Collaborative Knowledge Networks
EDITED BY HELEN ROCHE
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KNOWLEDGE IS power. This is an accepted fact in all organisations nowadays and employee knowledge is recognised as a significant organisational resource. Effective knowledge management can provide a competitive advantage for many organisations, but this requires that the right information is available to the right people, at the right place, and at the right time. As a result, the processes of identifying, capturing, and distributing knowledge is of the utmost importance in organisations of all sizes.

In order to benefit from the knowledge of its employees, organisations need to facilitate effective knowledge transfer between them. This is where collaboration plays a role in knowledge management. Collaboration, through the use of knowledge networks, is the means through which important organisational knowledge can be created and shared. Collaboration can help organisations to break down silo mentalities and, when promoted effectively, collaborative knowledge networks will encourage employees to share information which leads to greater idea generation, innovation, and organisational cost savings.

According to Don Tapscott, adjunct professor at the University of Toronto, ‘there’s a big change that’s underway right now in rethinking knowledge management. It’s really moving toward what I would call content collaboration’. The future of KM lies undoubtedly in the sharing of content and knowledge. Collaborative knowledge networks, in the form of intranets, knowledge hubs, and social networks for example, are the key to the sharing and dissemination of knowledge within an organisation. They foster better internal and external communication, boost organisational memory, and aid in accelerating idea flows.

While the benefits of collaboration are easily identified, the challenges are also considerable. How can an organisation establish a collaborative knowledge network? What can be done to encourage greater knowledge creation and sharing in place of knowledge collection and storage? How can organisations encourage their employees to become active participants in collaborative knowledge networks? These questions are addressed in this report. The contributors share their insight and experiences in relation to collaboration and knowledge networks. They provide practical advice and examples of the ways in which collaborative knowledge networks can be established in order for organisations to generate value from their knowledge-based assets.

As well as focusing on the benefits and challenges inherent in creating and managing successful collaborative knowledge networks, the expert contributions in this report discuss additional issues such as user adoption, identifying the critical success factors for collaborative networks, capturing tacit knowledge, the changing face of knowledge creation, creating a collaborative knowledge culture, and the importance of inclusive collaboration including the end consumer. The case
studies included show how networks have been used by different organisations (in different industries) to reap the benefits of collaboration.

Social networking and collaboration is the way forward for KM. All organisations should already have collaborative knowledge networks in place for their employees, otherwise this needs to be a serious business consideration for the near future. For those who already promote collaboration and knowledge sharing an assessment should be made into the effectiveness of those networks and into possible efficiency improvements that can be made.

In the words of Don Tapscott, ‘the train has left the station. The horse is out of the barn. We’re not going back on this.’ Effective collaborative knowledge networks are imperative for modern knowledge management programmes. This report outlines the importance of collaborative knowledge networks for today’s organisations and provides advice on how organisations can effectively promote and develop collaborative KM to their benefit.

References
About the authors

Arshad Ahmed is a knowledge management practitioner from the UK with experience across academic and business-focused KM. Previous roles have included working in the SME, legal, and procurement sectors, and he is also a regional coordinator for the Manchester Knowledge Cafés.

Curtis A. Conley is a knowledge management practitioner with a passion for helping people to connect, collaborate, and learn. He is an enterprise collaboration solution architect at Kellogg, where his focus is on developing both the technical infrastructure and social environment required for enterprise collaboration. Curtis holds a doctorate in Adult Education with a cognate in knowledge management, as well as an MBA from Northern Illinois University.

Liz Copeland is knowledge manager for the Local Government Association (LGA). Sharing knowledge and learning to help support, promote, and improve local government is at the heart of Liz’s work. She enables colleagues across local government and the public sector to engage with online tools that help them share practice and experience, develop new ways of working, and improve the work they do for their local communities. She is also involved in a range of internal projects to develop and improve knowledge sharing across the LGA.

Liz’s previous roles include providing advice and guidance to local councils on talent management, employee engagement, organisational change and workforce development, promotion of local government careers and jobs, and management of a summer placement scheme and a part-time employment service for students. In addition, Liz is vice-chair of governors at a local primary school.

Stephen Dale is the founder and co-director of Collabor8Now. He is a passionate community and collaboration ecologist with experience in creating offline and online environments that foster conversations and engagement. His career to date places him at the confluence between knowledge management, people and behaviours, and collaborative technologies. He is both an evangelist and practitioner in the use of collaborative technologies and social media applications to support personal learning and development, and Stephen delivers occasional training and masterclasses on the use of social technologies for personal knowledge management (PKM).

Stephen has provided change management consultancy services that have delivered more fluid knowledge flows and agile working processes for his clients in both public and private sectors. He was the business lead and information architect for the local government community of practice platform – the largest and most advanced online practitioner group in the UK public sector. Stephen’s current and previous clients include Reuters Ltd, Kent County Council, the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP), the Home Office, Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR, now BIS), the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the Scottish Government, and the Department of Health.
Stephen is a regular contributor to professional journals and magazines and is currently chairman of the Online Information Executive Committee.

David Galipeau has had communication and KM experience for the past 20 years crossing over both the traditional and digital channels, and lying within the spectrum of upstream strategic planning as well as downstream project implementation. David joined the dotcom frenzy of the late 90s and founded digital publishing, multimedia, and TV production companies in Europe focusing on multi-channel strategies and aligning traditional with new media channels. Both companies were successfully sold in 2000.

David joined the United Nations in 2004 and has held leading positions in eCommunications and Knowledge and Innovation Management for the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and is currently the Knowledge, Innovation and Capacity Group co-leader for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), based at the Asia and Pacific Regional Centre in Bangkok, Thailand. Working together with stakeholders ranging from senior ministers to community-based organisations, in diverse countries from Afghanistan to China to Fiji, David focuses on developing and supporting inclusive innovation and knowledge transfer initiatives for the 24 countries in the Asia-Pacific region. He also established a Swiss foundation that continues to research the effects of technology on society and institutional organizations.

Daanish Khan is the head of strategy and marketing for MindLink Software Ltd, a provider of business critical collaboration solutions. In the past two years in this role, he has worked with key industry influencers to champion efficiency improvements in collaborative processes through the use of new technologies. He has published several articles that discuss the value of collaborative networks and how collaboration solutions lead to demonstrable business results.

Daanish began his career in Silicon Valley, where he worked for two venture capital backed software start-ups. He moved to London in 2007 and spent three years helping a mid-tier investment bank streamline their processes for launching new products. Daanish holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science from Cornell University, Ithaca, NY and an MBA from Imperial College, London.

Josh Liu is a serial entrepreneur. After completing his MBA at Imperial College, he has started several businesses exploring how new technology and business models can better facilitate knowledge exchange among people. Currently, he is the CEO and co-founder of Acроссio, a software company that builds real-time software specifically for cross-department knowledge sharing in large organisations.

Kgothatso Mamabolo is a knowledge management specialist at Kumba Iron Ore, a leading value-adding supplier of high quality iron ore to the global steel industry. Kgothatso is responsible for the implementation of knowledge management strategies in capital projects. With over 10 years of experience in the field of knowledge management, Kgothatso has experience in setting up and implementing knowledge management in various industry sectors such as management consulting, government parastatals, and mining. Kgothatso is keenly interested in the knowledge sharing aspects of knowledge management.
Javier Martinez is the KM manager at Catenaria and he is the director of Knoco, Chile. Javier obtained a law degree from the University of the Basque Country and a Master’s degree in Internet Management from the Catalan Institute of Technology. Javier previously worked with the World Bank as a consultant in the area of knowledge management, and with the Inter-American Development Bank as a consultant in the field of communication and learning.

Joel Muzard is the founder and chief knowledge officer at Applied Intelligence Atelier. He is an international consultant on online real-time knowledge management and performs personalized coaching and training for professionals and managers in areas such as social relationship, collaboration, communication, knowledge management, strategic planning, problem solving, and the new social and semantic web. He is interested in the success of his clients, and proposes personalized plans to develop the appropriate strategies to reach their goals. He is the designer of the WebIDEApro cloud platform for agile online collaboration. He facilitates online knowledge events to help teams to augment group intelligence and performance.

Joel has lectured at HEC-Montreal, ENAP, Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica, and Universidad Santa María. He participated in the Ecuador project RETO-RURAL on professional training and knowledge management consulting sponsored by the Swiss International Cooperation COSUDE (2007–08). He is the organizer and facilitator of the Knowledge-Café-Lab of Montreal, the main activity of the KM-GC-MONTREAL community of knowledge management, with the participation of several countries, using web tools such as the WebIDEApro platform he designed. Joel tweets at http://twitter.com/Joel_Muzard and can be contacted at joel.muzard@a-i-a.com.

Penny Newman joined Lewis Silkin LLP in December 2007 in the then newly created position of director of people and knowledge. Penny trained and qualified as a chartered accountant with Deloitte, before moving first to a training role and then to become London audit HR manager. She left Deloitte in 1998 and has been working in law firms ever since.

Penny was previously head of HR at Davies Arnold Cooper and Farrer & Co. She is responsible for the HR, learning and development, and knowledge functions at Lewis Silkin. The HR team and the Library and Resource Centre (LRC) report to her directly and she chairs the firm’s Knowhow Committee which comprises of representatives from LRC, Professional Development Lawyers from each of the five firm departments, and IT.

Rooven Pakkiri is head of social business at Collaboration Matters, a leading UK-based social business consultancy. A veteran of the dotcom era, Rooven is a digital evangelist who focuses on the way technology changes organisational communication and collaboration. He is a published author and a regular speaker on the subject of social business and how it is transforming the corporate rule book. Rooven is also the co-founder of a regular thought leadership event in London where independent thinkers discuss issues of user adoption and cultural transformation.

As the head of social business at Collaboration Matters, Rooven is responsible for developing client specific adoption strategies and immersion programs. He has taken the lead in delivering collaboration platforms for global clients in the financial services and not-for-profit sectors. As part of this process Rooven employs a number of techniques from scenario modelling, content seeding, champion identification, and community development. Rooven can be contacted at rooven@collaborationmatters.com.
Karthikeyan Palanisamy is a results-driven knowledge management professional with proven experience in planning and leading KM initiatives in line with organisational goals and objectives. He is currently a manager of knowledge management at Mindtree Limited where he supports projects in improving ‘knowledge health’ and delivering better results through KM planning and execution. Karthikeyan aims to consistently improve the knowledge of an organisation by effectively using the relevant KM tools and techniques in winning new business, enhancing customer satisfaction, and gaining competitive advantage. He was previously a business development manager at NextGen Web Services and KM consultant at Wipro Technologies Ltd. Karthikeyan holds an MBA (marketing and operations) from ICFAI Business School, Bangalore.

Natalie Ryan is the information management coordinator for the Division of Technology, Information and Learning Support at Queensland University of Technology (QUT). Based in the QUT library, Natalie works closely with Information Technology Services and other areas across QUT to provide information management advice and support for intranet and collaborative tools. Natalie holds a Master’s degree in Information Management and has a background as a corporate librarian.