Knowledge Sharing is Key to Assured Success

Dr. Sarbjit Singh

Former Hony Advisor, School of Engineering and Technology, Apeejay Stya University,
Sohna-Palwal Road, Gurgaon, Haryana 122103 India

drsarbjit@gmail.com

Abstract -- **During fast moving IR 4-0 , number of technologies and management techniques are rapidly growing with time zones disappearing and global uncertainty threatening sustainability of organizations and growth of individual professionals. In such a dynamic world, continuous acquiring of newer skills, knowledge networking and knowledge are the keys to success.**

Keywords: IR 4-0, Knowledge networking, Knowledge life cycle, Digital indexed library, Knowledge sharing tools

"*Sharing knowledge is not about giving people something, or getting something from them. That is only valid for information sharing. Sharing knowledge occurs when people are genuinely interested in helping one another, develop new capacities for action; it is about creating learning processes*" *-- Peter Senge*

Figure 1. Concept of knowledge Sharing

I. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge sharing is the process of exchanging required information, in a required format, in a required time, from one person to his/her team, organization and from one organization to another organization. This exchange of knowledge could be domestic or overseas depending upon where your business partners or teams would be located. Sharing of knowledge with others should be a win-win strategy, where all participants get benefitted. Knowledge sharing enhances the productivity, quality and efficiency of all participants. The use/reuse of available knowledge assets, results in saving in cost, time and effort. In such environment, knowledge workers can work faster and more efficiently by getting easy access to knowledge resources which are already available with their organization/ business partners. To get maximum benefits of knowledge sharing, the organization should create a work culture and ethos, where knowledge sharing becomes part of their work-culture and all employees happily participate in knowledge sharing activities. For creating an efficient knowledge-sharing culture, the management should adopt Top-Down Implementation (TDI) scheme. This requires full involvement/ commitment of the top leadership. To promote knowledge sharing culture, senior management must provide a good appreciation and incentive to those who create, maintain and use/reuse knowledge assets.

Knowledge sharing is a multiplication factor to enhance your productivity, synergy and popularity among participants. If one team knows two skills and the other team knows five skills, collectively both teams gain a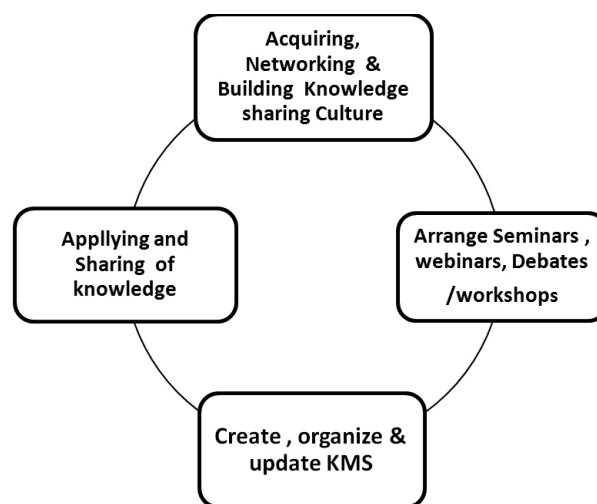dditional expertise which is more than the arithmetic total of 2+5 skills. In fact, it gets squared $(K+K=K^2)$. On the other hand, keeping everything close in your head/file/cupboard or laptop shows your complex or fear that others may take away your hard work/ research work. Such apprehension will often lead to deterioration of your knowledge and soon it can become obsolete. Withholding knowledge will lead to retardation of your professional growth. If as a professor or research scholar, you are doing research work or *innovation for* some new product/process, sharing your approach with others will help you to take advantage of other's experience and have a higher takeoff. This will help in avoiding "Re-inventing the wheel". A good old saying is ever true:

"Knowledge is power. Knowledge shared is power multiplied" – *Robert Noyce.*

II. KNOWLEDGE LIFE CYCLE

It has following stages:

- *Knowledge Acquisition:* This is the stage where knowledge is generated and acquired by the individuals, knowledge workforce and Knowledge Management Organization (KMO)/ Knowledge Management Centre (KMC).

- *Knowledge Updating:* Organizational knowledge is used to regularly update the Knowledge Life Cycle / Knowledge Management System (KMS) of the organization.

- *Knowledge Sharing:* It relates to the application of knowledge/expertise in a form/format that suits other users. Knowledge sharing could be through a physical (face-to-face) meeting to exchange knowledge from one person to another person, a person to a team, a person to KMS of the organization or through online electronic means like Video conference, Zoom meeting or Google Classroom or Skype.

- *Knowledge Reuse:* This stage relates to accessing the KMS and using the extracted information (knowledge). The reuse of available knowledge assets saves time, cost and effort in executing any given task/project.

III. NEED FOR KNOWLEDGE SHARING

It is well known that if knowledge is not used/ shared among others, it soon becomes useless/ outdated. Personal knowledge if locked up in your head or cupboard is like parking your car in the garage for a long time. Knowledge sharing creates a culture of learning more knowledge and gaining a competitive-advantage over competitors. Knowledge sharing happens when information smoothly and speedily flows throughout the organization, departments, teams, business partners and across business locations, within and outside the country. The good old saying is ever true—

"If you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go further, go together."

Therefore knowledge must be shared within your team, within your organization, with your business partners and stakeholders.

IV. KNOWLEDGE SHARING PROCESS

Knowledge management is the process of improving the performance of the organization through designing and implementing systems or tools for the creation and sharing of knowledge. As a manager/team leader, you must establish a process for smooth and speedy flow of knowledge across a team, a group and an organization. By optimum use of available knowledge assets, companies can develop better products, retain high-performing employees and improve customer satisfaction. To establish an efficient knowledge sharing process, following action should be considered:

Facilitate Knowledge Acquisition: Acquiring of knowledge can be in various modes using multiple sources. By organizing training workshops, conferences or seminars/webinars or exhibitions, your teams can acquire new knowledge/ skills. As a project manager/team manager/leader you should facilitate your workforce to take time-off from their routine work and acquire new knowledge**.** Right at the beginning of the year, the CEO and HOD/ HR managers need to plan a knowledge enhancement program. This includes preparing, a training schedule for all employees to take time off from their routine jobs and learn new knowledge/ skills. When employees are provided the opportunity to go for training, they will come back as skilled and happier workers. Remember happy and satisfied employees after completing their online courses or face-to-face (f2f) training through workshops, seminars, and conferences, will come back fully recharged and find better ways of doing their tasks. Therefore, the organization must invest in employees' training and should not expect them to do it on their own time and expense.

Open Seating for Knowledge Sharing: Remember we all are social beings and at our workplace, we need to freely interact with others and seek/give support. Of late, most organizations/ institutes/ research laboratories are doing away with traditional work cubicles and instead have open space layouts in a bigger hall. In such an open environment, employees are cautious of others around them and will stay in their seats to work sincerely. They will not loaf around disturbing others or spending more time in coffee shop. It is easier for the team leader/manager/ supervisor to just walk through, interact and give guidance/ decisions on the spot. The open environment ensures that all employees and their managers at all levels know what is going on in their workplace. It makes lot easier for them to ask questions or share ideas, rather than keeping those to themselves. The open layout is quite common in banks and software project work environments (Agile).

Brain-storming / Brain-sketching: Provide opportunities for the employees to share knowledge by organizing mini brain-storming/ brain-sketching sessions during team meetings. Knowledge Management Center (KMC) could also create an online portal for employees to submit their suggestions and share their knowledge.

Incentivize Knowledge Acquiring and Sharing: The CEO/ CKO and project managers should institutionalize incentives for knowledge acquiring, creating and sharing. The incentive could be monetary or non-monetary.

*Accessibility to seniors***:** Employees should have easy access to their seniors. They will get assured that their CEO/CKO is always approachable and encourages employees to share their knowledge/ experience and ideas for the growth of their organization. This will build trust-culture and motivate them to go for Knowledge Management System (KMS) environment.

Learning from Past Projects/Events: Learning from past events, correcting the present process and better planning for the future, is a proven approach for ensuring success. Knowledge sharing may involve audits or reviews of projects which have been delivered on-time or those which got delayed /failed or abandoned midway. This is good way of sharing experience in terms of problems faced, rework done, solutions provided, lessons learnt, and gains or losses made. Some of the probing questions which junior employees may ask their seniors are listed below:

- What was Customer Requirement (CR) for the assigned project/product?
- Was there any change after the CR was mutually agreed to and frozen?
- Was additional time allocated for incorporating changes in the CR?
- What were implementation plan highlighting Resources, Time and Funds available to the implementation team?
- Was the project delivered without any overrun of Effort, Time, and Cost?
- What were the problems and how the team tackled those?
- Was there any issue related to quality?
- Was there any rework required and its cost?
- Was the customer satisfied fully/ partially or unhappy?
- Were weekly telephonic /video conferences held regularly for reviewing the progress?
- Was any penalty levied by the customer and what were the reasons?
- Was there training for customers during delivery for period?
- What are the suggestions for the future?

V. DIGITAL INDEXED LIBRARY (DIL)

The Organization / Institution / Research Laboratory or Department should have DIL which is part of KMS for storing knowledge/ information and various assets. DIL/KMS should also have easy access to knowledge related to functional needs of teams or individual professionals.

Reusability of Knowledge: In knowledge-based organizations, software developers are encouraged and rewarded for developing more general knowledge assets, which can be easily adapted or suitably modified by other users. Likewise, there can be incentive schemes for those who use "reusable software assets". This will save Time, Effort and Cost and ensure higher productivity and better quality. This approach is recommended for every type of job and in every field.

Developing Knowledge Sharing Culture. It is well recognized that most knowledge workers feel happier at their workplace when they are sharing their knowledge for helping each other. Knowledge sharing is not the responsibility of IT department or HRD or KMC or selected few star performers. In fact, it is the joint responsibility of all involved say in design, manufacturing, logistics, aviation, construction, and many other business operations. However, some latest surveys reveal that most people are only sharing knowledge with their closest colleagues. Hence it is very important to encourage knowledge sharing across the organization, distantly located teams and business partners. Some suggested ways to promote knowledge-sharing culture are briefly given in succeeding paragraphs.

Make knowledge sharing part of Organizational Culture: The senior management and HR department must create a culture where knowledge sharing becomes a natural activity. One easy way is to include KMS operations in the orientation training for new employees. Let senior employees conduct such training to explain the benefits of KMS to the new employees.

Lead from the Top: The senior management should adopt Top-Down Implementation (TDI) approach for establishing KMS. In the TDI scheme, top stakeholders start sharing their knowledge and experience with junior managers and junior managers with their teams. The senior stakeholders should lead by personal examples and they should practice what they preach.

Organize Invited talks /Lectures: The knowledge sharing could also be in the form of organized lectures, or seminars. webinars, presentations, and invited talks by subject experts and industry leaders. These subject experts can quote good examples of successful KMS environment and inspire the audience to go for KMS.

Appreciate and Incentivize Knowledge Sharing: Knowledge sharing reduces repeated mistakes and help the employees make more informed-decisions and increasing productivity.

Encourage Experimenting and Innovations: Publicize that management supports experimenting, innovations and knowledge sharing. Accept "failures" and the cost of experimenting. Appreciate new ideas, even if those are small. Provide them with adequate resources, time and funds to research, discuss and evolve new solutions.

Create good Work Environment: It is true that more employees enjoy their work, the more willingly they will share their knowledge.

Make Knowledge Sharing Easy: KMS should have user-friendly Graphic User Interface (GUI). This will make it simple to update or access required information. KMO/KMC should offer multiple ways to do it.

Reorganize the Seating plan: Middle level managers, team-leaders and their teams should all work in an open hall. In this hall team leaders and managers can freely walk and talk with their team members. This will ensure that people are not leaving their seats and loaf around as everyone is being watched in an open hall.

Create Centre of Excellence for Innovations: Create Centre Of Excellence (COE) where employees can collaborate and discuss new ideas without distraction. COE should have tools and instruments for validating their ideas.

Informal meetings in coffee shops: Create more coffee stations in suitable locations of your workplace. These can act as informal conference rooms for sharing ideas in more relaxed environment.

Virtual Meetings for Remote Teams: To cater for knowledge sharing among remote teams, you may set-up weekly virtual events,where team leaders must encourage knowledge sharing. *Knowledge Sharing Activities:* Organize weekly meetings of teams to share their knowledge. Likewise, team leaders should hold their scheduled review meetings, where members can bring out what went right or wrong and suggest improvements. *Star-Performers must share their knowledge:* To popularize knowledge sharing across your organization, identify star performers who can inspire their co-workers to follow KMS route. However, these experts need an innovative and easy way to share their knowledge and not worry about their own indispensability.

*Showcase Hidden Talent***:** There will be some shy knowledge workers who are experts in a certain subject but they have not been brought to the limelight. They may be shy of showcasing their idea. Bringing them forward and praising them in public will inspire others to showcase their   expertise and newly acquired skills.

VI. KNOWLEDGE SHARING TOOLS

The selection of proper knowledge sharing tools for information extracting and sharing is very vital for the success of any KMS and growth of the organization. While, Tele-conferencing, Video conferencing, Virtual meeting software like Skype, Google Meeting or Microsoft Teams or Zoom meeting are useful for normal communications, these may not be suitable for knowledge updating and sharing. The limitations of knowledge sharing tools can impact productivity of the organization. Some popular knowledge sharing tools are shown below:

- https://www.askspoke.com/blog/knowledge-management/knowledge-management-importance/
- https://www.greatworklife.com/telecommuting-remote-working-statistics-trends/
- https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167923606000583
- https://www.gallup.com/workplace/231668/dismal-employee-engagement-sign-global-mismanagement.aspx?
- http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/CLAS/Centers/writing/Documents/HR_Managament.pdf
- ttps://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2019-01-24-gartner-predicts-70-percent-of-organizations-will

VII. CONCLUSION

Indeed, knowledge is a powerful organizational asset that can help individuals and organizations to achieve grand success. However, keeping knowledge to oneself can limit its potential to impact others and become outdated soon. The world has seen how sharing of research work and knowledge among many nations helped in quickly finding new vaccine and halt Corona Pandemic during 2020. Sharing of knowledge not only benefits others but also enriches the sharer's own experience and understanding. A recent survey reveals that 90% of the employees want the opportunity to share their knowledge and gain popularity. With dispersed teams, sharing stored knowledge and remote working from homes is on the rise. These teams need right software tools for accessing KMS and overcome the geographical barriers. Today knowledge sharing is becoming more common among educational institutes, research laboratoriesand many organizations involved in building infrastructure.

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Dr Sarbjit Singh is an alumnus of PEC Chandigarh, IIT Kanpur and Punjab University Chandigarh, India. Served for 30 years in the "Corps of Signals", the Indian Army. Got trained at EMC Agency, Bland Ford, UK and established an EMC cell at MCTE Mhow, MP. He has been the founder Director, War-Gaming Development Centre. Visited MIT, DEC, Stanford, CMU, University of West Virginia, and Intel Chicago in search of technologies and resources related to Terrain Digitization, Combat Modeling, and War-Gaming. As Director Telecomm. and Director SATCOM, Army HQ, closely worked with C-DOT (New Delhi), ISRO (Bangalore), TIFR (Bombay), DRDO (ISSA) New Delhi, and Modern Cartographic Center (MCC), Surveyor General of India, Dehradun for designing Real-Time Operations Information System (OIS) for the Field Army. Post early retirement as Brigadier from the Army in 1995, was GM, Decision Support System (DSS), McNally Bharat Engineering, Kolkata, Feb 1995 to Mar 1999.

Later served as Director, Apeejay Institute of Information Technology, Gurgaon, 1999-2003, Director Aikon Info Com, New Delhi 2003-2004, Executive Director, Future Computing Solutions India Mohali 2004-2006, Principal Apeejay College of Engineering, 2007-2010 and Hony Advisor, School of Engineering and Technology at Apeejay Stya University, Gurgaon, from Aug 2010 to Jul 2016. Possesses over 12 years' experience in designing & executing software projects for ERP in manufacturing, e-Commerce and e-Publication for clients in USA and India.

Kept himself updated in new skills through short courses and certifications in Oracle RDBMS, CMM, Cloud Computing, Big Data- Using Hadoop, Agile Computing (SCRUM), Authoring (Content Writing), Digital Marketing, Machine Learning and Python programming. His knowledge areas are Software Project Management, Software Reusability, Agile Computing, Software Engineering, Cloud Computing, AI, Machine Learning, Technology Management, Digital Marketing, Leadership, Spirituality and authoring in technology areas. He is committed to knowledge-sharing and supporting young professionals in their career. Authored three books published by Notion Press: *A2Z - 26 Steps for Assured Success,* June 2017, and *Career Challenges during Global Uncertainty,* May 2018, *Knowledge Sharing is Key to Assured Success,* Mar 2024.