

The 4 'C's of Knowledge Transfer and
Knowledge Based Working- Emerging
Themes in Successful Knowledge Working and KTPs

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Background -Where did the evidence that suggests this framework come from?

The research began life in 2000 as a PHD study supervised by the University of Bradford Management School. (Completed in 2006).

The research process involved gathering data from multiple sources;

Questionnaires (paper and electronic)

Semi-structured interviews

Participant Observation

Follow up interviews

Secondary case study data

Altogether views were obtained from over 250 executives, allowing for multiple triangulation of evidence

Background 2

The data was obtained from a large multi-national financial services company as a live case study.

This data was then compared with evidence from 8 non-case organisations who agreed to allow in-depth semi structured follow-up interviews. These interviews covered companies from the areas of Telecommunications, Food Retailing, Consultancy, Construction, and Information Technology.

The quantitative and qualitative evidence was subsequently analysed to provide a framework with which to understand the current situation with regard to knowledge based working/KT.

The emergence of 4 key themes

- There was significant disparity in the understanding terminology- (sometimes people did not even know they were working on KT activity)
- There was great 'energy' and perceived value in getting KT/KBW right, ie securing the benefits- this was not going to be just a passing fad like MBO/JIT/TQM etc.
- Many interviewees gave the view that they could 'half see' the destination but clearly needed a Map or framework-typical quotes

'Making sure everyone is aware of the existing knowledge in the company. Helping to facilitate the sharing and development of knowledge. Utilising the experience and competencies of each member of the organization.'

'Knowing who knows what and what they know. Initiate, build develop, share a collective pool of understanding amongst those who need it. Organising the recording, filing/storing of information in a way that makes it accessible to others.'

So theme one was 'Confusion'

- Gaining clarity around what KT was, what the benefits would be and who would contribute in what way was often the first real hurdle
- This is not unlike any other OD scenario but the added challenge is the intangible and dynamic nature of the central material –knowledge-
- Securing detailed agreement over what the KT exercise was going to involve was only ever going to be temporary and would need to be constantly checked



The second theme Convergence

- Where we saw really good progress being made on KT/KBW it was where the project/activity was core to a significant strategic driver
- Where the KT activity could be directly linked to visible impact such as;

Savings in direct labour costs

Improvements in customer response times

Fewer mistakes being repeated

Shared experiences between business units doing similar things

These were both welcomed and fundamental to business improvement.

Less obvious benefits like 'improved communications' did not enthuse our sample population.

The third theme Commitment

The literature (largely) and common understanding suggests that greater commitment leads to greater performance. However what does Commitment to KT mean?

At the organisational level

- Top level sponsorship-someone with credible authority must be the sponsor
- A willingness to change as a result of KT/KBW
- Recognition that the knowledge age is upon us and has not just changed the rules but the whole game
- Breaking away from the short-termism mindset and really invest for the future

(How common are these characteristics in large corporations.)

At the individual level

- WIIFM?
- The Fear/trust balance
- Reward and recognition issues

The Final theme Culture

This theme was suggested by the respondents to questionnaire and survey work in the case study research. The need for a suitable culture to promote and encourage KT/KBW was universally seen as paramount.

But what is a suitable culture and how do you get it? Investigated further we were able to boil this down to 2 aspects-



Trust



Flexibility

Conclusion- the 4 'C's model and what to do with it?

I have developed a self-assessment tool to indicate where your challenges lie and what cultural impacts are worthy of considering- (workshop tomorrow)

Any questions?

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