

7.CSC

Building Empowered & Business Focused KM pilots

Gopinathan R, Deputy Director of Civil Service College (CSC)

The Background and Purpose of the KM Effort in the Case

Very often we have been asked: How can we position KM efforts to support business goals of organizations? How do we design KM initiatives to reduce knowledge gaps in core business processes? How do we engage management to decide opportunities for KM? How do we empower project team members to deliver?

Literature says that a business focused KM strategy is critical for continued buy-in and support from management and to obtain the necessary resources for implementation.

The case study looks at an approach the CSC adopts in helping public agencies design their KM initiatives to support their business goals. We found that in a few agencies the college has worked with, there were no systematic approach to identify areas where KM can be applied to improve business. Often its key business processes are not clearly defined and organizations rely on tacit knowledge of its experienced staff in deciding what to do. In such cases, it would be difficult to identify knowledge gaps in the business processes and hence opportunities to reduce such gaps and improve businesses are lost.

The approach CSC advocates enables organization to engage management to identify opportunities for KM and enable project teams to design KM initiatives which are focused on reducing the explicit and tacit knowledge gaps in key business processes.

What We Did

Usually the approach consists of the following key steps:

- a) Interview with senior management to understand key business challenges and identify opportunities for better KM initiatives to improve business goals
- b) Survey a group of users to gauge ground sentiments around knowledge sharing and identify area(s) where focus need to be placed eg. People or Technology or Process
- c) Focus Group discussion among selected business leaders to discuss issues from a) with a view to identify one or two pilot projects
- d) Present the pilot project(s) which meets the business needs to senior management for endorsement as well as seek commitment and support for resources.
- e) Select project team members and through a knowledge mapping exercise identify knowledge gaps within key business processes and develop implementation plan to reduce gaps.

Lessons Learned

Engagement with management early in the conception phase is crucial to create a sense of ownership and buy-in for KM effort. Creating opportunities for management and business leaders to identify potential areas for KM as well as seeking inputs from them to help shape KM initiatives builds rapport, confidence and trust.

Not all agencies will have a formal, well defined business processes. Hence it will be useful that organizations identify and document their key business processes first before they embark on a knowledge mapping exercise to identify knowledge gaps.

The project team lead plays a very critical role in the success of the pilot. He should be a senior leader (director level) who can provide direction and lead his team. He should also be familiar with the business issues around which the KM initiatives are focused.

Impact and Benefits

There is a clearer link between the knowledge sharing initiatives and the positive impact to business it brings to organizations. In addition, KM initiatives are focused on reducing knowledge gaps around key business processes to avoid efforts expanded on other areas which has little business impact. Early engagement with management and creating opportunities together with business leaders to identify potential areas where KM can be applied builds ownership, buy-in, confidence and trust.

Insights and lessons learned from case study discussion

1. How to sustain KM initiative is the next challenge.
2. Don't talk about KM (think it) and focus on business problems or tasks, knowledge gap and missing process
3. Business focus KM initiatives
4. KM initiatives along people, content, process and technology
5. There is a utility in having a structured process to help the organization identify KM needed to support the business and fill the knowledge gap.
6. Need to tie activist KM works with performance management
7. Without adequate support, even the most energetic KM drivers will 'die' out.
8. Don't use KM lingo with end users
9. For KM initiatives to be successful, it needs to be tied in with the business needs
10. Business requirements in the organization and the gaps were analysed and requested before KM implementation
11. Importance of getting CEO support
12. Very structured and systematic way of rolling out KM initiatives, get close to aligning business objectives as key drivers
13. In order for KM to be successful, it must be a top down approach. Start from CE.
14. Very good framework to kick start KM
15. Engaging senior management early is important
16. Scope it down
17. Start small
18. Audit you gaps
19. Analyse and diagnose

Gopinathan_R@cscollege.gov.sg