

11.SAF

Implementing eSILK (Enterprise System for Innovation, Learning and Knowledge) : Challenges and Success from the first year pilot of 5000 people

Neo Kim Hai, Head of KM Office, SAF CIO Office and Kuldip Singh, Head of Centre for Heritage Services (CHS) Ministry of Defence, Singapore Armed Forces

The Background and Purpose of the KM Effort in the Case

Operational Imperatives.

The SAF was raised as a deterrence force that has since safeguarded Singapore's security and territorial integrity. Besides undertaking 24/7 homeland defence operations in close cooperation with Singapore's domestic security agencies, the SAF has also been deployed for various humanitarian and peace support missions overseas. Participation in such missions requires a high level of know-how and professionalism and more importantly adaptability, to be able to deal with a wide spectrum of operations. The challenges we faced were:

- Having the need and ability to capture deep knowledge.
- Harnessing the collective knowledge of combined services operations under our 3rd Generation SAF.
- The need to create an enabling environment that will facilitate the knowledge processes of creation, accumulation and sharing of knowledge.

It is very clear that the SAF needs to leverage on knowledge management as one of its key strategies. To this end, it has been having very active knowledge management program initiatives, way before the commercial hype on advantages of KM. Apart from investing in enabling technologies, the SAF has also actively embrace Learning Organization principles as well as commercial best practices such as Six Sigma and ISO across the three services.

What We Did

Knowledge Network.

This brought about the conceptualization and implementation of our Knowledge Network which comprises: firstly, the technology enabler which is our enterprise System for Innovation Learning and Knowledge or eSILK in short; and secondly, the creation of Knowledge Communities or KCs similar to that of CoPs that bring about the systematic grouping of people in selected competency domains and facilitating their knowledge creation, accumulation and sharing. eSILK was implemented by ways of wrapping Web2.0 capabilities around Athena - our content management system and integrates seamlessly with our Office Automation suites of MS Outlook and OpenOffice.

Think Big, Start Small and Scale Fast.

While the desire is to deliver an enterprise system to reach the top number of 15,000 users dealing with classified content, we adopted a phased approach by selecting the training communities comprising school houses and training commands by releasing the system for them to "test drive" or pilot. More importantly, we used the pilot stage to fine tune the integration as well as seek input for enhancement.

Lessons Learned

WHAT WENT WELL

- Think Big, Start Small and Scale Fast was a good strategy
- Having KM Office under the CIO is an advantage
- Learn from past KM efforts
- Enroll early adopters who are already KM aware
- Adopt the "out-of-the-box" features before embarking on customization

WHAT WE COULD HAVE DONE BETTER

- Need to have sustained communication at all level.
- While high level buy-in is important – having grassroots' level advocates is the real success.
- While we believe that the system being Web 2.0 would be easy to use will require no training, we were wrong,
- Set up Training Labs and helpdesk
- Digital S.O.P. to be done as early as possible especially governance

Impact and Benefits

We are at the early stages of measuring impact and benefits; however, we do have some early results in terms of systems usage and adoptions which has been very positive. Some quantifiable are reduced cycle time using our SMART meetings. Improved decision making with better and more ready access to supporting information. We are seeing an emerging group of bloggers who are able to do responsible blogging that supports the overall theme of the organization which will harness the traits of the Gen Y who will increasingly form the backbone of the SAF.

Insights and lessons learned from case study discussions

1. Relevance to users important for buy in
2. Excellent technology in place
3. Very flexible, operational and feasible
4. Good demo on the system
5. Good strategy to make KM into part and parcel of work life
6. Integrating the KM tools with legacy (email, comms) sharing is a good 1st step – “creeping effect”
7. Interesting concept of creating scarcity to increase “the need”
8. Accessibility with one stop portal, and is integrated into email.
9. Simplicity
10. Visibility of ownership
11. Customization
12. Comprehensive and well designed KM system with document tracking, good integration of process and good segmentation