WHITE PAPER

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS: A PRIMER

"Knowledge management is a discipline that promotes an integrated approach to identifying, capturing, evaluating, retrieving, and sharing an organization's information assets. These assets may include databases, documents, policies, procedures, formal instruction and training, and previously un-captured expertise and experience in individual workers." (Duhon, 1998)

An integrated knowledge management system enables any organization to get the right information to the right people at the right time – with the goal of enhancing and improving organizational performance.

Knowledge management promotes a collaborative and integrative approach to the identification, creation, capture, organization, access and use of "knowledge assets," including the explicit knowledge found in an organization's written documentations, the tacit, uncaptured knowledge of people, and the embedded knowledge found in the organization.

The concepts of integrated knowledge management systems have been around for decades, and all organizations – large and small, non-profit and profit-making – need knowledge management solutions and systems.

Most organizations have a de facto and informal system of knowledge management – a collection of policies, processes, and procedures, maybe a few videos, and an organizational "online library" which stores other "knowledge assets," – but the most effective knowledge management systems are carefully planned and designed, purposeful, and integrated into the organizational culture.

Knowledge management solutions and systems don't have to be elaborate or complicated to be effective and successful. The level of sophistication or simplicity of formally and intentionally designed knowledge management systems will vary, depending on the needs of the organization.

An integrated knowledge management system is useful because it places the focus on knowledge as an actual asset, rather than as something intangible. In so doing, it enables an organization to better protect and exploit what it knows, and to improve and focus its knowledge development efforts to match its needs.

In other words, an integrated knowledge management system will:

- Exploit existing knowledge assets by re-deploying them to areas where the organization stands to gain something, e.g., using knowledge from one department to improve or create a product in another department, or modifying knowledge from a past process to create a new solution.

- Promote a long-term focus on developing the right competencies and skills and removing obsolete knowledge.

- Help organizations learn from past mistakes and successes.

- Enhance an organization's ability to innovate.

- Augment an organization's capacities to protect key knowledge and competencies from being lost or copied.

An integrated knowledge management system prevents organizations from constantly reinventing the wheel, provides a baseline for progress measurement, reduces the burden of expert attrition, makes visual thinking tangible, and manages effectively large volumes of information to help organizations serve their clients better and more quickly.

As a fundamental organizational support, knowledge management systems help organizations to protect their intellectual capital and focus on their most important assets: their human capital. They will also help to re-orient organizational culture with knowledge sharing strategies to better link people within the organization by setting up collaborative methods.

The objectives of an integrated knowledge management system are to:

- Improve the quality of management decision-making by ensuring that reliable and secure knowledge, information, and data is available to the right people, at the right time.

- Enable the organization to be more efficient and improve the quality of their operations and to shrink operational costs by reducing the need to rediscover or reinvent knowledge.

- Ensure that all personnel have a clear and common understanding of the value that their organization provides to their clients and the ways in which benefits are realized from the client's relationship with the organization.

- Maintain a knowledge management system that is organized and provides ready access to knowledge assets, information, and data.

- Gather, analyze, store, share, use and maintain knowledge, information, and data throughout the organization.

All organizations have a need to have access to their extensive pool of knowledge. The way an organization identifies, collects, documents, shares, and exploits this knowledge can be central to its innovation efforts and the ability for it grow and maintain its success.

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