

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT FOR SMALL SIZED AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

R Senthilkumar*

Introduction:

The technology driven companies have now become knowledge driven companies. All that will make a difference is whether you *know* or not. In this highly competitive scenario it is imperative that Small and Medium Sized Enterprises also take note of the latest buzzword in the changing scenario- Knowledge Management. It might do well to change itself to the future and that will be on how well we manage things for the enterprise. There is the coming back of ERP in a totally different phase all customised and enhancing the role of Supply Chain Management and inventories. This is where Knowledge Management comes to the play as a very imperative tool today, which has gone beyond the MIS role of data collection and analysis. Here is a challenge to involve everybody to get into the act, right from the junior employee to the highest decision-maker. How does it reflect on the SMEs? Let's take a look.

It is a supercool fact that the Knowledge Management will depend solely on the flow of knowledge and the dissemination and most importantly the *response* from the receiver.

There are various factors responsible for the success of the Knowledge Management. For a growing company this is of prime importance because it could be the winning strategy for its success in the short term as well as long term scenario. The factors that contribute heavily in making the difference will be KFM i.e., Knowledge Flow Management, playing its ace in the current industry scenario.

The individuals who are responsible to make the knowledge flow, a smooth one, will naturally make or break the flow.

MANAGING KM - A HEART ROBBING STYLE:

The definition of knowledge management always holds good as the information or data available to the resource people who make a decision for the company in all its levels of functioning.

Knowledge = information translated into application

It's a bitter-sweet fact that there is a vast resource of knowledge available but the constraints are alpha plus in getting the right source and more so the right implementation. Therefore, the organization needs to check the veracity as well as the applicability of knowledge gathered for the better utilisation of resources and the infrastructure, which makes the bee in the bonnet.

Knowledge Management needs to be *defined* in the context applied and here with the round the clock truth, we need to look more into the intricacies of the industry where it is applied; the flow of knowledge and the people involved.

There are different ways of gathering knowledge; this seems to be the best part and every objective method is to get knowledge the right way to the right person in question which will convert information into knowledge which is valid and more reliable.

Here is a presentation on the topic of Knowledge Acquisition & Implementation with respect to Small and Medium Sized Enterprises.

* Corporate Communications, Sona College of Technology, Salem, TamilNadu India.

The five steps involved in Knowledge Acquisition and Implementation is name as KAI Pyramid.

The components of the pyramid are as follows:

1. Knowledge Ether
2. Knowledge Clutter
3. Knowledge Filtering
4. Knowledge Streamlining
5. Knowledge Acquisition & Implementation

These are five steps of the pyramid of KAI, and as we go nearer to the goal of realising the true value of information: translated to knowledge, it takes the pyramid route to perfection and achieve organisational goals with respect to the details involved in each layer.



Knowledge Ether:

This is the base of the pyramid on which the KAI is built on. Since the information and knowledge is available with the large resources either Internet or book and articles, it will be really a tough proposition to ask for relevant information in such a scattered & confused state and those are not specific and organised. This ether can also be the constitution of a lot of other factors, emails, personal communication channels, mass media and other reliable sources may be even word of mouth. Thus it need not be an organized effort to gain knowledge in terms of what the person in the authority needs to know and acquire for him and the ether can get him what ever he wants in measures that are very big and unorganised. It will be like said earlier, KM will depend on the

individual and this will contribute to their success and implementation.

There has been an innumerable times when a slice of life incident has lead to the discovery of the best of principles and may be the wildest of inventions. Thus ether will be a sea of opportunity for those looking at Knowledge Management and also effective utilisation of knowledge will depend solely n the individual and of course on the higher authority over him.

But as it goes up the order, it becomes an organised effort of gaining knowledge and acquiring it for effective implementation. In the case of SMEs, it leads to the best of effective utilisation of knowledge management. All the more easier because each department can actually set itself into streamlining and identifying data All the departments in any given organisation will put in a co-ordinated effort to administer knowledge and manage it effectively.

Knowledge Clutter:

The second part makes knowledge management still more interesting. Here we come to organise things in such a way as to make a classification with what is that we need and want and hence there is an idea of making it go the right road. May be it is a journey from the forest to the road where you could spot the road and it might still be a hazy picture, never the less, it could be the beginning of a great journey ahead.

This could very well be the first ether, but a differentiation has been made since there is an effort to organise us in fitting it to our need. Therefore this step is a prelude to deciding whether we need to take as much from the ether or just go deciding against skipping some components. This differentiation is depicted in the second diagram of flow of effective knowledge management.

Knowledge Filtering:

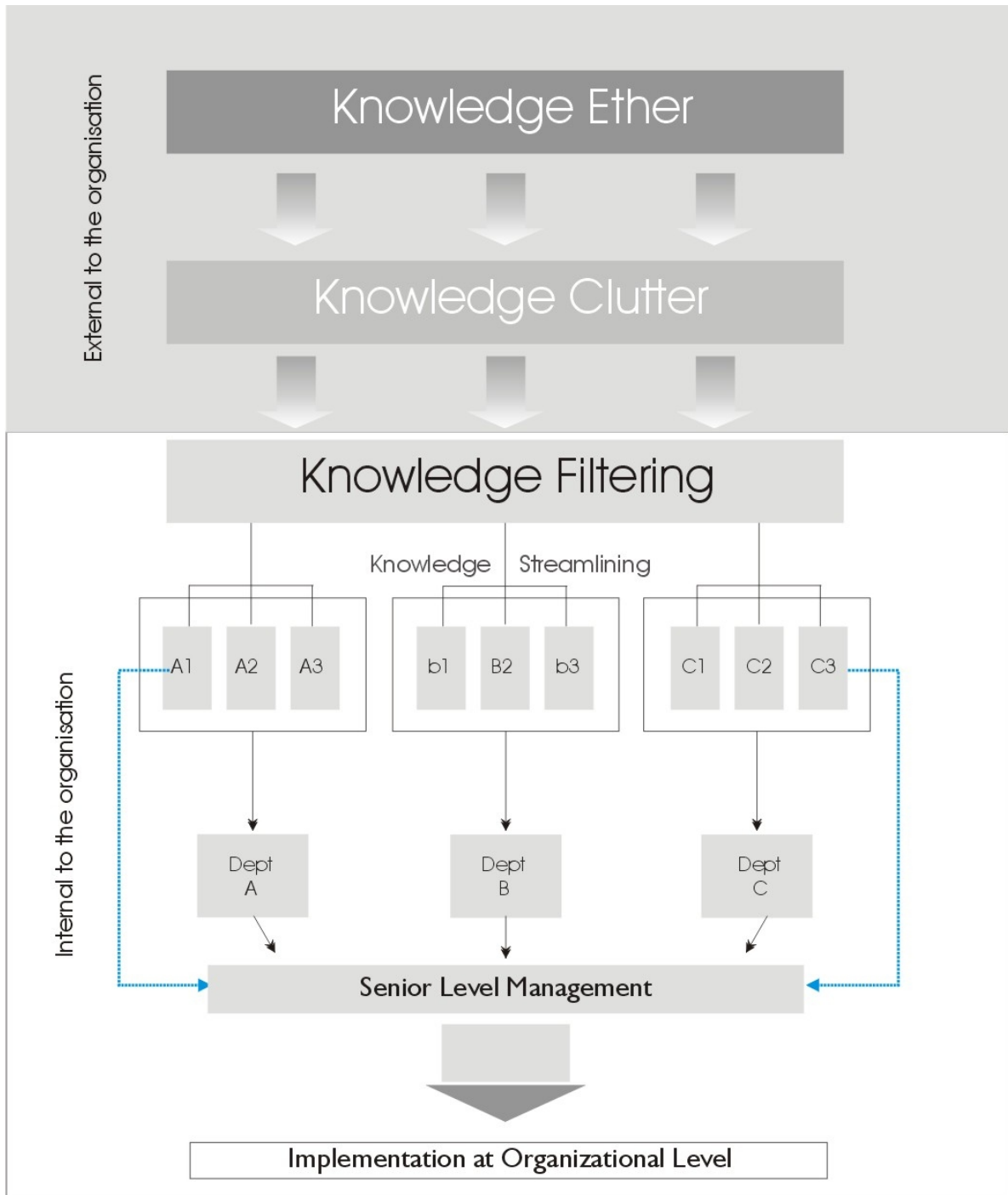
After knowledge cluttering by organisation, the next part involves the process of defining what exactly will have to be channelized as knowledge and other data as information, here we shall define knowledge as the applied information. There are various departments in each industry. Now how do we give the information only relevant to the department or do we give all the information? Here we will do the filtering in as much terms as we require a definition. Say, the marketing department need not get the whole picture of the R & D department and vice versa. So there is thin line drawn in making it as the information, and just information. That could be the filtering process and if you take a closer look at the pyramid and the KFM at Work , it will be more than sufficiently to understand why it is needed.

There will be of course need to filter information for any industry, but the people especially the marketing will need to gear themselves to accepts the challenge that is posted by knowledge filtering because they might lose on crucial information in terms of composition and clients specification.

This part will also be internal to the organisation. This will ensure effective exchange of information and ideas within the organisation, which eventually will cause the broad based filtering of information and knowledge.

Knowledge Streamlining:

This phase of KAI is crucial because when the knowledge being but not been channelized or distributed properly it will make a hell of waste. This phase needs to guarantee that the information has reached the desk of the competent authority and has been accepted. It could even be e-mail, and it could be a memo.



Knowledge Flow Management - KFM at work in a typical broad based organisation

The chart shows how the KAI pyramid is implemented and actually made into achieving organisational goals. The part of every individual is important in the sense that they will contribute to identifying knowledge relevant to the organisation in their own capacity. The flow can also be straight to the top level whenever warranted and through proper channel which will enable the participation of all those involved in the decision making.

The purpose of this phase of the KAI process will depend on the communication channel of the organisation. It also depends on the individual to the extent the individual decides to react.

Knowledge Acquisition and Implementation:

The final stage of the process calls for practical implementation of whatever knowledge has been gained. The implementation of this will depend on the efficiency of the people and the way the knowledge has been administered.

As per the famous saying “**The mind is like a parachute it's useful only if it's open**”. The knowledge will lay waste if not utilised so this is the exact time for the organisation to realise that four levels have been administered in its proper perspective and will generate automatic results.

This triangle can be used for any number of departments and it will be bisected or shared according to the number of departments the organisation has. Suppose we have a three-way department as in an X company, we can generate the same type of diagrams as given at 120 degrees each. Knowledge Management has to be done in a way that reflects accessibility to ideas and more importantly to work functions of a group or an individual.

Conclusion:

The implementation of KM with this pyramid and actual practice will be served best with the finding the right methodology for implementation and redesignation of the departments involved. It should also be borne in mind that it is a two way communication channel in each of the layers in effecting the real acquisition of knowledge.

A ship in a harbour is always safe but it is not the purpose for which it is built for.