

## **1.DSTA**

### **Communities in the Defence Science & Technology Agency (DSTA)**

Ng Kok Chuan, DD(KM), DSTA

#### **The Background and Purpose of the KM Effort**

DSTA's mission is to harness science and technology to provide leading-edge technological solutions to the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF). Increasingly, the SAF's business and operations environment are becoming more complex and unpredictable, with new threats such as global terrorism and emerging pandemic situations. In order to deliver value-added solutions in this complex and turbulent environment, DSTA has to ensure systematic build-up and sustenance of operations capability and staff competency in defence science and technology, and the capacity to respond to challenges.

#### **What DSTA Did**

As part of DSTA's organization transformation, a Directorate of Organization Capability (OCD) was set up in 2006. The OCD consists of eight competency communities (CC's), which are grouped by technical disciplines and competencies. Every CC is headed by a CC Head, and every DSTA staff is a member of a CC.

The CC's have developed a comprehensive Competency Framework for guiding and building up relevant competencies and facilitate career progression. One key point of the Competency Framework is the importance of capability development and staff learning to close competency gaps. Staff learning is facilitated by:

- CC 'Learning Days', which are face-to-face peer learning sessions.
- CC intranet portals, used by staff to disseminate announcements, events, and technology news.
- Formation of tech-watch and CoP for group-based learning and knowledge creation.
- CC 'Knowledge Hubs', used by staff as a document repository to share learning and technical reports and technical conference reports.
- Staff homepages, used by staff to share career aspirations and working experience. The value-add is that the homepages are searchable, hence allowing staff to connect beyond their immediate workgroups.
- An "ASK" channel, used by staff to provide feedback on information that cannot be found.

#### **Lessons Learned**

The critical success factor was to have the respective CC Head own and lead the implementation of their community learning/KM journey. During the initial phase, it was also critical for the KM team to actively engage and support the CC to promote and to review various KM initiatives. Another key lesson is to make the KM/IT applications easy to use (like second nature), and searchable e.g. template-based user-interface for easy submission to the information repository.

#### **Impact and Benefits**

The CC's dual approach of using face-to-face Learning Days supplemented by online community space has significantly expanded the staff capacity to connect, learn and share within their CC, as well as across DSTA. Overall, our staff are encouraged to take personal responsibility in learning and competency development so that they are always able to contribute to current job assignments and be ready for the next job assignment.

**Insights and Lessons learned from case study discussions**

1. Information can be shared across competency community but if it is confidential in nature, user can chose to share only within their own competency community.
2. Overall perspective is important even though the organization can start small.
3. Recognition for sharing is a key factor in making KM successful.
4. Top level support is critical.
5. Encourage officers to share.
6. Good knowledge sharing and good sharing of experience to get users to share.
7. Create or demonstrate value to get buy in.
8. Identification and development of a competency framewor as a starting point to set the CC.
9. Insight on how to systematically organizing a large number of competencies information and communities and generate community sharing.
10. Excellent journey towards Defence science and KM. Keep it up!
11. Alignment with business.
12. Find out what people want first before getting the tool.
13. Holistic approach ensures sustainment.
14. Impressive corporate intranet.
15. Top management support is crucial.
16. CC to develop people.
17. Program centre to deliver results to make KM work.