

Leading the Knowledge Management Process

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**KPM SYMPOSIUM**

# Leadership

- One may deem themselves an informed leader because they've read a lot of leadership books.
- This phenomena is similar to deeming oneself full because you've read the entire menu.
- Leadership is in the doing. And there's the rub.
- Leadership is much more than a position – it is the doing of that which is difficult

# Quick study of what we think about Leadership

- Can be taught, and also learned
- If you do 9 out of 10 things well, those around you will focus on the 1
- Creative leadership is distasteful to many organizations & almost always creates unwelcome turbulence
- Poor leadership is far more visible from below and leaders seldom check with their “reports” or the reports’ reports
- Sometimes a leader discovers they don’t have the power they thought they did
- It helps if the leader has a sense of humor

# Quick study (continued)

- The status quo will usually reign
- Leaders have to be bold or brilliant, preferably both
- Demographic categories pose inordinate difficulties (race, gender, religion, ethnicity, age, physical stature, etc)
- Relationship and task orientations are both important leadership skills
- A leader dearly wants to make a difference
- A leader must handle the escalated complexity of dysfunctionality that often pops up in organizations
- Leadership is physically hard work: long hours, wrenching decisions, crises, travel, complicated agendas – being physically fit helps

# Question

- Other issues that face leaders...

# What is also true of Leadership:

- Decisions made today determine wins and losses in the future
- Whether you do something or nothing, you are having a definite impact on tomorrow
- There are MANY strategies available to leaders, and I will mention only a few here today – choose, mix, match or find something else, but do something

# How KM affects leadership

- KM affects leadership by:
  - 1) enabling people in organizations to connect and collaborate more effectively across institutional silos, and
  - 2) helping leaders reduce wasted time and effort, leverage collective expertise and increase innovation.
- 40% of workers reported not being able to easily find information they needed to do their jobs

# KM & Leadership

- Organizations that can transfer information & share it are likely to be the ones to thrive by being nimble, making better decisions, and leveraging organizational expertise
  - the only sustainable advantage
- It follows that knowledge management is essential to leadership and innovation



# The Key

- Leadership is the work of managing people, positions and relationships
- Knowledge management is the process of leveraging those relationships
- Thus, leadership of the knowledge management process is the process of *leveraging those relationships to put the collective insights, know-how and wisdom to work*

# Skepticism (origin & answer)

- Skepticism usually results from previous failed attempts at KM, which probably resulted from not embedding the learning into the normal business practices of the organization
  - *(embedding KM into activities already being done is effective, using KM practices to enhance existing knowledge-sharing activities)*
- And, efforts were probably focused on capturing data rather than on the more difficult step of enabling and encouraging knowledge reuse:  
*the practical application of organizational knowledge*

# Question

- Other reasons KM efforts may have not worked as well as desired...

# KM Leader goals:

- The KM leader's focus is to ensure that what is learned can directly improve how people get their jobs done & accomplish their goals; a means to accomplish current work efficaciously
- Technology is crucial, along with creating a holistic approach of sharing, capturing, storing and reusing knowledge
- The aim is to maximize the ability and opportunity to transfer critical, reusable knowledge throughout the organization

# Leading the learning process

- A leader can embed the process by establishing work teams that go through 3 processes:
  - 1) peer-assist: import knowledge from people on & outside the team
  - 2) after-action review: what was supposed to happen? What did happen? Why was there a difference? What did we learn from the difference?
  - 3) retrospect process: look back on overall process & execution, & document what will help future teams

# Questions for the KM leader:

- 1 do we have the people we need to lead?
- 2 are our people capable of “more”?
- 3 are we guaranteeing a healthy reputation?
- 4 are we preparing to emerge stronger?
- 5 are we caring for our people & customers?
- 6 how effective have your strategies been so far? Did they deliver the kind of leaders you need? What’s missing?

# Questions (continued)

- What have been your best decisions?
- Your worst?
- What has been some of the best behaviors of leadership?
- The worse?
- How would your employees answer that question?

# KM leader actions

- Use crisis for learning and development.
  - (High potential leaders expect to be developed, mentored. Long hours and challenging work can be used for leadership development – strategically)
- Be visible
- Invest in training
- Hold “stay” conversations (rather than “exit interviews”): concerns, long term needs, & what would “better” look like?
- Make every effort NOT to develop “leadership” creeds out of powerlessness.



# Leadership concerns:

- Fact-free assessments: someone makes a statement & everyone goes with it – with absolutely no basis, or little basis in fact
- AWOL: those who committed didn't follow up nor did they follow through
- Skirting: team members who worked around the defined priority process
- Chicken: team members who don't acknowledge problems, or wait for someone else to speak up
- 90% leaders admitted to one of more of these characteristics in work teams

# How leaders show support – or not – makes a difference

- Giving timely feedback & reacting to problems w/ support & help
- Socio-emotional support, alleviating stress, socializing, keeping others informed, addressing feelings
- Recognition
- Consulting subordinates for ideas, opinions about the job & the people,
- then ACTING on them

# Trends

- Complex challenges will grow exponentially
  - e.g. internal organizational changes, market dynamics, shortage of talent, globalization
  - The innovation revolution; the next big thing
  - Leaders unprepared to *inspire* innovation
  - Rise in competition
  - Technological advances
  - Customer expectation

# Question:

- Other trends you've seen...

# Strategies

- Innovation processes (learned or imported)
- Talent & talent development
- Reward & recognition programs
- Best practices research – daily
- Performance metrics (no “supposing”)
- Increase revenue to R & D
- Organizational restructuring & re-educating
- Consultants
- Action planning/implementing groups

## Group:

- Other strategies you've seen that work...

e.g.

- “Office Hours” to pitch new ideas
- New idea listserv where absolutely anyone can post an idea
- Actually put things in place and let everyone know how it’s going
- Recognize and reward
- Central storage site of documentation of ideas and processes
- Prioritize, and re-prioritize – as needed

# Final strategy:

- Become a talent “orchestrator”; differentiate between good, better & best
- Implement organizational development for needed talent sustainability
- Train leaders in organization to encourage, mentor & coach, train & steer pool of talent – at every level
- Factor in the employees’ goals, perspectives, skills & needs: they have their own agenda

*The End*