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CHAPTER - VII

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS AND LEADERSHIP

(Setting the Direction and Gaining Commitment)

7.1. Introduction:

A major challenge, according to Mr. James B. Quinn and Mr. Philip Anderson, will be to transform a significant portion of the information highway into a knowledge highway in which data is informed and organized by human intelligence in order to give meaning and enable learning. Learners, regardless of their geographic location, socio-economic status and racial origin, are empowered by new technologies to gain increased access to learning systems and support services. Life long learning is enabled by the infusion of telecommunications and information technologies into the learning system so that learning may occur at times, in places and in ways that meet learners needs throughout their lives. Access to the information highway will enable more cost-effective, productive and relevant education and training through increased opportunities. Successful knowledge-based companies depend on how successful individual knowledge workers are at creating and applying new ideas productively and efficiently. This requires new roles, new skills and new ways of developing and continuously improving individual and organisational capabilities such as through organizational learning. The roles that workers play with respect to knowledge are an integral part of enhancing the knowledge processes, says a Renaissance Solutions.

In every organisation, there is a strong sense of momentum about KM through strong leadership. Leadership is one of the four key enablers of an effective KM programme. Good leadership could be attributed to four essential properties viz.,
• Management of organisational knowledge,

• Organisation grasps the potential of its knowledge resource and develops strategies for marketing it,

• Organisation uses knowledge and learning to support existing core competencies and to create new ones, and

• Individuals are appointed, evaluated and rewarded on the basis of their contribution to developing organisational knowledge.

7.2. New Roles

Mr. Nick Moore has attempted an appraisal of new roles and skills, and the ways that companies are developing them, examination of the issue of competency planning and a review of learning. The perspectives of the 'learning organisation' as a contributor to knowledge enhancement and the leadership required to steer the momentum has been attempted in the following paragraphs. Different types of knowledge role that are emerging, as brought out by Robert Keeley and Janet Caplan, are summarized below.

a. Knowledge Engineer: They develop skills in asking the right questions, making knowledge requests, assembling responses into a pattern, and playing back their understanding to verify correct interpretation.

b. Knowledge Editor: These are the people who refine explicit knowledge into formats that make subsequent access and use easier.

c. Knowledge Analyst: This is a role that acts as a link between the client and the knowledge base.

d. Knowledge Navigator: This role is filled by someone who really understands where the repositories of knowledge are within a company, whether it be in databases or pockets of expertise.
e. **Knowledge Gatekeeper:** Usually applied to someone, such as a librarian, who keeps tab on sources of knowledge outside the company and directs it to appropriate recipients inside.

f. **Knowledge Brokers:** This is a term used in several companies. They are like navigators and gatekeepers, and usually have a good network of contacts, both externally and internally.

g. **Knowledge Handyman:** This is a term used to describe those knowledge workers who may not have KM tasks as a specific role, but understand the context of knowledge within their teams. They are the brokers and navigators to whom other people come.

h. **Knowledge Asset Manager:** In some companies, focus is on intellectual assets through financial controller. In fact, there is an expanding role for financial controllers and, in some cases, auditors to cover intellectual assets.

### 7.3. Skills Needed for the Knowledge Economy

Information skills are vital in successful organisations but there is no cohesive attempt in promoting the existence of those skills or ensuring their application. To be successful in this environment, individuals need to acquire new combinations of skills. In particular, according to Mr. Michael C. Beers, the individuals need to learn skills that allow them to find, manage and share information and knowledge ('information literacy' skills). By stimulating an environment where intellectual assets are created and used efficiently and effectively, organisations can increase their 'organizational capability'. By acquiring information literacy skills, individuals can increase their 'individual capability'. Increasing both organizational and individual capability is at the core of success in the knowledge economy. This focus on intellectual assets and information literacy requires a complete understanding of knowledge and information flows and resources. It requires a new combination of information
skills that embrace every aspect of the complex information. The business strategies of many organisations depend on their staff working together effectively and creatively, and on their ability to innovate and respond to the marketplace. According to Mr. W.L. Gore, KM is about facilitating the marketplace success which is created by:

- The skills and expertise of the staff,
- Their ability to learn and build knowledge,
- The processes which enable skills and knowledge to be applied and shared,
- The culture and values which encourage knowledge building and sharing,
- The infrastructure which supports knowledge building and flow, and
- Sharing the intellectual assets which the organisation builds, maintains, organises and exploits

7.4. Roles and Skills for the Knowledge Age

Due to the lack of attention to improve our understanding of knowledge work better, it is found that similar considerations apply in understanding knowledge workers as well. One should learn how his best performer colleagues do their jobs, study how they make critical decisions, what dimensions of the context they judge important, and what techniques they use. Generally weak in leadership, communication and team building skills come in the way of KM implementation. The composition of KM teams confirms that competencies are rarely found in a single individual but must be built from several complementary individual skill sets. A list of skills needed for each phase in the development of a KM System is presented below (Table - 7.1).
### Table 7.1: Skills Needed for each Stage of Knowledge System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>Business, Value, Sector, Knowledge, Leadership, Influencing, Skills, Risk Management, and Presentation Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Information - Structuring, organization, Presentation, use, quality and Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>Change and project management, Training and skill transfer, Value added research, Subject knowledge, and Business knowledge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### 7.5. Managing Knowledge Workers

One of the precepts of good KM is to develop and retain knowledge. Mr. Karl. M. Wiig notes the growing awareness of the loss of expertise in downsizing and restructuring. An important aspect is, therefore, to retain, develop and motivate knowledge workers which is gaining growing attention of management. Further, it is necessary to keep the following points in mind:

- Making knowledge workers feel part of the corporate family (as opposed to being more loyal to their professional peers); and
- The need for motivating rewards (not necessarily monetary).
More recently, Quinn and colleagues have articulated the challenge as follows. There are four levels of individual knowledge that need to be analysed in detail to determine the type of learning activity needed to equip individuals with regard to skill levels. The starting point for analysis, as pointed out by David A. Garvin, is four levels of individual knowledge as presented below (Table - 7.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Knowledge</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level - 1: Cognitive (Know-what)</td>
<td>The basic professional discipline and knowledge (often taught)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level - 2: Advanced Skill (Know-why)</td>
<td>The effective execution of tasks in real world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level - 3: Systems understanding</td>
<td>Deep knowledge of cause and effect relationship underlying a discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(know-how)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level - 4: Self Motivated Creativity</td>
<td>This allows anticipation of subtle interactions and requires developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>intuition and insight.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Of the four levels of individual knowledge, many argue that training helps only at level one, i.e., the basic mastery of a discipline. Also, whereas knowledge at levels 1 - 3 may be embedded in systems, that at level - 4 is embedded in organisational culture. Nurturing and motivating knowledge at the higher levels needs different management approaches. There is a high degree of commonality of skills needed by knowledge workers and by managers in the knowledge-based organisation. The British Gas Management Competency Scheme lists 12 core competencies (Table - 7.3).
### Table - 7.3: Key Management Competencies at British Gas

| Direction                  | • Strategic thinking  
|                           | • Analytical thinking  
|                           | • Customer orientation  
|                           | • External sensitivity  
| Results                   | • Performance orientation  
|                           | • Business flair  
|                           | • Quality orientation  
|                           | • Change orientation  
| Managing                  | • Leadership  
|                           | • Team working  
|                           | • Influencing  
|                           | • Developing (People)  


A review of several management competency schemes showed team working, strategic thinking, change and quality management, customer orientation and a results focus as being prevalent in all.

#### 7.6. The Learning Organisation

The 'learning organisation' is one of those terms that has gained in acceptance over the last few years. The extensive and in depth study of relevant literature 9 portrays significant overlap and correlation between knowledge-based companies and the 'learning organisation'. Some see one as part of the other (but a different one depending on where they were coming from!), some as related but different. In particular, this leads to five building blocks for a learning organisation:

- Systematic problem solving;
- Experimentation with new approaches;
- Learning from own experience and past history;
- Learning from the experience and best practices of others (e.g., in benchmarking); and
• Transferring knowledge quickly and efficiently.

Thus, organisations need to understand how core knowledge drives their business - its philosophy, systems and approaches to problem solving and decision making, and how to develop the skills to acquire, organise, codify and deploy knowledge. There are seven key principles. They are:

a. Development of knowledge around the organisation,

b. Improved rates of learning create more choices and opportunities,

c. Adoption of "stretch goals",

d. 'Safe-sailing', i.e., providing opportunities that encourage risk taking,

e. Systems for encouraging knowledge and learning,

f. Stimulating core knowledge processes, and

g. Systems that cross - functional boundaries e.g., teams and networks.

Fundamental to the new perspective is viewing products and processes in terms of their information, expertise and knowledge. Within the learning system, knowledge is processed through four stages covered by architectural models and frameworks viz.,

- **Measurement**: Performance gaps, measurement focus.
- **Processes**: Scanning, operational variety.
- **Leadership**: Involved leadership, multiple advocacy, continuous education, systems perspective.
- **Culture**: Openness, experiential mind-set.

An important explicit link between organizational learning and knowledge was that of capturing 'lessons learned' knowledge. A key aspect is to
accelerate organizational learning. It is essential to expedite the process whereby one part of the organisation, when it learns something of value, then makes this knowledge widely available. It was also noted earlier that project assignments at several of the major management consultancies are not considered complete until participants have reflected on the key lessons and these have been elicited and added to their knowledge base. One difficulty reported frequently is how to get the stories and also how to portray them honestly. In general, there are five conditions that should be present for organisations to learn from their past experience:

a. Ensuring that the learning is purposeful,
b. Setting aside the time to conduct these activities,
c. Cultivating a culture that encourages self-assessment and critical thinking,
d. Creating performance measurement and evaluation systems that recognise this and do not penalise employees for mistakes, and
e. Building mechanisms to convert learning into policy and practice.

7.7. The Role of Knowledge Officer

A new breed of executive called Chief Knowledge Officer (CKO) is appearing in organisations says Mr. Karl. M. Wiig. Most of the appointees to this role explain that it signified to the rest of the organisation that top management recognised the important role of knowledge in their future prosperity. Creation of the role also signified support and usually, some focused investment. Besides, according to several knowledge leaders, it gave them legitimacy to bring individual KM efforts around the organisation into a coherent programme. In practice, as pronounced by Mr. Ikujiro Nonaka and Hirotaka Takeuchi, knowledge leaders furthering such agendas through some commonly repeated higher-level generic strategies. While the above are fairly
comprehensive and offer useful checks, we found that, at the current stage of
development, our knowledge leaders in general focused on just two or three
basic roles viz.,

- **Co-ordination**: Creating links between the disparate strands of KM
  activity, so that it moves forward in a concerted way.

- **Catalyst**: Helping line managers understand the nature of intangible
  assets, like knowledge; helping create a new language so that people can talk
  about it meaningfully; developing an understanding of processes for KM to
  work.

- **Creating an Infrastructure** especially in IT and systems, so that
  knowledge is more readily accessible and shared.

### 7.8. Characteristics and Skills of Knowledge Leaders

Knowledge leaders can come from anywhere in an organisation and from
almost every function in the business - human resources, information systems,
finance, research and several more besides. The all encompassing nature of KM
does not bias the selection of knowledge leaders to any given background.
However, there are a number of general characteristics that do seem to be
desirable for the knowledge leader. In particular, we noted a strong desire to
collaborate with all the different functions and business units of their
organisation. While leadership provides vision and is a force for change, the
management is about continuity and efficiency. Effective knowledge leaders
have to exhibit the following five key characteristics:\footnote{12}

a. **Good Conceptual Capabilities**: Knowledge management is a complex
   subject; this was reflected in the deep cognitive thinking of several
   respondents, their use of models and sometimes appearing quite
   philosophical;

b. **Visionary**: The conceptual thinking converted into action-oriented
   frameworks and a vision of the direction;
c. **Communications skills:** An ability to turn complex concepts into formats that could easily be communicated through analogy, example, logical explanation, and above all enthusiasm and passion;

d. **Involvement:** Through teamwork, making connections within and beyond the organisation; and

e. **Appetite for Learning:** Always seeking out more knowledge, seeking out peers in other organisations to share learning.

As knowledge also becomes more important to many companies, this will itself change the role of the CEO. Mr. Karl M. Wiig\(^ {13} \) points out that there has been a shift in the last few years in the role of top management, following disquiet with the status quo. First, there was emphasis on structure, organisational delayering, decentralising, etc. In turn, the emphasis shifted to a company-wide process perspective, exemplified by initiatives like BPR (business process re-engineering). This, in turn, led to problems, and so the emphasis is now shifting to changing behaviours and developing relationships. We saw similar relationship-building patterns among our knowledge leaders, of which a good relationship with the CEO was often cited as the most important. The CEO role can vary from one of passive support, through to active stimulation through to knowledge leadership, where the CEO personally takes a leading role in making knowledge initiatives happen. In some companies, as long as there is some level of support, KM initiatives can thrive and bring results.

### 7.9. Knowledge Through Learning and Quality

One corporate leader who is very much aware of the role of knowledge and of the human dimension in achieving organisational performance realized that the rate of learning is the only sustainable competitive advantage and waiting for crises or under-performance to motivate change is a formula for failure. Thus, KM is not something that is distinct and separate. It is an integral part of continuous improvement that in turn evolved from a TQM perspective. A
shift in emphasis in the quality movement from the quality of products to the quality of services and ultimately, to the quality of management. An example of how acting as a member of this community has changed the traditional functional role is that of the finance manager who took the quality agenda as a legitimate challenge to transform internal financial and accounting services. He benchmarked and developed predictive metrics to gauge improvement. He focused on the total organizational structure and processes within the system. He also redesigned the planning framework for finance to facilitate the delivery of information beyond the traditional financial data and to strengthen his group's role as a service provider to internal customers. In developing a common language, the company has encouraged cross-functional collaboration. Each manager now has a genuine respect for the complementary competencies that exist internally. In this way, the team of expertise is harnessed toward a common strategic vision as a collective of knowledge. Each contributes from his/her own perspective to the value of the whole. It also means that collective activities may be carried out by any member of the team. Current style is to encourage respective employees to become a community of inquirers rather than a community of advocates. Rather than forcing ideas on one another, employees are encouraged to understand and leverage each other's knowledge, skills, experience and diversity of views. We will be surprised by how much our conversations can be improved and by how much what/how it affects the quality of our relationships and the effectiveness of management style. While the quality and re-engineering efforts have enabled companies to improve efficiency, similar emphasis seems to have not laid on the effectiveness that is needed to compete in a dynamic market place.

7.10. Leadership at all Levels

One view is that the middle managers play a key role in the organisational knowledge-creation process. They have a lot of knowledge, being positioned at
the intersection of the vertical and horizontal flows of information in the company, which qualifies them to serve as team leaders. It was found that KM activities, according to Mr. Debra M. Amidon, apparently being instigated from all levels that later evolved into KM as a result of top-level strategic reviews. Champions of knowledge activities were, when they started, at middle management level, their leadership qualities and success later attracted the attention of top management and gained their support. The process of great leadership - the road to great leadership (common to successful leaders) are indicated below:

- Challenge the process,
- Inspire a shared vision,
- Enable others to act,
- Model the way, and
- Encourage the heart

7.11. The Know-How Companies - Organisations of the Future

All management theories up till now are based on the simple fact that the formal boss has an automatic advantage by being in control of the information flow, so he or she always knows a little more and has a better overview. The most successful know-how companies have to adapt to the needs of their clients, to tailor-make their problem solving. They have to be very careful with how they organize in order to make room for creativity. They have to learn to manage the difficult, highly skilled people that are now becoming numerous in the manufacturing industry also. The know-how companies have to invent individual remuneration tied to performance, they have to maintain and develop the valuable knowledge of their employees as their prime assets. In order to survive, they have to create a leadership based on mutual trust, respect for the individual, employee-driven, and loose but still strong.
7.12. Crucial Role of Universities

In the knowledge economy, universities have a key role to play. In the globalised economy, capital is mobile, technology can migrate quickly, and goods can be made cheaply in low cost countries and shipped to developed markets. We cannot compete simply on low labour costs, the supply of raw materials or land. Now, more than ever before, business must seek competitive advantage by exploiting capabilities which its competitors cannot easily match or imitate. These distinctive capabilities must be knowledge, skills and creativity. Capabilities help in generating high productivity business process, and high value goods and services. Our ability to compete successfully, as a nation, depends on our ability to create an economy that is genuinely knowledge-driven.

Universities must be at the heart of our productive capacity. They are to be the powerful drivers of technological and other changes. They have to be central to local and regional economic development. They produce people with knowledge and skills. They generate new knowledge and import it from diverse sources. And they apply knowledge in a range of different environments. They are the seedbed for new industries, products and services, and they are at the hub of the business networks and industrial clusters of the knowledge economy.

Universities have been viewed traditionally as creators of knowledge, trainers of young minds and as the transmitters of culture. To these established roles, we must add a fourth viz., universities as a major agent of economic growth. In the knowledge economy, entrepreneurial universities will be as important as entrepreneurial businesses, the one fostering the other. Diversity with excellence should be the key principle for the government's policy towards all aspects of education. This principle must be at the core of our thinking. Excellence with diversity means a greater diversity of missions, and a change
from the status quo. Because, if they are to deliver genuine excellence, universities and colleges need to play to their strengths - strengths which may lie in teaching, research or knowledge transfer or a combination of all these.

7.13. Conclusion

As organisations become more knowledge based, new knowledge roles are emerging and the roles of existing knowledge workers are changing. Some of the new roles encountered were knowledge editors, navigators, analysts and brokers. All play a part in linking some knowledge process to day-to-day activities. All roles require more knowledge creation and its sharing. This shift requires more hybrid knowledge and skills including organisation/business knowledge, and general management skills such as networking, communication and relationship building skills. There is a growing focus on learning. In turn, this reflects a shift from training focus to student-centered learning linked to on-the-job activities. Several ways are used to create such a learning environment including open learning centres, links with universities, and the use of 'safe to fail' simulation tools and board games. There is a strong correlation between knowledge-based organisations and learning organisations. However, explicit linkage between knowledge activities and learning requires development in many organisations, such as through 'lessons learned centres'.

Apparent in all successful cases was the visible evidence of knowledge leadership, with one or more people actively championing the knowledge agenda. Many companies are now creating the post of Chief Knowledge Officer (CKO) or one with a similar title. This is used to give KM both a focus and an impetus. Many of the successful cases illustrate the value of a supportive Chief Executive Officer. Some take a very active role in promoting and moving forward the knowledge agenda. Commonly found leadership roles are those of developing the big picture, for example, through frameworks or a Knowledge
Management Architecture (KMA) that promotes the knowledge agenda, overseeing the development of a knowledge infrastructure and facilitating the building of knowledge connections. Knowledge leaders can emerge from any part of the organisation, but they do share common characteristics - good conceptual thinking, having vision and being good communicators. For diffusion of the practices and behaviours that support an effective KM programme, leadership is required at all levels of the organisation. Several cases demonstrated that middle-up-down leadership and leadership development programmes to create the necessary changes in perspective. The Management Accounting plays a key role in building a learning organization, evaluating the effectiveness of training programmes besides taking leadership in KM implementation. The leadership role clearly suited to him as he has macro view of the organisation in particular and global business in general.

References and Notes


