

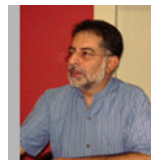
CREATING HEART CAPITAL

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"One of the advantages of being disorderly is that one is constantly making exciting discoveries."



The Author is an Industrial Designer for whom design is a way of life. People are the true assets of any commercial venture and he believes that those that think with their hearts, or for that matter, use their intellects to emote are the harbingers of our destiny.

This article disregards the ongoing global debate that continues to baffle experts about the facets of knowledge and their value. Instead of delving into terminologies and techniques, the author raises basic issues to provoke solutions that can only come about by consciously disrupting the traditional mindset.

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Different processes drive KM projects, but "Human Issues" might dominate other ones.
Davenport

Knowledge Management is different from Managing Knowledge. Very different. When knowledge is at work, it is collecting information, creating and classifying patterns, arranging experiences from the past. A whole lot is going on. Well, it is really the knower at work and the knower's knowledge is merely a continuous energy flow.

Let's talk about the *state-of-the-heart* aspects of knowledge.

__ Where's it all coming from

Let's take a closer look at how knowledge has been transmitted down generations and centuries. Does the human DNA carry bits and bytes of my father's knowledge base? I doubt it. Do families own supercomputers to capture, store and distribute the knowledge of their code of conduct? Unlikely. Is driving in traffic codified into a process that you can refer to when you need to get to an important meeting? Probably not. And aren't we glad for it!

__ Managing Knowledge?

Managing information is possible, perhaps even easy. Managing knowledge is not. Can knowledge be managed by Management principles taught in B-schools? Can you command and control knowledge? Is it fair to even try?

KM has become a blurb without real meaning due to the over-selling of simple IT solutions.

Implementation and success of a KM system do not depend on technology (representing maybe 20% of the cost), but on the management's ability to *support* it, and the employees' *motivation* for creating and using it.¹

__ A matter of people

People matter. Put people into a room and knowledge becomes available for sharing. Put documents into a database and you have structured information, not knowledge. Why? Because,

- Individuals have their own needs for information (i.e. personalisation).
- Personal information needs change from situation to situation.

¹ The Faros Project -- Statoil, Norway

- Timely delivery of information to specific contexts is crucial.
- People travel between real-world situations – so do their needs.

The Maths of Knowledge

To share is to
multiply; to
spend is to
save ...

KALiF *multiply!*²

The mathematics of knowledge defies all we have learnt as kids. Sharing has 2 connotations. Firstly, when dealing with material, it means “splitting up”. On the other hand, the social connotation for sharing is “to have together”. If I share 2 apples with another, we have one apple each, but if I share 2 ideas with another, we both have 2 ideas each. In the case of knowledge, *to share is to*

__ There’s no Algorithm for Community³

Only an environment. Algorithms are math-based formulae and equations with imposed constraints. The term algorithm (pronounced AL-go-rith-um) is a procedure or formula for solving a problem. A computer program can be viewed as an elaborate algorithm. In mathematics and computer science, an algorithm usually means a small procedure that solves a recurrent problem.

algorithm⁴ [ˈælgəˌrɪðəm] *noun*

1. a logical arithmetical or computational procedure that if correctly applied ensures the solution of a problem
2. (*Logic*) (*maths*) a recursive procedure whereby an infinite sequence of terms can be generated

Let technology be. This is the hard part. We feel uncomfortable when there’s nothing happening. We always want our activities to result in something tangible. We want to show results. Knowledge flows gently in a community. But it does flow. Unfortunately, it is invisible and cannot happen through predefined inputs and expected outcomes. If you know something, you can use the knowledge when you need to.

SHARING IS FUN AND USEFUL

People like to feel comfortable and will only let their guard down in familiar settings. People like sharing. People like having fun!

² From the book “KALiF”

³ This succinct (and accurate) observation originates, I believe, from Peter Kollock of University of California at Los Angeles.

⁴ The Collins English Dictionary © 2000 HarperCollins Publishers

__ Communities are living entities

Communities are born, they have a lifespan and they die. They are impermanent, volatile and dynamic. This is the first reality and there is no point wishing for immortality. They are about gain with pain – innovation with extinction. Technologies change, people change and market dynamics change. Communities possess knowledge and this knowledge grows through interaction between their constituents, within the community and with the outside world.

__ Take a coffee break

Since knowledge implies a knower, it also implies that value is added by people – context, experience and interpretation – in transforming data and information into knowledge. People just want to know enough to be comfortable, and to know that they can go back to their desk and find collateral information (codified knowledge) when the need arises.

Three heuristics illustrate the change in thinking required to manage knowledge:

Knowledge can only be volunteered; it cannot be conscripted for the very simple reason that I can never truly know if someone is using his or her knowledge.

We can always know more than we can tell, and we will always tell more than we can write down. The nature of knowledge is such that we always know, or are capable of knowing more than we have the physical time or the conceptual ability to say. I can speak in five minutes what it will otherwise take me two weeks to get round to spend a couple of hours writing it down.

We only know what we know when we need to know it, human knowledge is deeply contextual, it is triggered by circumstance. In understanding what people know, we have to recreate the context of their knowing if we are to ask a meaningful question or enable knowledge use.⁵

__ The nature of Nature

Nature has its ways of transmitting knowledge too! Species emerge when the environmental balance provides favourable conditions. They become extinct in accordance with the laws of evolution. Every organism has a “memory” of prior stimuli and ecology that is stored in the class of species. It is a collective “knowledge” that resides elsewhere and not in any physical “brain”. Nor is this information stored in a

⁵ Dave Snowden – Complex Acts of Knowing: Paradox and Descriptive Self-awareness

common repository for easy access. There are invaluable lessons for organizational KM initiatives in Nature's model of evolution and extinction.

THE WORLD WITHIN

Introducing ecology. As applied to any organizational effort it is "*the relationships between human groups and their physical environment*". KM frameworks need to create environments, physical as well as virtual, to foster relationships for knowledge capture and exchange. Ecology presumes sustainability and renewability. Therefore, Knowledge ecology presumes that knowledge is sustainable, renewable and can be shared like any energy form. What it takes to ignite a knowledge cycle is an open, transparent and defenseless attitude.

Formality has its own unspoken rules. There is a social thermostat in each one of us. A kind of formality meter that regulates our body language. If I am sitting around a conference table, I regulate my behaviour accordingly. I should think that there are some universal rules we follow. I am more comfortable and open in my living room, less formal and guarded, than when I sit on the dinner table.

The challenge for organizations, to encourage the flow of unstructured tacit knowledge, is to strike the right balance between informality and corporate culture. It is easy to go overboard in creating an environment and culture that will make people so comfortable that they will only have fun so no work gets done.

Information technology has shattered historical power centers and transferred their power to the hands of individuals. Like any other power, this can be misused and abused. At the same time it can be a power that enables a better future for humankind. But one thing is certain, short-sighted stampedes will not last. Only creativity and commitment to humancentric issues will enable sustained survival. A good starting point is to humanise Information Technology.

— The heart never lies

We use the word "heart" in many ways.

As the symbol of love. (My heart goes out to you)

As the organ of emotion. (I love this place)

As the barometer of intuition. (I don't know why, but I'm not too comfortable with this tactic)

As the centre of things. (Let's get to the heart of this)

As the opponent of the mind. (I feel we should ignore what he said)

As the culprit of vulnerability. (He wears his heart on his sleeve)

Follow your heart ... it never lies. It is the seat of emotions and feelings.

Information technology has created a revolution and continues at a pace that is difficult for even the experts to keep up with. Its ubiquitous nature has transferred the reins of power to the hands of individuals all over the world. But technology continues to be employed for its own sake because the stakes of its proponents have reached mammoth proportions.

To humanise means to create value concepts for technology to enable. To humanise is to create solutions that can be tailored to every individual's tastes and interests. To humanise is to recognise that technology cannot replace the charm of personal contact. To humanise is to disrupt current business thinking and methods. To humanise is to add emotion. To humanise is to add fun to work and work systems.

"Unlike all previous revolutions that had technology trying to keep up with human needs, the coming era will be one of slowing down. Slowing down to use only those aspects of technology that truly reflect individual enrichment."⁶

Traditional business approaches seem to dictate that people should leave their hearts at home when leaving for work. Yet the expectation that one's heart should show in one's work continues. The relationship between the employer and employee is limited to monetary compensation for work done. Basically, time is being commoditised here.

__ Brew the future

It is time now, to create heart capital. An exchange of feelings, emotions and culture to foster knowledge creation and sharing. An asset for individual growth and organizational excellence. A tool for sharpening the competitive edge. A culture for human enrichment. A plan to protect and propagate our common heritage.

Let's ask ourselves some questions.

Is it necessary to create a new lexicon of corporate nomenclature if we want to change traditional thinking? For example, HR is traditionally responsible for all people issues in an organization. Does this mean that other departments do not need to care about people? Is there something about the nomenclature "HR" that needs repairing? When dealing with materials, the word "resource" is probably appropriate. But Human

⁶The author

Resource?? I thought resources were for people to use, so how appropriate is it to think of human beings as resources?

The entire business terminology needs a revamp. Human Resources should become Corporate Citizenship, Research & Development should become Knowledge Innovation, and so on. The focus is clearly shifting from efficiency to effectiveness, from sentiment to passion, from profit to value and from performance to the emotional well being of the user.

“It is not going to be enough to react to problems that emerge and then set about solving them. The questions we must face are going to be led by creative thinking and a sensitive balance between technology and human interaction.”

VIRTUAL REALITY ANYONE?

Here we're not talking about gizmos and entertainment in virtual spaces. The idea is to look at combining the real-world feel with technological and creative wizardry. Sometimes too much of a good thing can become boring after a while. Since knowledge sharing needs the knower, the known and a conducive environment, the challenge is to transpose real-world comfort on technological solutions so that people can relate to the space they interact in. Enter the age of Virteal communities.

We'll talk about these some more in a future article.

Thanks for reading this.