



Managed Knowledge

Harnessing the collective power of experience and learning





Knowledge Age

The world of technology has brought along with it an ability to store data in a structured form and allows its search and retrieval across locations and without any time barrier. This digitally encoded data can be combined, transformed, distributed across people and places and stored safely to survive years and decades without any loss or aging. Today after a decade of widespread computer usage, data is increasingly beginning to be considered a vast body of knowledge that can be interpreted and harnessed in a number of different ways for the growth and competitiveness of the enterprise.

This knowledge can be used to induct and train new personnel, enable youth to gain access to the vast pool of knowledge and experience that successive decades of operation have brought into the organization. The acquired and structured knowledge can also be used by intelligent software programs to bring in alternative solutions to situations and problems based on the expert system model. The knowledge can also be presented with graphics, animation and video to enable better visualization and interpretation.

Digital Storage and Retrieval

Today knowledge thanks to digital information technology can be stored and held over an enduring period, in fact almost for eternity in a structured and organized format that enables more effective access and search through the myriad of information.

The technology of documents, graphics and databases now makes it possible to store knowledge in a multitude of forms and sift through them, sort them and order them in almost any way. This has enabled the creation and maintenance of vast volumes of data, information and knowledge by corporations and public networks, enabling people to refer, find, learn and add to the knowledge pool.

Sources of Knowledge

Knowledge in businesses is being produced all the time - during meetings, telephone conversations, notes that are circulated among colleagues, discussions with customers and suppliers, decisions that are made, analysis that is done based on operational statistics, the vast reading that executives do during their average working day and the ideas that keep springing in the minds of people at their workplaces and homes as they work passionately for the corporations to which they belong.

Knowledge is also created through reports, research articles, manuals, white papers, brochures, product & service specifications, drawings, project proposals, minutes of meetings, exchanges of correspondence, applications for patents, copyrights and trademarks and a host of other documents that most often get filed and are never available for access thereafter.

There are people who have been working with organizations and industries for decades. There is a vast accumulation of knowledge and experience that has taken place during this period, that adds value to the individual and enables better insight, analysis and decision making. These are available to the organization through the mind of this individual but are not there to exploit once the individual is not with the organization or through others who might be battling situations and circumstances for the first time and are not aware of the remedies that have already been tried out and tested by others before.



Managing Knowledge as a Corporate Policy

Corporations around the world need to now look at knowledge as an investment in essential infrastructure that can help make them globally competitive, robust and more nimble. This knowledge infrastructure needs to be designed to be a perennial fountain that keeps growing as each day brings in new insights, more information and data, new ideas and discoveries and additional inputs from customers, suppliers, employees and associates.

The absence of a corporate policy that recognizes knowledge and its management as a key corporate goal will result in lower levels of consciousness of what constitutes knowledge, leading to large volume of potentially rewarding knowledge not being registered and shared.

A corporate policy must therefore be framed to induce everyone to participate and share the knowledge that they gain each day.

Knowledge Infrastructure

In order to enable the effective harnessing of this knowledge, the corporation needs to set up a digital infrastructure that enables the building of a vast corporate knowledge repository and simultaneously makes it accessible to people who can use it to the advantage of the enterprise. The digital infrastructure must make knowledge easy to access and yet provide a security cover that ensures only those authorized to use the available knowledge are provided access to it.

Design

A knowledge management program needs to be planned and designed carefully in order to integrate the various sources of knowledge within the enterprise as well as collate the vast public knowledge that needs archival for the organizational library. The design also needs to create a well organized and structured knowledge repository that will be able to stand the test of time or at least lend itself to be transformed or migrated to new formats and structures in the years to come as technology brings in new options.

Technology

Various technological options are today available for enterprises to adopt. Since all these are on a constant evolutionary process, most corporations end up with a multitude of environments that frequently need to be integrated or interfaces developed to move data and processes between them.

It is important that managers understand and believe in the cost of delay in the implementation of technology projects. Technology decision making must plan for the future but must also accept the limited time window that is available for their exploitation. The limited time window becomes reality due to the advent of new methods, ideas and technologies that render the older ones obsolete and necessitate migration for corporations to stay abreast of global technological advances.

It is therefore important that a careful process is adopted for a corporation's technology strategy that is in tandem with the business and knowledge management objectives that the organization is adopting to build on their core competencies and strengths and plan for global growth and competitive advantage. The team managing the technology process needs to be always



updated on the new tools and platforms that are emerging and becoming global standards, research on their implementation and design pre-requisites, benchmark with competitors and role models across the globe and constantly keep in focus the needs of the organization, its strategy and the specific initiatives that the corporation will need to undertake to achieve its goal. Technology needs to support the corporate strategy and help make it a reality.

Making a beginning

The needs of different organizations for knowledge management vary depending on their business strategies and areas of priority. Knowledge management must be focussed on those areas of knowledge that are immediately critical to the organization and leave out those that will involve a high cost of collection and might only have incremental use in the long term. It is also important to identify and cull those areas that will cause information overload on the individual trying to access this knowledge repository to solve a problem or understand an operational area.

Before embarking on a comprehensive program, it is important that there is adequate understanding among the senior management team on the possibilities and implementation issues involved for a holistic knowledge management program. Presentations and discussions with experts in this field will help create a better understanding and appreciation and enable managers to articulate their needs and ideas better.

It is then important to identify various needs for knowledge in the different functions of the organization and prioritize these needs to support the business strategy of the corporation. These needs then need to be mapped against the vast knowledge that is already available within the organization, that which is regularly produced as part of regular working and exchanges among people in the organization and sources where relevant public or researched knowledge is regularly updated and is available for storage and indexing. Finally an audit needs to be done of the technology architecture and platforms that are part of the infrastructure of the corporation, the systems and databases that are being operated and maintained and those that are planned and the skills and levels of knowledge of the people who are using these systems.

Once this perspective has been formed about the organization, the knowledge management initiative can be planned and committed to an implementation schedule. Technology options need to be evaluated, skills upgrade areas identified and currently available knowledge classified. Champions need to be identified, appointed and motivated into leading this initiative and bringing about a transformation in the organization.

When this has been done and budgets have been committed to building of the knowledge infrastructure and a corporate policy on knowledge management has been drafted, the organization is now ready to embark on the development of a system that will technologically implement this concept and tie it in with the business operations of the organization.



About Nixel

Nixel helps business enterprises harness technology & digitally manage knowledge for greater organizational productivity, quality and response leading to improved competitive advantage in a global arena.

Nixel has pioneered several methodologies and built solutions that have helped transform business processes, automate routine tasks and enabled managers to visualize business operations better and take more informed decisions.

Nixel's products and solutions span a wide area of technology applications including Enterprise Resource Planning, Relationship Management, Knowledge Management, Collaborative Intranet, Content Management, Design Automation and Business Reporting. Nixel's customers include international corporations spanning a diverse spectrum of business areas including engineering, manufacturing, financial services, pharmaceutical, oil & gas and construction.



About the Author

Nikhil Narayan is Chief Executive of Nixel since its founding in 1991. He has led the organization through the various computing eras from the early nineties when Dos and Client-Server based software were in vogue to the past few years when internet, web and mobile based technologies are pervading the world of computing.

Nikhil is passionate about technology and the need to capture and harness the vast volume of knowledge that is created in organizations. He believes digitally equipped enterprises can survive the globally changing market environment and gain competitive advantage by transforming themselves and working continuously to integrate their operations, centralize knowledge management and digitally network with their customers and partners.

A compelling speaker and trainer, Nikhil's workshops and seminars have been attended by thousands of business executives and professionals. Nikhil has also authored a number of papers and books.

Nikhil has a Bachelor of Technology degree from the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras.

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To know more about Nixel and all the solutions, products and services we offer, we invite you to visit www.nixel.com

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