

Key Factors in a Successful Knowledge Management Model

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Abstract

This paper first seeks to understand success factors in established knowledge management models. The paper then prescribes a simplistic a three-stage model to understand or evaluate success factors in KM models: transfer, relationship and community. The model proposes a key factor in KM models is its transfer mechanics, which is directly related to the ability of community to form values and behaviors consistent to the natural rules or laws of the community of practice. The acceptance of the natural rules or laws form the mechanism or trust levels in an individual that grants them to access to internal knowledge sharing nodes. These nodes then seek externalization with communities of practice that are in alignment with their own core or noble values.

Keywords: Knowledge management, data, knowledge, information, transfer

Introduction

Knowledge management is based on three key factors: transfer, relationship and community. In a small mid-Atlantic Pennsylvania University leadership was a key success factor in transferring explicit and tacit knowledge. The leadership united in commonality through extensive training in the widely published book by Dr. Stephen Covey called, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. University success relied not on one person, but the entire community, and its relationships internally and externally.

Former Special Assistant to the President Norman Hasbrouck said, “Our mission is not seen as a success through ourselves, but through our external community relationships and continued relationships built here by our students.”

This paper will first explore past leading scholars’ literature’s key concepts in knowledge management. Then the paper will identify and clarify how three common factors are established in successful knowledge management models: transfer, relationship and community. And finally, this paper will suggest how the presented model can be influential in determining outcomes for knowledge stakeholders.

Literature Review and Key Terms Definitions

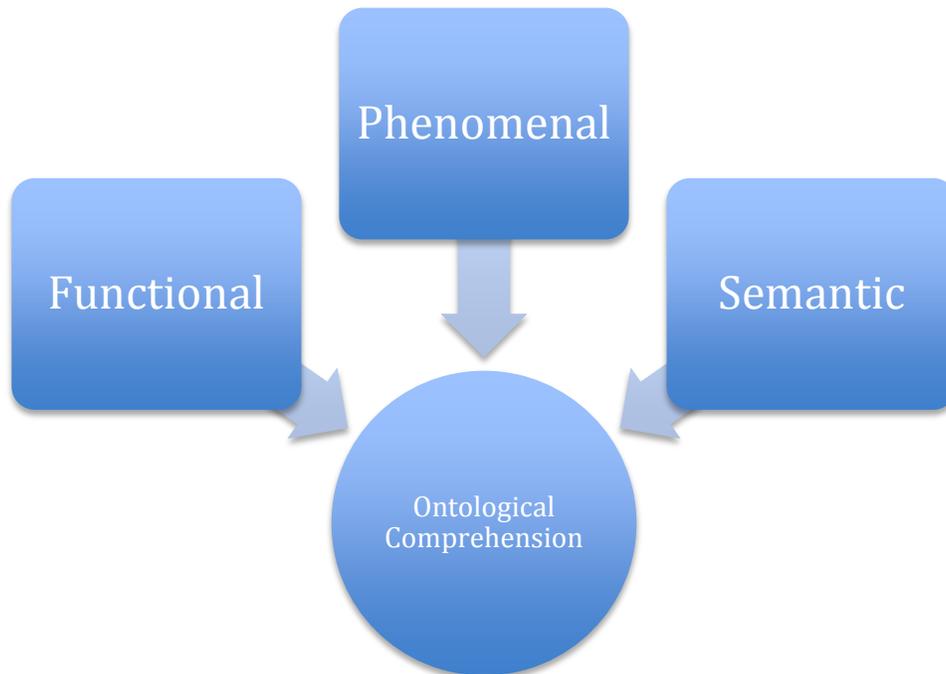
Polanyi & Sen, (1966) said, we “know more than we can tell” (p. x). Knowledge is composed of organized data or bits of “simple measurements,” and patterns that surround us (Debons, 2008, p. 5). Knowledge can be broken down into two key forms: explicit and tacit. Explicit knowledge can be described as data that is “clearly stated,” which has been

written down and easily transferred between one or more stakeholders (Debons, 2008, p. 9).

Conversely, Tacit knowledge is fluid and actively shaping through developing and past experiences in which knowledge is created. Polanyi describes four states of tacit data: functional, or an active awareness of purpose; phenomenal, knowledge in formation and appearance; semantic, meaning through application or hands on experience; and ontological, or a comprehensible understanding or proximal and distal relationships in forms.

Figure 1

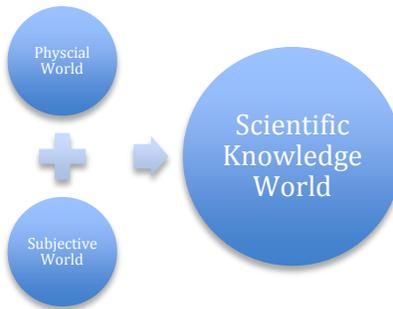
Polanyi's Four Stages of Tacit Knowledge



This tacit knowledge structure can be developed through Gestalt's psychological perceptions, or Gilbert Ryle's concepts of "knowing what" or "knowing how," which forms the functional structure of knowledge. This phenomenal data or meaning is functional and transferable from one stakeholder to another. This data, which can be organized from the world we live in, represents what Karl Popper described as physical world, where we live in the world; subjective world, how we see the world; and scientific world, the accumulation of recorded information (Debons, 2008, p. 13).

Figure 2

Popper's Stages of the World

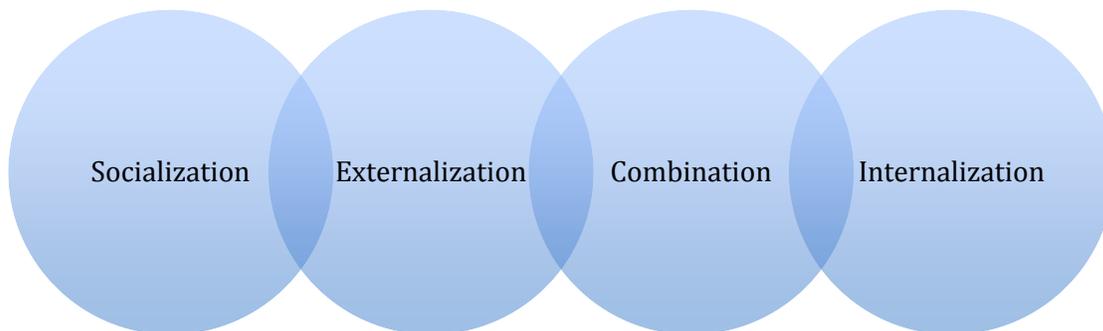


These relationships of transfer or transferable knowledge form through best practices in value creation. The value in transferred data is formed when knowledge practices are returned in distinctive action. These communicated learned actions formed through the patterns of exchanged knowledge and data formulate a knowledge value proposition (O'dell & Grayson, 1998). In turn this knowledge proposition and action transfer can have a measurable effectiveness to the model's strategy.

Organizational knowledge creation is adapted from a single transfer to multiple transmissions of explicit or tacit knowledge exchanges inside of a community of practice. These exchanges intermingle between explicit and tacit knowledge inside the process creating value. The exchanges are navigated through a cognitive developed four-stage metamorphosis processes: Socialization, externalization, combination and internalization.

Figure 3

Community of Practice stages of Knowledge Transferrantion

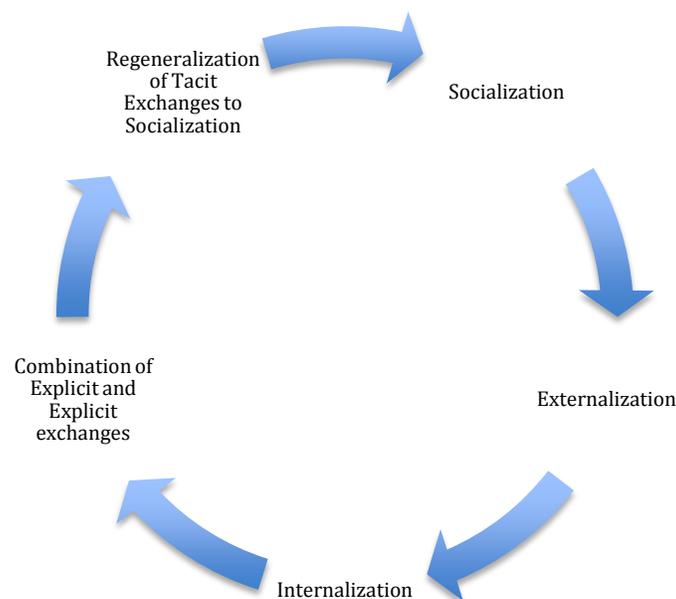


This process is creates the organizational "spiral" of knowledge transfer in a community of practice. Inside of this spiral transfer mechanism human action in forms of "intention" and "commitment" are deeply rooted in a value system in the community that forms behavior and interaction with knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). The socialization

of experiences exchanges tacit knowledge into shared tacit knowledge. The tacit exchanges then form explicit transfers of knowledge in the externalization of the tacit shares before in the internal awareness or comprehension is accepted. Then the spiral reshapes the exchanges in explicit forms to once again create large cognitive exchanges in the tacit domain that recycles the information into greater community bodies of practice (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Figure 4

Nonaka & Takeuchi's Cognitive Exchange Stages



The re-generalization of knowledge exchanges in the community creates a paradigm-shifting criterion and assumes solutions. These paradigm shifts in knowledge follow presiding laws or rules within acceptable solutions while community members capitalize on the new data and patterns to conceptualize the “puzzle” fragments into workable tacit knowledge again (Kuhn, 1996, pp. 34–44). The compared experiences and observations result in data transfers that “coexist” in coexistences in the community of practice that evolve the “inferred sequences” in to ordered events of knowledge to be further transferred, enriched, and developed (Dewey, 1958, p. 4a).

Pooled or shared knowledge has no beginning or ending transitionally. The tacit exchanges of data blend, grow, and recycle in the spiral to form new overlapping constants. The cohesion of exchanges and transfers develop a larger pool of shared knowledge in which one “person’s knowledge ends and another’s begins” is never clear by all aid in forming new solutions and continuing beginning structures or conscious-cognitive strings (Brown & Duguid, 2000, p. 106).

The pool forms interlacing communities of practice. The communities, in an almost magnetic attraction for clarity, attract knowledge in the spiral loop of the larger pool. These spirals of community practices interlace in a web of “about” knowledge, which through interconnecting nodes form “know how” or exercised and explored new practices or new rules (Brown & Duguid, 2000, p. 128). This overall encompassing web of cognitive connections is what Polanyi described as a reservoir of knowledge where “operators are in positions to learn from each other” (Brown & Duguid, 2000, p. 132-133).

The community of practice theory has been coined by Etienne Wenger-Trayner’s contributions. The tribal perspective focuses on communities’ engagements in social learning and sharing. The scholars prescribe a deeper connection in the tribe in which the community has an inner domain. The domains function or centralize meanings in the culture for assemble, construction and utilization of knowledge for a “survival” in the collective. The assembly is considered less constrictive or organized as a body or system of experts. Its function is transfer mechanism to disperse experienced information in a synergistic frame. Deeper collaboration or cyclical transparency comes through the community’s ability to enable the realized value of the social information (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). In the scholar’s 2015 model, the influence of the feedback loop becomes a dominant success indicator and corrective measuring device for further assemblage of social information. Similarly, this paper demonstrates the importance of socialization of meanings and constructs in knowledge management models (Wegner-Trayner & Wegner-Trayner, 2014). The shared tacit experiences assembled in the constructs of model or fame construction are vital to the overall centralization and dispersion of information that is core to the value of any partnership and relationship-gathering construct. Overall the paper demonstrates the value of “freedom” in tacit exchanges in socialized marketplaces are more important than the actual non-monetary construct value of the information itself in a collective-communal exchange system.

The Construction of the Theoretical Knowledge Management Success Model

Uncertainty is one common thread that describes why individuals or communities of practice seek knowledge. Knowledge management models have formed through business practices and rules of conformity in relationships. Transfer mechanics are a common thread in every community of knowledge. In order to develop knowledge sharing, which aid in eliminating uncertainty, communities formulate distribution nodes. The nodes, which remain in the “minds” of people in the communities of practice, formulate sharing constructions of information or data when relationships are trusting of one another and have behaviors essential to fulfilling “initiatives” and “encourages” universal rewards (Davenport, 2000, p. 24).

In the first case examined, the scholars found nine traits or factors that are present in successful knowledge management projects: culture, infrastructure, support, value, process orientation, vision, motivational aids, knowledge structures, channels for

knowledge transfer (Davenport, 2000, p. 153). Similarly Covey (2004) drew upon nine principles or guidelines of human conduct and practice based on service, encouragement, growth, value, fairness, potential, dignity, natural law and order, and patience (34-25). These basic tenants formed the model's nodes in the web of community interaction that later constructs the primary value system for knowledge sharing growth.

In both cases the overall constructs establish a web of interacting nodes to form relationships or habits inside the knowledge sharing communities. The habits are described as the intersection of theories on skills, and how to dos, which are the cores of known tacit knowledge exchanges. Covey (2004) spiral of knowledge persuades individuals to construct first independence from communities to gain personal growth than later form in the nodes of interaction an ultimate destination of community interdependence and shared knowledge pools. The shared pools are relationship bound and linked through mutual success balances.

Critical assets such as intellectual assets build upon themselves when transferred in communities. Drucker's (1998) model endows a community of practice through its abilities to expand knowledge exponentially as "interconnections" expand (p. 103). The community must then find methods to expand their linear links to form large webs linked to nodes of an external commune in order to gain benefits. The external commune nodes allow for "amplification, and modifications— the benefits—" that form collaborative knowledge and "exponential" community knowledge (p. 193). The community knowledge is the essential core values asset seen in many knowledge management models. This was expressed as assets, behaviors, and interim outcomes with a measurable deadline hallmark in Logan, King, & Fischer-Wright (2011).

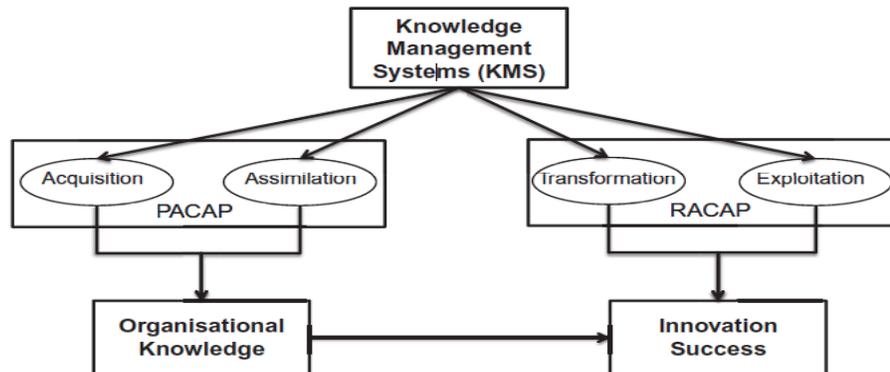
Logan, King, & Fischer-Wright's (2011) model presumes a four-stage prolog in formulating community knowledge: alienated, separated, personal, partnership, and finally team. The scholars' upward digressions in the knowledge sharing compare an individual's self-discovery as an iatrical part of communication structure. An individual, like in Covey's model, must transcend self; understand greater self, to emancipate singular knowledge into "team" or collective. In their model the leadership or "tribal" leader becomes an organizer or node in projecting individuals away from self or negative values into participants of noble community value.

In Logan, King, & Fischer-Wright's (2011) framework the "tribal seed" attracts external resources through the devolved and efficient running nodes or internal communities that surpass organizational boundaries and measures to mature the populace's knowledge consortium. The externalization is paired through maximizing value-based relationships constant with the recognized core value. This external exchange or acquisition of knowledge is core for internal development and success in the models. In an essence, the community forms knowledge "stock" with intrinsic value for exploration.

The "absorption" of knowledge acquisitions is directly linked to the strength on the individual internal nodes to assemble the external knowledge or "stock" into comprehensible discoveries and then redistribute this commodity into itself. The absorption, internal transfer, and transcendence into creating deeper external relationships is key to meriting knowledge success (Moos, Beimborn, Wagner, & Weitzel, 2013).

Figure 5

Moos, Beimborn, Wagner, & Weitzel' (2013) model



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Although some models separate the management of knowledge acquisition from the internalization of knowledge spiral, the literature and scholars all form an acknowledgement that all knowledge must have an assemblage or absorption period inside the nodes. This process development begins in the cognitive mindsets of the stakeholder in has control or ownership of tacit or explicit knowledge. Each of the examined models expressed a need for stakeholder transcendence from individual to “we” or community knowledge. In turn this transcendence of knowledge is held in business models as a source of control or power, whereby knowledge is considered a mechanism of safety. In order for the transfer of knowledge in the system to occur the individuals must find a superior order or merit an augmentation in the core value to surpass individualized pooling. This cognitive recognition cycle inside the community of practice must find the value in the external data in order to recapitalize and assemble the data into internalized contributions (Acklin, 2013). This knowledge cycle is established in Acklin’s (2013) model that reflects seven-stage management generation sequence: exploration, transformation, assimilation, acquisition, organizational capabilities, and parent resources, and finally knowledge model redesign.

Knowledge acquisition is therefore in need of codification. The codification process inside the internal nodes by itself “does not exist in the abstract, but only in the relationship of the practice” or transmission of the internalized data (Pitra & Zaušková, 2014, p. 52). The transformation practice includes again a sharing process to assume benefits.

The benefits are then measurable once externalized in the cycle again to align the

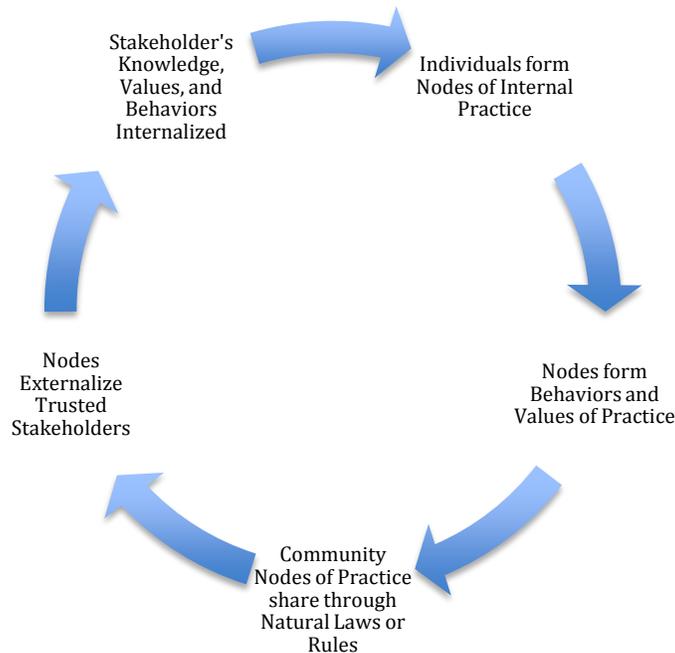
community of practice with shareholders or stakeholders. Thus the socialization of knowledge in the externalization process creates the “real knowledge.” Real knowledge or transferred knowledge can be measured then by its ability to be used, or cycled into new creation in a pull-knowledge model or a strategy model that pushes intelligence into action (Pitra & Zaušková, 2014, pp. 53-54).

Three-Stage Model of Knowledge Generation and Assembly

This paper seeks to boil down the existing models into a three-stage model: transfer, relationship and community. In the model, transfer is directly related to the ability of community to form values and behaviors consistent to the natural rules or laws.

Figure 6

Three-Stage model of Knowledge Generation and Assembly



The natural rules or laws in the nodes are seen as a mechanism or lubricant that forms the bounds and trust levels of individuals to release and acquire internal knowledge sharing nodes. These nodes then seek externalization. The community of practice internalizes stakeholders’ knowledge, values, natural laws and rules that are in alignment with their own core or noble values. The assemblage of internalized stakeholder knowledge is then again transferred in the cycle, evaluated, and cycled into new creation. The new creation is then measurable through action and creation.

The knowledge cycle can contain tacit and explicit knowledge. In exchange, the cycle can form micro or macro-knowledge management practices. The goal of this model is to not generate a method for organizational knowledge boundaries or project knowledge

management. The goal of the model is to assemble the key functionary foundations that must be present in any knowledge management model or future model to form a success value.

This paper and model acknowledges scholar's works and acts as a key to generating or evaluating current models. In general, the model acts as a method to simplify and improve processes that are already established in communities of practice. This model follows guidance from prior models and literature that suggest the core of all knowledge management is the "process of creating, sharing, distributing, capturing, and understanding knowledge in a company" or community that includes "knowledge identification, creation, acquisition, and exploitation" of data. Overall the goal of any and all knowledge management models is applying knowledge whether tacit or explicit to secure a task's resolution or apply performance (Gasik, 2011, p. 26).

Concluding Thoughts and Suggestions for Further Research

This paper sought to align current models of knowledge management practices into a streamlined model of practice for communities. To further this research, scholars should consider utilizing this model to determine success factors in current models of practice. In addition, this model could be used to establish a test or starting point for individuals or organizations to build their own knowledge management model. The model offers key points of reflection that are needed in all model to survive and become active additions to any community of practice.

Although this model is not intended to become a direct usage model, the paper can be a reflection for future leaders or community of practice members to formulate a system of practice. The model should then be considered a guide to effective knowledge management model building.

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Note: Figure 1. Moos, B., Beimborn, D., Wagner, H.-T., & Weitzel, T. (2013). The Role of Knowledge Management Systems for Innovation: An Absorptive Capacity Perspective. *International Journal of Innovation Management*, 17(5), -1.

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