

Knowledge Management Practices: A Case Study

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Abstract: *Knowledge management is a well established management effort that has important benefits for public sector organizations as well. KM in terms of management approach is having direct influence on various components of an organization and directly helps an organization to achieve organizational efficiency. The effective implementation of KM initiatives has to be recognized because, various organizational processes and departments has to combine and various functional processes which had remained stored in bulk should be eliminated. KM requires permanent commitment and dedication from stakeholder of an organization. There are various knowledge management facilitators in every organization that are required to be developed and that becomes necessary to achieve organizational effectiveness. These enablers are the organizational culture, human resources, information technology, organizational structure and the organizational strategy and leadership. This study accesses the KM initiatives and how they impact on organization's KM efforts. Rajouri Municipality is examined in this study and the paper also examined how the municipality implements KM practices so as to achieve the expected service deliver and organizational goals.*

Keywords: *Knowledge management, Knowledge management initiatives, Municipality, Rajouri.*

Introduction

The need and requirement of more efficient delivery of services in Municipality has increased over the year. With the change in trends of the developing countries India has also amended its various reforms which stresses on the consumer centric approach of India's delivery system. Knowledge management is well established management term which has been applied across many business sectors successfully by systematically creating, saving and optimally using the knowledge which is already present in such organization. The present age is the age of technology, knowledge and information acts as strategic tools in the organization, which also generates an opportunity for the local government bodies to adopt and utilize the concept of knowledge based organizations which indeed enhances the competence of knowledge workers. With the effective and efficient implementation of KM, local government bodies could be in a better condition to deliver the services, operate effectively and work in an environment which includes transparency and accountability.

Objectives of the study

- To know the extent to which Rajouri municipality determines its readiness for the carrying out the KM practices through the estimation of already existing KM enablers.
- To analyze a broad principles determined by Rajouri Municipality that can be used for advanced application in the Rajouri municipality.
- To give some suggestions for the proper implementation of Km practices in Rajouri municipality.

Research Methodology

Rajouri Municipality is a local government organization in the Jammu province of J&K, overcasting the municipal services to the Rajouri town. The municipality consists of departments with various sub departments under it. The important role performers in KM in the municipality which were considered in this case study were Public sector services, corporate services and strategic services. Secondary data was collected through various documentary estimation and primary data was collected by interviews with municipal personnel available in the selected departments. The procedure for sampling use was purposive sampling. The main aim was to know:

- Who is accountable for knowledge capturing
- By whom and how is knowledge utilized, processed and disseminated, and
- How financial, human and technological resources are utilized for smooth knowledge creation, processing, utilization and dissemination.

Seven interviews were done with selected interviewees on various positions of the municipality. Interviewees consisted of senior officers and middle level officers from selected departments within the municipality. The interviews conducted aimed at achieving the necessary data which stressed on the degree of awareness, comprehension and general concepts about KM. The study aimed to determine:

- Whether the municipality structure and strategy are favorable for effective KM
- Whether the municipality configuration can bear effective KM
- To organize if the municipality's human and technological resources favors KM.

Data Analysis of enablers

It is important for enablers to be available and properly brought together in an organization because the execution of a KM effort will be smooth and the organization will accordingly be able to use its resources (Yeh at al. 2006-794).

Human Resources

Knowledge is extracted from a person's use of information joined with the person's knowledge or level of understanding. This mixture helps to make person's knowledge essential for the organization and also for the society at large (Syed Ikhsan and Rowland 2004a:238). In the end the organization's human resource creates a huge impact on the organization's KM operations.

Information Technology

It is the core towards the maintenance and organization of KM efforts (Yeh et al. 2006:799). According to Yeh et al. (2006:799) it favors KM by encouraging quick searching, access to and regaining of information and coordination among the members of an organization.

Organization Structure

Organizational structure can be defined as the way in which various individuals and vacancies are arranged, to make the organization's work possible (Syed Ikhsan and Rowland 2004b:101). Nonaka (1994:30) argues that a top-down beauracratc structure is not conductive to the process of creating knowledge within a organization, as only top management have the authority to create information which they can use as a essential tool instead of tangible products. Conversely, in bottom up organizational model only lower level and middle level employs are responsible for knowledge creation,, which is also not favorable. What is required is a model that considers all organizational departments and its members who work jointly to facilitate knowledge. The organizational structure must promote communication across and within the organization's boundaries and strengthen interdependence of teams and networks (Skyrme 1999:185). Hence it is clear that when a organization implements KM strategies, it must reunite its organization's structure for smooth creation and efficient flow of knowledge throughout the organization.

Strategy and Leadership

The execution of KM practice needs an organization strategy which must be based on involvement of various members of the organization (Yeh at el. 2006:795). The organization strategy therefore helps to derive various organization policies and programmes and these derived policies and programmes should be place in such a way that they are aligned each other and also must be helpful for the organization KM strategy (McElroy 2003:60).

Knowledge Management in Public Sector

Mostly the researches on KM practices are seen in private sector, which promotes the KM process so as to achieve competitive advantage (Fowler and Pryke 2003:255). The demonstration of KM in the public sector is less common (Flower and Pryke 2003:255). Anyhow, as governments are assuming policies which are identifying the information age, there is strong desire for KM within the government jurisdiction. KM has various benefits for the public sector organization. Cong and Pandva (2003: 27) have recognized such benefits as:

- KM brings the option of employees to enhance their skills, performance and experience with the help group work and sharing of knowledge.
- KM enhances the working of organization through better quality, working, capability and ability.
- KM ensures the financial growth of organization
- Sharing of knowledge introduces value and systematically implements a competitive advantage in the organization.
- KM promotes effective decision making, effective structuring of organization programmes, more association and also reduces the replication of work, properly reducing the operational cost and raising the standards of service delivery.

KM must attain rise in importance within the context of Public sector organizations. The local government bodies must acknowledge KM as a major managerial ability for superior managers at local government level. Thus for this it needs the ability and skills to a foremost knowledge creation and sharing as process of developing the combined knowledge of municipality.

Discussion and Results

The compiled data was figured out to determine the organization position in relation to Yeh et al.'s (2006) suggestion of relationship among KM enablers and organization effectiveness. The main target of the study was to identify any patterns or trends totally dependent on the interview subjects responses to a series of question based on four key components of organization.

Data Analysis of enablers

Organization Culture

The present organization culture reflects the potential for changing into a best possible organization culture that can sustain the insertion, implementation and operation of KM efforts, according to interviews conducted. By analyzing the culture available in each of the assumed departments, it is clear that there is responsiveness to share information and a tendency towards the application of KM practices. Knowledge sharing is broad in the organization but there still exists the problems towards the full implementation of KM. The atmosphere of information and knowledge sharing is well established but a culture continues with regard to lack of energy to get aware of how to use the information and technology. According to current scenario what is required is the way to make their employees aware about the importance knowledge sharing and to bring a change in the approach to deal with the information and knowledge.

Human Resource

Rajouri Municipality requires a proper and well planned recruitment and selection processes and also necessary training and skill enhancement programmes. The appointments in the municipality must be done in a defined way by keeping in view all requirements regarding the skills and competencies. The municipality functions under political influence which also involves employee placements.

Information Technology

Rajouri municipality has various information technology systems. However, as these available systems are not integrated, these information resources are limited because information sharing is disturbed and not in a connective manner. Rajouri municipality possesses IT infrastructure to promote KM practices. However, there are chances of improvements and requirement of organization wide information system which in turn will allow access to and retrieval of information and knowledge in various parts of the organization.

Organization Structure

The Rajouri municipality has top-down hierarchical structure. The top-down structure is not most favorable to KM efforts, because it is influenced by bureaucratic nature and is not ready for changes which are required to make. More than that, it also hampers horizontal communication flows. Skyrme (1999:32) claims that the networked structure is favorable to promote KM, because it involves virtual teams and organizations that permits the organization together greater value with a variety of unique skills and combinations that are easily polled when required. These networked organizations are more favorable for instant responses to change.

Strategy and Leadership

Rajouri municipality carries a strategic plan which shows the municipality's mission and vision and also clears its road map to show the present scenario as well as future plans of the municipality. It is quite clear that municipality requires a formalized KM strategy. The requirement of strategic service department which must create position of KM officer within their department's structure. Efforts must be made established a KM unit within the municipality services directorate (Fourie 2007).

Conclusion

Rajouri Municipality comprises the ability to adopt KM practices. As there is requirement of some improvements, the two factors are favoring the implementation of KM initiative to some extent are Human Resource and Information Technology. The biggest problem facing the municipality for transforming in to a knowledge organization and attaining the organizational effectiveness in achieving leadership support and developing a sharing climate among all the departments of the municipality. Once the top management favors the term and concept and organizational culture identifies the importance of KM, then Rajouri Municipality can start planning and making new strategies according to its KM practices.

Recommendations

If the Rajouri Municipality wants to become a knowledge based organization and wants to obtain organization effectiveness, it has to plant a systematic KM strategy. KM enablers are available in the municipality, main aspect of these enablers that must be developed in accordance to make them more favorable to KM efforts. The KM strategy must be utilized as a policy to highlight the municipality's mission in terms of KM. The policy must be according to organization's resources and needs should be identified. The strategy should also make a guideline of how to attend to these and provide suitable answer. A systematic KM effort must need energetic and continuing commitment from municipality members. Thus, both leadership and strategy must be in accordance to changes in municipality milieu.

Another recommendation is that the municipality must maintain organizational memory. By maintaining organizational memory which includes pooling and streamlining whole organization's data in terms of reports and documents and obtaining information from those stored reports. The documents must be made available electronically and should be easily accessible with easy and safe point of access (Lehaney et al.2004:238). To develop a knowledge repository, it is important to understand and learn how to locate knowledge and how to place it strategically in the municipality which must be easily available when it is required.

The third important recommendation is to motivate employees with rewards and various other incentives for their efforts towards knowledge generation, sharing and its management. It is necessary to develop an atmosphere to encourage KM and to produce community of practice. This organization culture must be monitored and run by dynamic leadership and it will ultimately develop knowledge workers. Thus a sharing culture is important for effective KM efforts, the municipality should consider on devising an incentive for its member's KM efforts.

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