

10.NLB – Knowledge Champions

Knowledge Champions Programme: National Library Board

Lim Kwang Kok, Deputy Director, Knowledge & Quality Management, National Library Board

Background and Purpose

NLB wanted a more mature, deeply developed framework for distributing KM awareness, activism and skills throughout the organization. Even though staff were primarily practicing KM in a practical sense, via their daily work, either using collaborative systems and software which are in place, or following strict project management disciplines, (which ensured lessons learnt are captured and reused from a KM point of view), better awareness and demonstration of 'KM in action' was required.

This was to ensure that activism needed to support collaborative efforts would be further imbibed into the way things are done, proper techniques were thought to individuals who could then demonstrate back in their work place the techniques in action, and finally selection of key individuals to partake in this programme ensured experience and networked staff could provide a knowledge brokering role.

What We Did

Recognising that NLB's business is pretty diverse, the programme identified Knowledge Champions from across the board. Close to 40 staff were nominated based on their experience, standing and openness to learning new techniques and put through 10 sessions (over 10 months) covering 24 different knowledge solicitation, capture, codification and distribution techniques. Such techniques included Rich Pictures, Play of Life, Podcasts, Storytelling...etc.

In order to ensure techniques thought were then practiced, each participant had to identify a project in their workplace where they could then practice what was thought, try them in a live environment, and then blog about their experiences. A blog site was provided where all Knowledge Champions were given access and encouragement to blog, comment on each others experiences, ask questions...etc. The consultant hired also played a very active role in coaching individuals 'live' via the blogs and in subsequent sessions reviews were done comprehensively.

Impact and Benefits

Of the 24 techniques taught, 60% of the techniques practiced during the course were described by the Knowledge Champions to have helped them in recognizing a Tangible Value (better, faster, cheaper). 30% of techniques practiced resulted in an Indirect Value (building knowledge culture).

Insights and lessons learned from case study discussions

1. KM should be built into the process as far as possible
2. KM should be part of our work. No job description or terms of reference should be given to KM champions as this suggests KM is an additional ECA
3. Need to get senior people to champion and be involved in KM initiatives
4. Buy in from top management is very important in order to set the culture
5. Possible set of tools and system to train KM activists to promote the sharing of knowledge
6. Activist must volunteer or want to be involved

7. Useful approach for getting knowledge champions to blog and share
8. Insight on not to make KM as additional work
9. Important to have the RO of the KM reps to set the expectation and direction. This reduces confusion and encourage the KM rep to put in their effort when KM work is deem secondary
10. Challenging to get the KM champions to commit to the training
11. Passionate, competent and keen KM activists are key to sustaining KM
12. You need people with passion and a little push in the right direction
13. Criteria for selection of staff are they must be experienced and held in high regard (not necessary rank).
14. Skill sets are identified such that they could be easily integrated and applied in their project life cycle.
15. CoP is never meant to be favourable, so its ok for it to “die” after some time.
16. Attrition rate for champions and interest is natural
17. Choose respected and experienced staff as your KM champions
18. KM need top management support
19. Knowledge champion selection criteria → nominated by group management
20. Blogging as way of project management
21. 10 months training and senior staff who are highly regarded are K-champions and they practise and preach KM
22. Skill sets a mix of difficulties, eg. Have a number that easy to apply (about 10 skills)
23. Building of Skills and capabilities for the group of KM champions to enable them to be effective
24. Using “champion” is a good way to roll out KM approach
25. Use of divisional blog, project and personal blog to share and try to minimize lost of information by email

kwang_kok_LIM@nlb.gov.sg