

Challenge Facing Sudanese Business Organizations For Using Knowledge Management System

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ABSTRACT

The current century is focusing toward knowledge-based system. Knowledge is a fundamental resource for developing a knowledge-based system and it can give power to any organization. Because of that, every Sudanese organization is going to changes and is required to adapt to the changes for good results. While the field of Knowledge Management has long been studied by scholars of several disciplines, there remain significant challenges for the future. The Most people expect the economy to grow and competition to increase in Sudan.

In our paper, we will focus on Challenge Facing Sudanese Business Organizations for Using Knowledge Management System. These challenges reside in Sudanese organization by both theoretical and conceptual studies include; The Growth of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Globalization, Knowledge Management and Organizational Competitiveness, Culture, The individual, Shared leadership, and others.

On this paper we will use an observation and literature survey from all possible sources and formats based on knowledge management challenges.

Keywords

Knowledge management, Sudanese business organizations.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The improvement and change of Sudanese business organizations will be ubiquitous - requiring organizations to make incremental or continuous improvements, and breakthrough or "game-changing" advances. The question is: What are the contributions that Knowledge Management will make as a field of study .and a relevant practice (Dierkes, Berthoin Antal, Child, & Nonaka,

2003). Knowledge and innovation played an important role in the development of society

In the distant past, some scholars in organization science recognized the value of knowledge and expertise in organizations. But knowledge and knowledge processes in Sudanese organizations have only received systematic theoretical and empirical attention during the last decade. Knowledge has become a central concept in the field of organization studies (e.g., Nonaka 1994; Grant 1996b). The prime contribution of knowledge is that it enables actions.

1.1 What Is Knowledge Management?

According to (Davenport and Prusak, 1998) Knowledge management is the name given to the set of efficient and closely controlled events that an organization can take to achieve the maximum value from the knowledge available to it. "Knowledge" in this framework includes both the experience and understanding of the people in the organization and the information, such as documents and reports, available within the organization and in the world outside. Useful knowledge management usually requires a suitable combination of organizational, social, and managerial initiatives along with, in many cases, employment of appropriate technology.

In this matter (Dayer, 2000) mention that KM can be defined as" it is essential to today's enterprise growth and evolution, KM is a key requirement to future successful enterprise and rapidly being recognized by firms to be major strategic importance's.

1.1.2 Why Is Knowledge Management Important?

The success of businesses in the 1990's in an increasingly competitive marketplace depends critically on the quality of knowledge which those organizations apply to their key business processes. For example the supply chain depends on knowledge of diverse areas

including raw materials, planning, manufacturing and distribution. Likewise product development requires knowledge of consumer requirements, new science, new technology, marketing etc.

The challenge of deploying the knowledge assets of an organization to create competitive advantage becomes more crucial as: The marketplace is increasingly competitive and the rate of innovation is rising, so that knowledge must evolve and be assimilated at an ever faster rate. Corporations are organizing their businesses to be focused on creating customer value. Staffs functions are being reduced as are management structures. There is a need to replace the informal knowledge management of the staff function with formal methods in customer aligned business processes. Competitive pressures are reducing the size of the workforce which holds this knowledge. Knowledge takes time to experience and acquire. Employees have less and less time for this. There are trends for employees to retire earlier and for increasing mobility, leading to loss of knowledge. There is a need to manage increasing complexity as small operating companies a re trans-national sourcing operations. A change in strategic direction may result in the loss of knowledge in a specific area. A subsequent reversal in policy may then lead to a renewed requirement for this knowledge, but the employees with that knowledge may no longer be there.

2.0 CHALLENGES FACING SUDANESE BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS

In the distant past, some scholars in organization science recognized the value of knowledge and expertise in organizations. But knowledge and knowledge processes in organizations have only received systematic theoretical and empirical attention during the last decade. Knowledge has become a central concept in the field of organization studies (Nonaka 1994; Grant 1996b). The prime contribution of knowledge is that it enables actions. Therefore many Sudanese business organizations resist challenges for Using Knowledge Management System to improve and develop their activities and the main reason being that it is not read, manipulated and communicated among (knower and users). Knowledge embodied in books and journals does not necessarily translate into useful and usable knowledge unless it is read, manipulated and communicated from one person to another (Suliman Al-Hawamdeh October 2002).

2.1 The Growth of Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

Technology plays an important role in knowledge management, although knowledge management is not about technology. Technology, including the information revolution and globalization, continues to exert major effects on knowledge management development in

Sudan, ICT has been the driver of the knowledge-based society. The economists now look at ICT as drivers of change, tools for releasing the creative potential and knowledge embodied in people. ICT has transformed the ability of both individuals and organizations to augment their intelligence via accelerated learning (Pemberton & Stonehouse, 2000). They are providing new and faster ways of delivering and accessing information, innovative ways for real-time communication and new ways to do business and create opportunities. The technology is putting more and more information into the public domain, leading rearrangements of societal forces and governance structures towards greater efficiency, transparency and accountability in functioning. The initial challenge of knowledge management in Sudanese organizations is synthesizing the information processing technologies in these organizations and the unique abilities of the people to allow the organization to survive and thrive on knowledge. Knowledge management does not just know every thing the organization knows. It is creating a synthesis between the people and the information to the point that the whole is more than the sum of the parts.

Bellinger (2004) offered that "The value of knowledge management relates directly to the effectiveness with which the managed knowledge enables the members of the organization to deal with today's ICT situations and effectively envision and create their future."

2.2 Globalization

One major trend today that has implications on knowledge management is globalization. The world is fast becoming one interdependent global marketplace. Almost all firms are now competing in international markets as barriers to the movement of capital and tariff walls have been reduced. Floyd (1999) suggests that globalization is the freeing up of labor and capital flows. Indeed, there is much evidence to suggest that this is taking place in both the global and regional integration contexts.

According to Kozul-Wright and Rowthorn (1998), the globalization process is largely considered beneficial, to the extent that it creates more open economies and is based on rapid technological advances, which optimize the insertion of more countries into the world market. However, the global business environment demands employees who can work effectively across national and cultural boundaries. For example, rapid economic growth in the economies in the world, and the progressive movement of production toward higher-technology industries and services have resulted in an increased demand by businesses for a more skilled and educated work force. In addition, Sudanese business organizations must also understand that their client's problems and needs are paramount and that they are the primary driver of continuous improvements and innovation.

In this matter (Kotter, 1996) mentioned that the clients now demand products and services to be better, faster and more affordable. As technology grows by leaps and bounds, the enterprise should exercise care in the insertion of technology and stay within the limits of the firm's financial and technical capability to control the inherent risks. Knowledge management is now more than at anytime in history, the key contributor and it will be knowledge as the potent competitive weapon for the 21st century.

2.3 Knowledge Management and Organizational Competitiveness

Many leading organizations recognize the value of intangible assets, such as know-how, in relative to tangible assets, such as manpower, buildings and equipment. The measurement of intangible assets (e.g. expertise, experience, patents) is increasing in importance because these assets are more permanent than the tangible assets by which organizations' values have traditionally been evaluated (Drucker, 1995). Whether the specialty is manufacturing or service, many organizations are beginning to investigate how these intangible knowledge assets or intellectual assets can serve as the basis for competitive advantage (Steward, 1994). The ability of companies to exploit their intangible assets has become far more decisive than their ability to invest and manage their physical assets (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). As Sudan markets shift, uncertainty dominates, technologies proliferate, competitors multiply and products and services become obsolete, successful Sudanese business organizations are characterized by their ability to consistently create new knowledge, quickly disseminate it and embody it in their new products and services. In the postindustrial era, the success of a organization lies deeply embedded in its intellectual systems, as knowledge-based activities of developing new products, services and processes become the primary internal function of firms attempting to create the greatest promise for a long-term competitive advantage for Sudanese business organizations.

2.4 The individual

According to (Goldsmith, Morgan, & Ogg, 2004), "Our business system is based on accumulating knowledge individually".

This form of defining working culture is antithetical to a social structure that believes and embraces knowledge sharing and management without having to accrue personal gain. This challenge presents itself in many ways within Sudanese corporate because those who prescribe to it limit their ability to work more effectively together and share intellectual capital.

According to Grant (1996), the major challenge of knowledge management is in the process of capture and integration. In order to be successful, an organization must first concentrate on changing the mindset of its followers. The goal in using knowledge management is

to aid them in the performance of their duties. Knowledge management challenges that were once focused on financial aspects are now facing the challenges of measuring human and intellectual value too. Not only is this technology meant to enhance access, but also to enhance interactions between people by improving knowledge awareness. Therefore Sudanese business organizations requested to share the knowledge with each others.

2.5 Culture

Knowledge Management, likewise, must have practical application to Sudanese organizations. The tools, databases, and technological equipments are not themselves Knowledge Management. Knowledge and learning come from people and their relationships with each other and their experiences. The real challenge, therefore, comes in the form of developing a culture that embraces learning, sharing, changing, and improving, all through the collective intelligence and knowledge of people.

Kluge et al. (2001) tell us that their examination of a variety of companies revealed that many of them had attempted to implement knowledge management efforts but failed due the lack of an appropriate cultural context that would "create and nurture reciprocal trust, openness and cooperation".

Sudanese organizations maintain that employees must be enthused with a thirst for knowledge and that many failures in this arena are the result of top down efforts to "push" information. Push approaches can often be identified by management's reference to information technology initiatives. The authors maintain that push is easy; the challenge is in creating the pull - the desire for the knowledge among the employees.

2.6 Shared leadership

One of the greatest challenges of knowledge management is the assurance that knowledge will prevail by ensuring that knowledge workers are given "voice" – sometimes referred to as shared leadership. But if viewed in the Sudanese business scenario, managers are attracted by the social status they gain from being managers and never share leadership. Goldsmith (2004) defines knowledge workers "as people who know more about what they are doing than their managers do [and adds that] while many knowledge workers have years of education and experience in training for their positions, they often have little training in how to effectively influence upper management" (Goldsmith, et al., 2004, p. 19).

Goldsmith et al. (2004) quoting Peter Drucker provides an explanation for this lack of influence when he says, "The great majority of people tend to focus downward. They are occupied with efforts rather than results".

Sudanese organizations maintain challenges of sharing leadership which appears as the result of old mentality and traditional of leaders for these organizations.

2.7 From Customer –side

In Sudan, customers are affected by opinions of others and after they trust a certain product and they will never easily substitute it unless they are convinced with other product substitution. And it is really very difficult to judge on their reaction toward a given product. On the other hand, there is no systematic mechanism for acquiring continuous flow of customer data. It is not easy to convince them that knowledge creates knowledge and in the process brings competitive advantage and leads to wealth creation. It is very difficult to convince Sudanese business organizations to accept that Knowledge creates knowledge and in the process brings competitive advantage and leads to wealth creation.

2.8 Supplier and Company –side

By systematically varying its activities to test the bounds of its models and assumptions, and measuring and making sense of the results, an organization can proactively create learning opportunities instead of passively waiting for them to occur.

- Knowledge can profoundly change the way an organization positions itself in its industry and in doing so, can radically change the organization itself.
- Because of the time required to develop knowledge, most short-term efforts tend to be focused on knowledge exploitation rather than exploration and on technical rather than organizational fixes.
- taking an internal exploitation strategy
- How to accept The concept of treating organizational knowledge as a valuable strategic asset as a fact?
- In order to stay ahead of the competition, firms nowadays understand fully the need to know (a) their customers and (b) their competitors deeply.
- the need to know the competition

3.0 FINDING

Challenges for the Sudanese business organizations may include, pointing out few:

- Deprived role of IT application in business on account of inadequately perceived notion of IT.
- Pattern Shift in Business Strategy. The new world of business imposes the need for variety and complexity of interpretations of business information outputs generated by computer systems, but the same is very hard to comprehend and it is totally different in the case of the Sudanese business companies.

- Consideration of information as a ‘utility’ is a realization challenge of the term for the Sudanese business organizations.
- Another challenge is re-build the company’s information architecture and information strategy by rethinking the company’s business in terms of business processes rather than discrete functions and hierarchies.
- Another challenge is in the form of scope and it is that Implementations of knowledge management may range from technology-driven methods of accessing, controlling, and delivering information to massive efforts to change corporate culture.
- Marketplaces are increasingly competitive and the rate of foreign investors’ competition is rising.
- Early retirements and increasing mobility of the work force may lead to trouncing of knowledge.
- Changes in strategic direction may result in the loss of knowledge in a specific area.
- Competitive pressures reduce the size of the work force that holds valuable business knowledge.

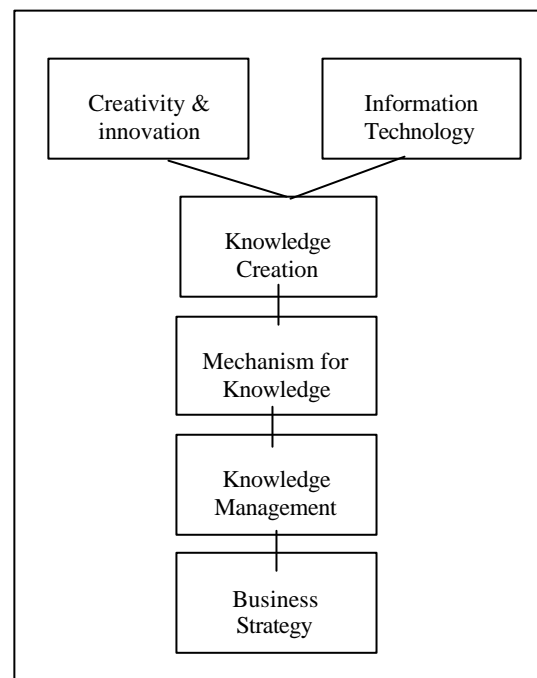


Figure 1: Knowledge Management for Business Strategy

This figure shows IT as a platform for applying KM for Sudanese business organizations, Creativity and Innovation as a pool for acquiring innovative ideas and creative thinking from different sources (may be the employees of the same organization). This is expected to lead to knowledge creation and then a mechanism is developed to share knowledge then managing that knowledge and finally set business strategy

4.0 CONCLUSION

The world now breathes knowledge, the knowledge is the oxygen of life and therefore, we find that knowledge is the latest and the most common and popular science in the world now. To summarize these findings, Sudanese business organizations managed knowledge management effectively on their strategic planning and improving their knowledge.

One of the fastest growing sectors in the Sudan now is the sectors of trade and business, and for the importance of the case, we did a survey on the sector of some Sudanese business organizations for a commercial purpose to stand on the status of knowledge management in these organizations, and that it obtained some of the challenges faced is the different management systems even within the organization single and illiteracy technical and convinced management institution reasons transformation, requirements and the strong incentive for individuals to the success of the transformation process and the sense of being part of the process of transformation and success and access to electronic management integrated within organizations as well as some others challenges indirectly.

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