How Knowledge is Created: The Knowledge Transfer Process

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Knowledge that is not shared will result in lost intellect. How the transference of this intellect occurs between resources is important. The dynamics of the knowledge transfer process should be understood before designing a plan. There are four methods linked to this concept: individual to individual, individual to group, group to individual, and group to group. One of these methods will always be used in sharing either explicit, or tacit, knowledge. There are distinct differences between tacit and explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge, unlike explicit knowledge, is difficult to articulate (DeLong, 2009). Explicit knowledge can be explained, or written in communications. On the other hand, tacit knowledge, like knowing how to ride a bike, or having the ability to speak a foreign language, can be quite complicated to explain.

The dynamics of transferring knowledge will employ both individuals and groups. By interviewing team members, management can make evaluations about individuals before assigning roles. Debriefings may uncover potential barriers related to employee resistance that could threaten a successful outcome. For example, if an employee seems unapproachable, or unwilling to participate, then this individual may need to be assigned written communications. Documentation created by this individual could be posted to a repository for sharing. Also, if this particular troublesome associate is one of several people who have special skills, then he, or she, can be used to monitor, or measure, activity on the database. And, it would seem more appropriate to select cooperative individuals to interact with groups or individuals.

The guidelines established for creating documentation will be a necessity when devising the plan. First, team members must feel that there is a process to follow. Second, leadership should clearly state that they are aware of, and will allow, the extra time that employees will
need to participate. Lastly, if employees do not see the point in all of this, there will be obstacles.
If these three concepts are understood by all of the participants, especially in its early stages, then there is a good chance of a favorable outcome. Everyone that is expected to participate should understand what is meant by *learning forward* as it relates to preparing for the future (DeLong, 2004).

DeLong tells us that storytelling is an excellent way to communicate technical details and complicated experiences. It seems, to this student, that business partners who have the most experience in their field are always the best at providing a fluent story; The more exposure one has to new developments and/or problematic situations, the better they will be at storytelling. Experience seems to be a precondition for storytelling. DeLong tells us that it is a way to “make meaning out of experiences”, particularly when it comes to sharing complicated intelligence (p. 101).

Tacit knowledge, like knowing how to ride a bike, or how to speak a foreign language, cannot be transferred by writing things down. This is where storytelling plays an important role in shifting knowledge from one resource to another. So, what are the attributes that make storytelling so beneficial? As already mentioned, experience plays a big part in its use. But, Larry Prusac writes, in “Storytelling in Organizations”, that the story must contain how we were able to endure situations. A person’s story must have saliency, cleverness, wit, humor, and punch. It must have a value of amusement. And, lastly, Prusac reports that the story must make sense. And, only when a storyteller is comfortable with the situation that they are describing will it be effective (Prusac, 2001). On the other hand, DeLong states that storytelling needs to be clearly
stated and should occur on regular occasions. He also says that the story should have enough information so that the lesson learned is understood (2004).

To a Programmer/Analyst working in the field of information technology, using face to face techniques between groups, or individuals, has always seemed to work best. When knowledge transfer is accompanied by visual demonstrations, or even with personal viable explanations, it becomes most effective. Why? Technical documentation, as it relates to complexities in Information Technology, is not only cumbersome to create, but ten times as hard to comprehend. Most programmers do not have the fortitude to read through many pages of technical jargon. They’d rather browse through code. And, if regrettably there was no previous verbal transfer of knowledge that occurred beforehand, then programmers always choose analyzing code over reading lengthy documentation. Reading technical histories can be more overwhelming than scanning through thousands of lines of logic to a technician. To this student who works in the field of Information Technology, being able to visualize how another resource follows technical procedures, by seeing it for themselves, improves knowledge transfer. Even hearing about it from the resource, face to face, improves the chances of holding onto the information in memory far better than any written documentation.

To summarize, this student has learned that there is more to knowledge management that meets the eye. The concept of how it is practiced, through transferring intellect, is critical. Almost like a social science, it is easy to see how important the interactions between an organization’s staff will be. Certain steps should be followed like interviews, assignment of roles, storytelling, written communications, and After Action Reviews (AARS). These will all play a major part in designing a plan. While it is important to focus on a positive plan, DeLong also
emphasizes upon the challenges and potential road blocks that leaders may face. It will be up to those leaders in charge to resolve these issues related to uncooperative employees, pessimism and negativity. Only with patience, and the practices learned, will it be possible to set the tone so that all will follow.
References
