

Spring 2018

"What'S uP" - Newsletter Spring 2018

Dear former and current interns,

Once again it is time for the year's first "What'S uP" newsletter. We have a variety of topics on offer about "Knowledge Management".

We hope you enjoy reading it.

Yours sincerely,

©Jennifer, Susanne, Sofia, Qingqing, Janosch and Madeleine

Editorial: Schlegel und Partner Intern Team



"Knowledge Management - a human problem or a technological problem?"

What is information? What is knowledge?

By Jennifer

In general, information is part of a message mostly to an individual, such as facts and data. Knowledge on the other hand is the understanding (and processing) of delivered information and is more complex than data and information. Knowledge is subjective, often based on experience and highly contextual.

But what does that actually mean? Does information automatically lead to knowledge? Is the information always useful and is the gained knowledge useful for my daily life? But how can we make sure to acquire the right knowledge, in the right place, at the right time and how can we not miss the obvious in a forest full of trees? The answers to these questions are probably highly diverse and depend on a person's interest, cultural background as well as on a variety of other variables.

How to efficiently collect and transfer big data into knowledge

By Qingqing and Sofia



Big data can be described as the large volume of data that a business tackles on a daily basis. The process from data to knowledge is from collection to analysis to control over to the decision making part. This is an attempt to describe something so complex simply!

Data-collection is the prerequisite for information-veracity. The data can be collected through various sources and formats, such as texts, numeric data, graphics or images. In business, data can be categorized into customer data, transaction data and interaction data. The traditional way of data collection can already collect the first two mentioned data groups. The interaction data on the other hand can be collected by modern technologies like surveillance, cookies and is a new way of collecting more personalized data.

This scenario is already part of daily life in many Chinese cities. Surveillance cameras are not only there for security reasons, they also have the job to collect data. Data like everyone's time in front of a product, the duration of checking out the product as well as main information like what gender and what generation buys which products. So, how can data-collection help a company to gain useful knowledge? Let's take a further insight into data-collection: Supposing a supermarket has no employee, but is full of cameras. People check and take products they need and pay with their phones. Information about products that are sold really well, what target group buys what product and which payment method is mostly preferred among users will be distributed to the shop owner, manufacturers and financial companies.

At the moment of collecting data and analyzing it, companies are gaining knowledge about their situation. This helps companies to generate criteria for buying decisions and to make strategic moves. But to whom does the data belong and how is it shared with manufacturers or financial companies? How is the data interpreted and what algorithms are behind the data evaluation? Are they always right and what are they based on? These are questions nowadays all the data technology companies are working on. We can foresee methodologies to integrate data in a legal and efficient way. In the big data world, advanced controlling and analyzing skills are necessary. Ultimately, using data in suitable knowledge in the right manner can avoid "data grave".

SuP's culture can benefit from that. Due to the advanced collection and evaluation of data, the company can gain market-relevant insights.

Is learning by heart necessary?

By Janosch



Most schools and universities enforce the intake of information of their students in one way or another. The question that occurs is whether it is necessary to struggle through something that bores us if the information can be found within seconds at our fingertips. The answer to that is clear: It depends.

On the one hand, it is a waste of time, hammering something into your brain, when you are sure that you are not going to keep the information in the future and it will be forgotten within minutes. The need to keep information might become even more questionable when facing the possibility to research the topic instantly via smartphone or computer. Thus making the ability to retrieve the material again much more crucial. On the other hand, many aspects from other domains can be applied to different fields of specialization and tests don't just fulfill the role of making people learn – they also quantify an individual's motivation, ambition and even diligence.

All in all, one of the most important skills a person has to have is **the ability to instantly acquire necessary knowledge**. Meaning, if you are able to find and select relevant information in a small amount of time, you will have a competitive advantage.

It is therefore logical to properly teach this skill rather than just raw knowledge. This is partly achieved already through literature research courses at schools and universities. However, this might gain an even greater importance in the future. With information providers trying to influence what we consume, adequate screening is essential to be able to differentiate between unbiased and biased information.

For SuP this would mean to find a quicker, more precise method of researching in all available sources but for now it is easiest to research the one defined, particular information.

Sharing knowledge in a non-sharing economy

By Susanne



Since the publications of Edward T. Hall (*Beyond Culture*) and Geert Hofstede (*Cultures and Organizations*), we have been aware that we all are differently imprinted culturally. According to Hall, western civilizations tend to be more individualistic and form a low-context culture, while eastern civilizations tend to be more collective and form a high-context culture.

This means relationships, collective gain and trust have a high value for the latter, while the formation of the own personality, personal gain and power has a high value for the first. These aspects, as well as the organizational culture in which we work, influence our willingness to share knowledge with others.

The “hype” of knowledge-sharing and management on platforms like social networks, wikis, blogs or content and learning management systems ignore the fact that important knowledge will not transfer itself from our heads into a digitalized version. Instead, human beings need to transfer it – no digital tool is useful for a company, as long as its employees do not accept it as a possibility to reach a collective gain by knowledge-sharing. We should not underestimate the energy we need to put in learning to share in a society like Germany, besides all the new digital possibilities – primarily by eliminating a corporate culture that supports competition and creating one that supports cooperation.

Shouldn't we get together and discuss how to manage our collective knowledge? How about participating in common activities after work in order to build trust? And last but not least – shouldn't we get together during our working hours without having a bad conscience? A starting point could be a suitable and comfortable room, where we, the employees, can meet up regularly and exchange our expertise and ideas on our projects in an "Open Space". If we are successful in knowledge-sharing in one or the other aspect, let's communicate our experiences to the entire company.

"Sharing is caring" at SuP

By Madeleine



Knowledge management is an important factor within the SuP culture, with so many different cultures working together. Observing the process of knowledge transfer you can see that it is represented differently throughout the departments. The requirements for a knowledge-sharing culture are good relationships as well as team-building and therefore creating a good working atmosphere. The more open-minded the atmosphere between colleagues is and the better everyone knows each other, the more positive effects does this have on knowledge sharing.

Within the SuP culture, knowledge sharing was, is and will always be a very important aspect. As we have noticed there is a good atmosphere in all the departments among employees. Everyone is trustful, open-minded and always helpful. Apart from the cross-functional project teams, this is also enhanced by personal contact of employees – be it playing pool during lunch break or meeting after work for drinks or for other curricular activities. Due to this trustworthy and open-minded culture, important criteria are fulfilled **to create a basis for knowledge management.**

A lot of knowledge is transferred within most departments, while having face-to-face conversations or brief, but intense team meetings. However, knowledge transfer mostly happens within the project-team and not with all members of the department. During projects, there is a communication line between different departments, but it is just a small part of the actual knowledge that could be shared. So far, the knowledge-sharing happens via phone or email.

Is there a possibility to improve the communication and knowledge-sharing? Sure there is. By creating an open space or a "Social Hub" for employees, knowledge can be shared with all departments of the company and their knowledge management could be improved in the future.