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Chen Wai Ling Manjit S. Sandhu Kamal Kishore Jain

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Knowledge sharing in an American multinational company based in Malaysia

Knowledge
sharing

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Chen Wai Ling

Triotech Malaysia, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia

Manjit S. Sandhu

Monash University, Malaysia, Bandr Sunway, Malaysia, and

Kamal Kishore Jain

Indian Institute of Management, Indore, India

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper seeks to examine the views of executives working in an American based multinational company (MNC) about knowledge sharing, barriers to knowledge sharing, and strategies to promote knowledge sharing

Design/methodology/approach – This study was carried out in phases. In the first phase, a topology of organizational mechanisms for knowledge sharing was developed. A review of academic and practitioner literature provided the basis for this topology. In the next phase, a detailed field-base case study of the knowledge sharing conceptualization in a large MNC was performed based on a sample of 81 employees.

Findings – The results show that most of the respondents agreed that there is a knowledge sharing strategy and there is a growing awareness of the benefit of knowledge sharing in the organization. However, it was worrying to know that 22 percent responded negatively to the statement “KS is important to the organization”. Also, 27 percent of the respondents were also not willing to share knowledge. The most effective method to promote knowledge sharing was to link it with rewards and performance appraisal. Top management support was also vital to ensure the success of knowledge sharing in the organization.

Research limitations/implications – The survey did not cover the non-executive level employees such as operators, technicians, facilitators and shift leaders due to difficulties in gaining access to these groups of people as they work in shifts. In addition, most of the operators would have difficulty in understanding the survey objective and content.

Originality/value – While existing studies on knowledge sharing are more of a generalized nature, this study examines the perceptions about various aspects of knowledge sharing more in a country and company specific setting.

Keywords Knowledge sharing, Knowledge management, Multinational companies, Malaysia, United States of America

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

While the critical role played by the application of knowledge in economic development at a macroeconomic level is relatively well understood, its centrality to the management of individual firms is more of a recent concern. Companies that compete based on knowledge are faced with a dilemma since the organizational asset is held in the minds of individuals. The critical knowledge is only available to the organization



as long as employees are willing to cooperate. Moreover, the knowledge can easily be lost if the employees decide to explore other opportunities outside the organization or simply opt to retire. In a knowledge-driven economy, an organization's intangible assets are increasingly becoming a differentiating competitive factor. For companies to achieve continuous growth in their business, knowledge sharing (KS) practices needs to be an integral part of the day-to-day conversation. Better and purposeful sharing of knowledge translates into acceleration in individual and organizational learning and innovation. Therefore, the challenge for organizations is to capture this competitive knowledge through effective knowledge-sharing strategies.

What is known about KS stems mainly from studies focused on the individual who is the source of the knowledge. Such studies take the perspective of factors that impede its sharing, including Kalling's (2003) study of motivation to share, various studies on attitude (Bock and Kim, 2002; Ryu *et al.*, 2003), and Foss and Pedersen's (2002) study of the source's innate ability to share. Although a number of studies have concentrated on exploring factors that may influence the recipients of the shared knowledge (Simonin, 1999; Szulanski, 1996), some still consider that this research area has been neglected (Dixon, 2002). Calls are currently being made in the literature for more research on KS in organizations. This research focuses on KS in an American-based multinational in Malaysia – Sensata Technologies (formerly known as Texas Instruments' S & C division). This US-based company was selected for this research due to the loss of a vast number of knowledge workers that occurred soon after a major restructuring of the parent company. With the resignation of several experienced employees world wide, the company experienced a great loss of knowledge. Thus, this US-based company appeared to be losing competitive advantage.

In the backdrop of this, the present research study aims to:

- ascertain the views of respondents on various dimensions of KS;
- determine barriers faced in the sharing of knowledge; and
- determine the strategies for KS.

Literature review

Organizational knowledge

The most important source of sustainable competitive advantage in an increasingly turbulent business environment is knowledge. The organizational capability to create, recognize, disseminate widely, and embody knowledge in new products and technologies is critical when faced with shifting markets, rapid product obsolescence, hyper-competition, and financial upheavals (Nonaka, 1991). Grant (1996, p. 376) regards knowledge as the “most strategically important resource” that an organization possesses. A number of authors suggest that organizational knowledge resides in the interactions between individuals and therefore, forms the basis of competitive advantage (Argote and Ingram, 2000; Nonaka, 1991; Spender and Grant, 1996). However, implicit in these transactions is the assumption that individuals will share with and transfer their knowledge to others, which may or may not occur in circumstances where KS is regarded as a voluntary action (Dougherty, 1999).

The term “knowledge” in this paper is defined as the boundaries encompassing entities (such as behaviors, operational thoughts, standard operation procedures and

organizational routine) and individual's insights and their past working experience which is relevant to their current job.

A range of definitions and perspectives on knowledge has been presented in the organizational literature. Davenport *et al.* (1998) describe knowledge as information combined with experience, context, interpretation, and reflection and knowledge production as comprising value addition to information.

An alternative view has been championed by Dretske (1981) and Nonaka (1991), among others. This perspective acknowledges the importance of subjective factors such as beliefs and their links to actions as well as the relatively tacit dimension of knowledge. Knowledge is associated with beliefs produced and sustained by information (Dretske, 1981). Information represents a flow of messages but knowledge is created and organized from it, anchored by the commitments and beliefs of the concerned individuals. There is also a connection between such knowledge and the subject's ability to plan and act. The more implicit and tacit dimension of knowledge has also been highlighted.

Explicit or codified knowledge is what is transmittable through formal and systematic languages. This type of knowledge is less valuable and can be quickly and easily disseminated to a large number of people. Tacit knowledge is more personal and subjective, making it difficult to be formalized and communicated. It tends to be deeply rooted in action, commitment, and involvement in a specific context. According to Nonaka (1991), individuals are able to recreate their own systems of knowledge to accommodate ambiguity, noise, and randomness generated in the organization in its interaction with the external environment. These communities emerge not through absorption of abstract knowledge but when members become insiders and acquire the community's shared vision and speak the same language.

The notion of contextualization of knowledge and evolving communities of practice have particular resonance for MNCs given the geographic distances and cultural differences across units around the world. Table I presents a somewhat stylized set of distinctions between the systems-theoretic and pragmatic perspectives on organizational knowledge.

Knowledge management

Some researchers focus on the information system and information technology facets while others view "knowledge" as financial value and intellectual capital. Nonaka (1991), Beckman (1999) and Rowley (2000) present the knowledge management (KM) concept from the viewpoint of management of people and the organization. One of the

	System theoretic view	Pragmatic view
Source	Documents, databases, systems, prototypes, processes and procedures, manuals, etc.	People, communities
Form	Codifies or codifiable, explicit	Tacit, implicit, intuitive
Transfer	Exchange of documents, electronic means, formal training	Socialization, apprenticeship, situated learning
Organization	Relatively mechanistic	Organic

Table I.
Perspectives on
organizational knowledge

proponents of the KM concept is Nonaka (1991) who is concerned with the transfer process between tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Nonaka and Konno, 1998). This process encompasses the aspects of identifying and gathering useful information, leveraging and encompassing knowledge, sharing it with others through the whole organization, storing the knowledge in a repository and enabling employees to retrieve organizational knowledge.

KS

The sharing of knowledge can be defined as the dissemination of information and knowledge throughout the organization. McDermott (1999) describes the process of “knowledge sharing” as enabling sharers to guide sharers’ thinking and/or using their insights to assist sharers to examine their own situations

Earlier studies have shown that employees often resist sharing their knowledge (Davenport, 1994), there are barriers for knowledge flow even when the organization makes a concentrated effort to facilitate KS (Szulanski, 1996), that the success of knowledge exchange depends on the organizational KM system (Davenport and Prusak, 1998), and on organization culture and climate (De Long and Fahey, 2000). However, the reason why individual employees decide whether to actively participate in KS activities are currently not well understood. Therefore, this research aims to contribute to the general understanding of the barriers determining the success of KS in organizations in general, and to the organization under study in particular.

Past research on barriers to KS

Riege (2005) came up with the term, “the triad of knowledge-sharing barriers”, in which the barriers to KS are classified into the individual barriers, organizational barriers and technology barriers.

At the individual level, some of the barriers identified by Riege (2005) are general lack of time to share knowledge, apprehension of fear for job security, low awareness on the benefits of KS, dominance in sharing explicit knowledge over tacit knowledge, use of strong hierarchy/formal power, differences in experience level, lack of contact time and interaction, poor verbal and interpersonal skills, age differences, gender differences, lack of social network, difference in education levels, lack of trust in people, fear of not receiving recognition, lack of trust in knowledge source accuracy and cultural differences.

At the organizational level, Riege (2005) outlined several major organizational barriers to KS as unclear/missing integration between KM initiatives into company’s goals, lack of leadership and managerial direction, shortage of formal and informal spaces, lack of transparent rewards and recognition system, unsupportive corporate culture, low priority on knowledge retention on experienced staffs, shortage of appropriate infrastructure, deficiency of company resources for adequate KS practices, competition with business units/functional areas/subsidiaries, restricted communication and knowledge flows, restrictive work environment/layout of work area, hierarchical organization structure and size of business unit.

Finally, among the technology barriers highlighted (Riege, 2005) are lack of integration of IT systems/processes, lack of technical support, lack of maintenance of integrated IT systems, people’s unrealistic expectation on IT, lack of compatibility between diverse IT systems/processes, restriction due to mismatch between need

requirements and IT system, people's reluctance to use IT systems and lack of training for familiarization of IT systems and processes.

Several prominent studies (Argote *et al.*, 1990; Baron and Markman, 2000) highlighted a clear correlation between an employee's social network, interaction within and outside the company, employee personality and ability to interact and KS. According to Davenport and Prusak (1998), the ability of employees to share knowledge depends on their communication skills. Few studies have investigated the impact of national cultures on knowledge-sharing practices (Moeller and Svahn, 2004; Straub *et al.*, 2002). National cultures and language barriers are an important factor for international subsidiaries and multinationals.

Knowledge power, status inequality, knowledge hoarding, perceived lack of job security are potential barriers to KS as well. Employees fear to share knowledge with other co-workers as they are not clear on the objectives of sharing and the intent of senior management. Sharing of knowledge was viewed as reducing the employee's position, power or and status. Many employees will share their knowledge voluntarily if they perceive the process to be important to their work, if they feel encouraged to share or if they wish to support a certain colleague (Wheatley, 2000). Many managers often struggle in the implementation of KS strategies due to time constraints. Time restrictions cause people to focus on tasks that are more beneficial for themselves than others. Therefore, it is important to allow some informal time and space to allow employees to take time for knowledge generation and KS.

Some employees have a certain level of uncertainty over the value of their possessed knowledge. They do not know how their knowledge can help to benefit others as well. Similarly, some do not know who possesses the knowledge that would be useful to them. Neither the knowledge source nor the recipient is too concerned with who possesses knowledge and who requires them. Szulanski (noted in O'Dell and Grayson, 1998) argued that this "ignorance on both ends" is one of the biggest sharing barriers in most companies.

Strategies to promote KS

A review of the literature on KS strategies found the following commonly used strategies:

- *Communities of practice*. This refers to "groups of people who do some sort of work together (on line or in person) to help each other by sharing tips, ideas and best practices" (UNFPA, 2003; Faul and Kemly, 2004).
- *Knowledge networks*. This refers to "a more formal and structured team based collaboration that focuses on domains of knowledge that are critical to the organization which is part of their standardized job" (UNFPA, 2003).
- *Retrospect*. This refers to "an in-depth discussion that happens after completion of an event, project or an activity to basically capture lessons learnt during the entire activity" (Faul and Kemly, 2004). At the end of the session, a documented review of the project process is created. The main idea behind this meeting is to share feedback with decision makers, improve support from the team and ultimately enhance team building.
- *Story telling*. This refers to a story telling session whereby the person who attends an event or training session is given the opportunity to disseminate the

information/knowledge gained to others within the organization (Faul and Kemly, 2004).

- *Rewards for KS.* According to a study by Cornelia and Kugel (2004) monetary rewards have an immediate effect on motivation to share knowledge but at the same time bear the risk of spoiling users. However, monetary incentives can be used to start a KM system and to incentivize users from time to time. Yet, in the long-term users should be incentivized non-monetarily for sharing their knowledge. A study by Ghosh (2004) observed that individual pay-for-performance incentives are not very useful when implementing a KM system. What about team-based pay-for-performance systems such as profit sharing systems? First, like most team-based incentive systems this could lead to the problem of free-riding. While free-riding could still be controlled through feelings of shame (Kandel and Lazear, 1992) induced by peers, free-riding on KS is difficult to control in such a system.
- *Linkage with performance appraisal.* Nobody disputes the fact that what gets measured gets done. People do not do what you tell them, but what you measure them for. If people know that one aspect of the performance management is linked to KS, they will certainly like to ensure that they do not get a low ranking on this dimension (Jain, 2005).
- *Training.* A regular training on themes like trust building, collaboration building, team building can go a long way in overcoming barriers related to lack of trust, faith, and fear. Presence of top management during these sessions may further leave a positive impact on the participants (Jain, 2005).

Methodology

This study was carried out in a few phases. In the first phase, a topology of organizational mechanism for KS was developed. A review of academic and practitioner literature provided the basis for this topology. In the next phase, a detailed field-base case study of the KS conceptualization in a large MNC was performed. For this research, the target population was all the executive level employees employed in the organization. The primary data for the research were gathered using a self administered survey questionnaire and e-mail-based questionnaire.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections, namely section A and section B. Section A comprised questions on demographic characteristics and other background information. Section B comprised questions designed to ascertain the views of the respondents on the various aspects of KS, identify the barriers in KS and strategies to encourage KS. Likert's five-point scale was used where 1 represented "strongly disagree" and 5 represented "strongly agree". A cover letter explaining the study objectives was attached with the questionnaire. The potential respondents were contacted by e-mail or through a face-to-face meeting to solicit their participation in the study. Additionally, a definition and description of KS was included in the initial portion of the questionnaire to ensure that all respondents had a consistent concept of what is the process of KS, and to minimize confusion.

For questionnaires that were administered through e-mail, a follow-up e-mail was sent approximately three weeks after the first e-mail. Respondents were assured that their responses will be treated as confidential and would be analyzed at the aggregate

level only. The questionnaire used was developed based on the review of the literature, industry reports on knowledge-sharing and the information obtained from employees during the initial phase interview. Negatively and positively worded statements were used interchangeably to ensure respondents read thoroughly each statement carefully before ticking the selected answer to enhance the reliability of the scales. The data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS.

Reliability test

Reliability analysis was conducted to ensure stability and consistency of the data collected. The questionnaire was pre-tested to establish reliability by circulating it to a few staff to determine the understandability of the items included in the questionnaire in addition to incorporating any useful suggestions for the questionnaire. It was pilot tested with a group of around 20 employees to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. The pilot testing enabled adjustments and refinement on the questionnaires and to eliminate questions that were redundant. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient values were then calculated. Alpha values that are more than 0.7 and closer to 1 indicate high internal consistency reliability (Sekaran, 2003). If the coefficient is low, the pre-test will be conducted again after the relevant modification. The results of Cronbach’s correlation alpha are given in Table II. All the three factors produced alpha values more than 0.7 indicating acceptable level of reliability.

Data analysis

Respondents’ profile and background information

The demographic and background variables used in this study are gender, race, age, marital status, designation and years of service in the organization. Table III gives respondents’ demographic profiles.

Based on the demographics and other personal background information obtained, the majority of the respondents were male (70 percent), are between the age of 31 and 40 years (38.3 percent) and married (74 percent). In terms of race, the majority comprises the Malay ethnic group (55.6 percent) followed by the Chinese (30.9 percent), Indian (11.1 percent) and others (2.5 percent). Most of the respondents are in the executive level (66.7 percent) with 0-5 years (45.7 percent) of working experience in the organization.

Views on various aspects of KS

Importance of KS. Respondents were asked to ascertain the degree to which KS was considered important by the respondents. This survey found that 59.3 percent of the respondents stated “agree” and 16 percent stated “strongly agree” to the statement that KS is extremely important for the success and growth of the organization. A total of

No.	Description	Number of items	Cronbach’s alpha
1.	Items related to the general attitude towards knowledge sharing	8	0.763
2.	Items related to barriers in knowledge sharing	18	0.786
3.	Items related to strategies to encourage knowledge sharing	9	0.860

Table II.
Reliability analysis

Respondents' profiles	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	57	70.4
	Female	24	29.6
Race	Malay	45	55.6
	Chinese	25	30.9
	Indian	9	11.1
	Others	2	2.5
Age	20-30	28	34.6
	31-40	31	38.3
	41-50	18	22.2
	Above 50	4	4.9
Status	Married	60	74.1
	Unmarried	21	25.9
Designation	High level manager	9	11.1
	Middle level manager	18	22.2
	Executive level	54	66.7
Years of service in organization	0-5	37	45.7
	6-10	27	33.3
	11-15	12	14.8
	More than 15	5	6.2

Table III.
Respondents'
demographic profiles

18.5 percent of the respondents “disagree”, whereas 3.7 percent of the respondents “strongly disagree” with the statement. The results of the analysis are shown in Table IV.

Is the importance of KS clearly communicated? Respondents were asked to respond to the statement whether importance of KS is clearly communicated in the organization. 69.1 percent of the respondents said they “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement as compared to 13.6 percent of the respondents who “disagree” or “strongly disagree”. A large number of respondents (17.3 percent) were undecided. The results are shown in Table V.

Views on knowledge receiving and knowledge donating. Respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they are willing to share knowledge and the degree to which their colleagues are willing to share knowledge. A total of 53.1 percent of the respondents were willing to share information with their colleagues, 19.8 percent were neutral and 27 percent of the respondents were not willing. The majority of the respondents (59 percent) had the opinion that their colleagues are willing to share information with them as opposed to only 23 percent who believed otherwise.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	3	3.7
Disagree	15	18.5
Neutral	2	2.5
Agree	48	59.3
Strongly agree	13	16.0
Total	81	100.0

Table IV.
Significance of KS for the
success and growth of the
company

Approximately 70 percent of the respondents also agreed that employees in the organization are willing to share knowledge with others and people in the organization share their ideas openly. Similarly, 54 percent of the respondents agree with the statement that people with expert knowledge are willing to help others in the organization. Overall, most of the respondents agreed that the KS atmosphere in the company is healthy with most of the employees willing to share knowledge among one another. Table VI shows the views on knowledge receiving and donating.

Existing KS scenario in the organization. Table VII shows the overall view of KS in the organization. The mean scores are more than 3.5 thus indicating overall positive perception towards KS. Most of the respondents agree on the importance of KS to the organization, acknowledge that KS is clearly communicated in the organization and that the KS atmosphere in the company is healthy with most of the employees willing to share knowledge among one another.

Barriers to KS. The Table VIII shows the respondents' view on the barriers to KS. Respondents were required to state the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements. Information is gathered through a five-point Likert scale. A score of 5 denotes "strongly agree", 4 for "agree", 3 for "neutral", 2 for "disagree" and 1 for

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	2	2.5
Disagree	9	11.1
Neutral	14	17.3
Agree	36	44.4
Strongly agree	20	24.7
Total	81	100.0

Table V.
Is the importance of knowledge sharing clearly communicated?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I am willing to share information with my colleagues	4 (4.9)	18 (22.2)	16 (19.8)	29 (35.8)	14 (17.3)
2. My colleagues are willing to share information with me	7 (8.6)	12 (14.8)	14 (17.3)	35 (43.2)	13 (16.0)
3. Employees in my organization are willing to share knowledge with others	3 (3.7)	7 (8.6)	22 (27.2)	32 (39.5)	17 (21.0)
4. People in this organization share their ideas openly	6 (7.4)	10 (12.3)	17 (21.0)	30 (37.0)	18 (22.2)
5. People in this organization keep their best ideas to themselves	11 (13.6)	42 (51.9)	5 (6.2)	18 (22.2)	5 (6.2)
6. People with expert knowledge are willing to help others in the organization	13 (16.0)	9 (11.1)	16 (19.8)	32 (39.5)	11 (13.6)

Table VI.
Views on knowledge receiving and knowledge donating

“strongly disagree”. The barriers have been arranged in ascending order of the mean value. From Table VIII, lack of formal and informal activities to cultivate KS, lack of rewards and recognition system, lack of system to identify the colleagues with whom knowledge needs to be shared have been identified as the strongest barriers where as lack of trust, fear of knowledge being misused by taking unjust credit for it, reluctance

Table VII.
Overall, view on
knowledge sharing

	Mean scores
1. There exist knowledge repositories (database) in my organization	3.70
2. There is growing awareness on the benefit of knowledge sharing in my organization	3.89
3. There exists a knowledge sharing strategy in my organization	4.08

Table VIII.
Barriers to knowledge
sharing

Barriers to knowledge sharing	Mean scores
1. There is general lack of trust among staff in my organization	2.59
2. Employees in my organization do not share knowledge because of the fear of it being misused by taking unjust credit for it	2.59
3. Staffs are reluctant to seek knowledge from their seniors because of the status fear	2.62
4. There is general lack of time to share knowledge	2.62
5. There is lack of interaction between those who need knowledge and those who can provide knowledge	2.63
6. There is a shortage of formal and informal spaces to share, reflect and generate new knowledge	2.65
7. The best way to keep your job is to make sure that you are the only one who knows how to do it	2.67
8. Existing organization culture does not provide sufficient support for sharing knowledge	2.68
9. Knowledge retention of highly skilled and experienced staff is not a high priority in my organization	2.69
10. It is difficult to convince colleagues on the value and the benefits of the knowledge that I may possess	2.75
11. Employees in my organization do not share knowledge because they think that "knowledge is power"	2.77
12. There is lack of infrastructure in my organization to support sharing practices	2.93
13. IT systems and processes are lacking in my organization to share knowledge	2.95
14. Employees in my organization do not share knowledge for the fear of job security	3.00
15. Physical work environment and layout of work area restrict effective knowledge sharing in my workplace	3.12
16. There is lack of formal and informal activities to cultivate knowledge sharing in my organization	3.38
17. There is lack of rewards and recognition systems that would motivate people to share their knowledge in my organization	3.44
18. There is no system to identify the colleagues with whom I need to share my knowledge	3.57

to seek knowledge due to fear and lack of time are rated the lowest in terms of barriers to KS.

Strategies for promoting KS

The respondents’ views on the ways to promote KS were sought. Their responses are shown in Table IX. Most of the respondents agree that there is a KS strategy and there is a growing awareness of the benefit of KS in the organization. Based on the survey, the most effective method to promote KS would be to link it with rewards and performance appraisal. Top management support is also vital to ensure the success of KS in the organization. A non-monetary reward seems to be a less effective strategy based on this survey.

Conclusion and implications

While most of the respondents agreed that there is a KS strategy and there is a growing awareness of the benefit of KS in the organization, it is worrying to know that 22 percent of the respondents selected disagreed and strongly disagreed to the statement “KS is important to the organization”. This may be a cause of concern for a company that is a knowledge-based company. With regard to “willingness to share knowledge”, 27 percent of the respondents were not willing to share knowledge and 19.8 percent were neutral in their perception. This could be another major cause of concern for the company and it needs to do something to bring more people to the category of those who are willing to share knowledge. Based on the survey, the most prominent reasons for executives not sharing their knowledge was “lack of formal and informal activities to cultivate KS”, “lack of rewards and recognition systems that would motivate people to share their knowledge” and “absence of a system to identify the colleagues with whom knowledge can be shared.. Based on the survey, the most effective method to promote KS would be to link it with rewards and performance appraisal. Human Resources need to institute a system of recognition, and performance development practices – activities that reinforce the discipline of sharing, documenting knowledge and reuse of others” ideas with pride to achieve business goals. This could be one of the key competencies for identifying managers of high potential. There are examples of companies who included sharing of knowledge as a criterion to get the highest rating in performance evaluation. There are other examples – where people who do not share are ignored or fail to be promoted. Cap Gemini Ernst & Young (professional services

Strategies for promoting knowledge sharing		Mean scores
1.	Non monetary rewards (such as appreciation, recognition) shall be more effective in encouraging knowledge sharing than monetary rewards	2.35
2.	Technology plays a significant role in promoting knowledge sharing	3.72
3.	Knowledge sharing can be encouraged if there is a designated knowledge officer in the organization	3.84
4.	Knowledge sharing can become a culture in the organization if top management regularly displays and reinforces the theme that “knowledge is the lifeblood of an organization”	3.85
5.	Knowledge sharing can be encouraged if it is linked with the performance appraisal of the staff	3.88
6.	Knowledge sharing can be encouraged if it is clearly linked with rewards	3.93

Table IX.
Strategies for promoting knowledge sharing

consultants in St Louis), for example, consider KS as a factor in employee appraisals, measuring performance on a scale from 2 to 5. Employees cannot earn a 4 or a 5 unless they have participated in KS activities, such as responding to posted questions or publishing research (Stevens, 2000). According to a study by Cornelia and Kugel (2004) monetary rewards have an immediate effect on motivation to share knowledge but at the same bear the risk of spoiling users. However, monetary incentives can be used to start a KM system and to give incentive to users from time to time. Top management support is also vital to ensure the success of KS in the organization. The company may also think of developing a system by which people could identify the colleagues with whom they could share the knowledge.

KS needs a culture and a set of behaviors in which people will share knowledge as part of their day-to-day activities. While giving people a means to share their knowledge is an important prerequisite on its own this will achieve very little. Creating the desire to share is far more important. It is true that in the short run, for the sake of signaling the importance of KS and getting the attention of employees, organizations should put in place rewarding policies for such behavior. However in the long run, it must be established that KS is one of the basic requirements to do business on a daily basis. That is to say, KS should not merely be integrated into job description, but also into the value system of an organization.

Limitations of the study

This survey was only conducted among the executive level employees who include the engineers, middle and the upper level management. The survey did not cover the non-executive level employees such as operators, technicians, facilitators and shift leaders due to difficulty to gain access to these groups of people as they work in shifts. In addition, most of the operators would have difficulty in understanding the survey objective and content. The non-executive staff in the organization come close to about 600-700 employees.

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About the authors

Chen Wai Ling graduated from UNITAR in 2007. She has more than eight years of working experience with several American multinational companies in the field of engineering and manufacturing.

Manjit S. Sandhu joined Monash in 2007. Prior to this he was the Head of the Centre for Teaching and Learning and a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Business Administration, Tun Abdul Razak University, Malaysia. His research interest spans a wide variety of topics such as knowledge economics/knowledge sharing, foreign direct investment, e-banking, competitive advantage of firms, economics of entrepreneurship, leadership, and e-learning. His research papers have been published in refereed journals such as *Knowledge Management Review* (UK), *Malaysian Journal of Distance Education* (USM), *Malaysian Journal of Educational Technology*, *UNITAR e-Journal*, *Multimedia Cyberspace Journal*, *Asian Journal of Distance Education*, *Journal of Contemporary Management Research*, *Journal for the Advancement of Science and Arts* and *Journal of Asia Entrepreneurship and Sustainability*. Some of his papers have been presented at International Conferences in Malaysia (2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006) and abroad – Indonesia (2002, 2005), Oman (2003) and Turkey (2006). He has also acted as an external examiner for DBA dissertations from the University of Newcastle, Australia. Currently he is an ordinary member of the Malaysian Economic Association and an editorial board member of *UNITAR e-Journal*. Manjit S. Sandhu is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: manjit.singh@monash.edu.my

Kamal Kishore Jain is currently a Professor at the Indian Institute of Management, Indore (India). Prior to this he was a Professor and Deputy Dean (Research and Graduate Studies) at the Faculty of Business Administration, University Tun Abdul Razak (UNITAR), Malaysia. Before joining UNITAR, he chaired the Department of Business Administration, St John's College, Agra (India). He did his graduation and post graduation from St John's College, Agra (India). He was

awarded a PhD degree by Agra University in 1983. During his teaching span of over 30 years, he has taught at Christ Church College, Kanpur (India), St John's College, Agra (India), and UNITAR (Malaysia). He is actively involved in research, training, and consultancy. He takes regular MDPs on themes like stress management, team building, conflict resolution, negotiation, personality development, leadership etc. He has about 40 publications to his credit in national and international journals and his bio-data have been included in *Reference Asia – Asia's Who is Who of Men and Women of Achievement*, and *Trainers and Training Institutions – Who Is Who*. He has presented research papers at many national and international conferences. His paper "Relationship between psychological characteristics and entrepreneurial inclination" was given the outstanding paper award at IBBC Conference held at Sarawak, Malaysia in December 2006. He received the UNITAR's President Award for his meritorious contribution to the university in January 2007. His research interest is in the areas of e-learning, leadership, HRD, and organizational development and change.

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