriers often involve a significant, negative impact on the organization. In order to avoid irreversible changes in the organization, that will be pulling it to the bottom, they should be noticed as soon as possible and the action to deal with them should be taken, which will be described in this chapter.

Jerzy Baruk among the main effects for the company resulting from the barriers to knowledge management in Polish companies enumerates the following¹⁰:

- delay of innovative projects
- interrupting the work on the implementation of innovative projects, not working on innovative projects
- difficulties in translating knowledge to action

The consequence of following the beaten track is the pressure of consequence in the activities, “because we always did it,” it is convenient, because you do not have to spend time searching for new solutions and information. Proceed in this manner would bring most destruction when in fact the situation is changing and the old actions produced poor results. Another consequence of the barriers to knowledge management is a failure to execute the intended action, instead of using the knowledge to implement them. This happens because in some companies a lot of time is spent on discussing the projects, a lot of theoretical knowledge is transferred, and finally there is not enough time to translate it into practice, there is no mechanisms that help to change plans into implementation and completion.

¹⁰ Baruk J., *Zarządzanie wiedzą i innowacjami*, wyd. Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2006, p. 54.

I think that this may have its origin in the lack of motivation, the desire to make oneself better. People are looking for acceptance, they want to be admired. Participation in many projects and taking part in several meetings involve the acquisition of new specialized experience, enriching the range of achievements and an increase in the position. Therefore, the ability to appreciate employees is so important, their search of recognition may have a negative impact on the company, due to the fact that discussions in this case are perceived as an action. Competition procedures can be destructive and can affect the company's ability to translate knowledge into action. Created in such a way internal competition leads to a weakening of loyalty to the organization.

Steps to deal with barriers to knowledge management

In modern enterprises there are numerous barriers to knowledge management, which does not mean that this fact should only be acknowledged. On the contrary, you have to fight with emerging or existing barriers and take action to deal with them. One can talk about unlocking the business¹¹. Unlocking is removing barriers both between the company and its environment, as well as inside the company.

In order to destroy the existing barriers, organizations can take several actions. The first is trusting the employees, the next action is to create teams and transformational leadership. One cannot forget the organizational culture, created in such a way as to support the demolition of existing barriers and to create an incentive system satisfactory for employees who wish to take certain actions to remove the barriers, and then to build a knowledge management system.

Teams are “nodes” in the network with a loose and variable configuration. Their characteristic feature is communication, in addition they have common goals, integrated measures and resources necessary for the accomplishment of goals and guided by the same norms and values. The result is cooperation, trust and mutual respect. Collaborative action forces the joint decision-making, as well as the variability of responsibility, i.e. there is rotation, different people are responsible for the same area or division and integration of knowledge.

Transformational leadership. Speaking of leadership, we will have in mind some important resource of organization, part of its skills, social

¹¹ Kordel P., Kornecki J., Kowalczyk A., Krawczyk K., Pylak K., Wiktorowicz J., op.cit., p. 25.

potential: the sum of the capacities, skills and talents of the impact of some members on other members of the organization in order to be able to achieve the goals of the organization. (...) According to Tichy and Ulrich transformational leader:

- firstly, he provides a vision of development of organizations,
- secondly, he motivates participants to work towards realizing the vision,
- thirdly, he institutionalizes, organizes the process of changes needed to achieve the vision.

This definition of leadership says that: it is an attribute assigned to the entire organization, not to a single person; it is not equivalent with the position in the hierarchy, although it should be correlated; the liquidity, i.e. it “moves” to where at the moment it is needed; the quality of teamwork and trust are the result of the quality of leadership. There is not just one style of leadership, one type of leader. Literature gives several divisions. One of these is the division proposed by P. Pitcher, who shows the leaders as: artists, craftsmen or technocrats. They have different traits and style of work, it depends on the specifics of the organization or on the situation in which it is located now, and organizational culture.

Corrective action is to build an appropriate incentive system that encourages people to share their knowledge. Actions that will be used to deal with barriers to knowledge management are tools for the development of appropriate interpersonal relationships, which include¹²:

- creating conditions to facilitate networking and the development of interpersonal relationships,
- having procedures for the acquisition of diverse experiences,
- allowing for widespread experimentation,
- implementation of organizational solutions facilitating learning.

Another corrective action is to “use” older workers by the company to transfer their knowledge to younger colleagues. In order to eliminate the barrier involving, among others, the fact that I do not know that my knowledge may be useful to someone else, it is necessary to develop such an organizational culture that will support this type of activity. It is known that the strength of any organization is highly qualified staff, in order to have a high percentage of them, the measures should be taken towards achieving the state in which the employees have new knowledge. The excellent sources of this knowledge are experienced workers, but be careful not to

¹² Białobłocki Z., Białobłocka S., Sawina M., *Ekonomiczeskaja teoria. Uczebno- metodiczeskije materialy*, Rossijskij Gasudarstwienyj Socialnyj Uniwersytet, Katedra politiczeskiej ekonomii i miezdunarodnych ekonomiczeskich ostnoszenii, Moskwa 2006.

get caught in the trap of the use of old solutions to the current situation, which are simply inadequate. It's not about the use of older people, but about allowing them to actively participate and use their potential to build competitiveness.

Conclusions

The most visible barriers to knowledge management are: an inadequate organizational culture that prevents transferring ideas from employees to supervisors and the lack of incentive systems that encourage the sharing of knowledge.

Actions which are taken should be aimed at achieving by the employees new knowledge, but you must be careful not to get caught in the trap of mindless use of old solutions to the current situation, which are simply inadequate

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