

Knowledge Management in Business Strategy

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Paris Diderot University, 09/15/2019

In recent years, knowledge has become a factor of production in the same way as traditional land, labor and capital. For some, it is even the main factor of production of today's companies, which tend to create a knowledge management service or to outsource it. The purpose of this research is to understand the importance of Knowledge Management (KM) in companies nowadays, and how it can serve the business strategy. Thus, this article will explain the definition and evolution of KM, then depict the challenges associated with KM and business strategies, and finally explore the way a management system is implemented. Thanks to all these elements, we will be able to understand how the KM system becomes essential in business strategy, and when.

To stick close to reality, we conducted interviews in two companies: one that has implemented a KM system a few years ago, and another without, which allowed us to show two opposite ways of dealing with knowledge in companies, and therefore show the link between KM and business strategies.

Keywords : Knowledge Management, organisation, business strategy, KM approach, KM issues.

Introduction

Nowadays, more and more companies tend to manage internal knowledge and hire knowledge managers. Knowledge, compared to raw data or information, has become one of the recent issues for businesses. Targeting, preserving, valuing and making knowledge evolve is a new development and distinguishing factor for companies. They are able to thrive, adapt and last in a very competitive context (Aurélié Dudezert, Louis-Pierre Guillaume 2012). In other words, they are able to reflect on a long-term period. Thus, the Knowledge Management team is entrusted to implement such a strategy within the company.

When comparing our personal experiences in our companies, we came to the conclusion that knowledge management is not something obvious for businesses. Some do not have any team dedicated to manage knowledge. Some have created a whole department. In short, there is no single way of implementing the KM strategy. We tried to identify the reasons why a company decides to implement or not a knowledge management strategy: is it voluntarily or is it due to unawareness, disinterest, financial constraint? This led us to think that this decision was intrinsically linked to the business strategy, which can vary a lot from one company to the other. Our reflexion is based around this problematic, which is to understand the issues behind KM and the business strategy, and to seek how knowledge management can serve the business strategy.

To answer this question, we will give a definition of Knowledge Management, then we will focus on business strategy and on how to implement a KM strategy. Our work is based on the literature and on interviews carried out in our respective companies.

Definition and evolution of Knowledge Management

Definition of Knowledge Management

The basic definition of Knowledge Management (KM) by Tom Davenport has become the most used: *“Knowledge Management is the process of capturing, distributing, and effectively using knowledge.”* (1994).

In other words, KM consists of gathering and sharing knowledge for people who need it. It is about making sure that an organization can learn, and is able to retrieve and use it when needed.

Quoting Peter Drucker, KM is *“the coordination and exploitation of organizational knowledge resources, in order to create benefit and competitive advantage”* (Drucker, 1999).

The purpose of KM is to make knowledge available anytime for their users. In order to be competitive, an organization has to answer these questions: *“What do we know?”* and *“What do we need to know?”*. The purpose is to identify the most valuable knowledge owned by the experts, hence the difficulty to identify it.

In fact, a document itself does not allow a beginner to become an expert. The challenge of KM is to clarify tacit knowledge through a collective and collaborative approach to create new organizational knowledge.

Indeed, two major types of knowledge can be distinguished: tacit and explicit knowledge.

This distinction was first made by Michael Polanyi in the 1960s and used in Nonaka and Takeuchi’s book *The Knowledge-Creating Company* (1995).

Tacit knowledge is the *“knowing-how”*. It is the knowledge embedded in the human mind through experience and jobs.

Explicit knowledge is the *knowing-that*. It is the knowledge codified and digitized in all sorts of documents.

Making this distinction, the definition of KM can be extended: *“Knowledge Management is the explicit and systematic management of vital knowledge - and its associated processes of creation, organization, diffusion, use and exploitation - to help achieve organizational objectives.”*

Generally, Knowledge Management involves a strategic aspect (*“What do we need to know?”*) in order to be competitive in the short and long term. To do so, KM aims to detect and categorize knowledge and promote the sharing of this knowledge. Moreover, it is essential to protect valuable existing knowledge and to generate new knowledge.

To do so, an organization must have the right organizational culture, the right process and an environment where people want to learn, capitalize and share their knowledge (as a common wiki for example), as well as the right technological infrastructure to convey this knowledge.

Origin and Evolution of Knowledge Management

The concept of KM appeared with the management consulting community. With the Internet and more specifically with the Intranet (an inner Internet for organizations), companies realized that these tools can be very useful in sharing and making information accessible worldwide. This new expertise came with the name of Knowledge Management. The term was first used by McKinsey in 1987 for an internal study on their information handling and utilization (McInerney and Koenig, 2011).

Knowledge Management was mentioned in the second half of the 20th century but its popularity emerged during the last two decades of the 20th century.

Management writer Peter Drucker was the first to coin the term “*knowledge worker*” in the 1960s. It was in 1995, that knowledge management truly captured widespread management attention with the publication of the book *The Knowledge-Creating Business* by Nonaka and Takeuchi and the conference *Knowledge for Strategic Advantage* organized by Arthur Andersen and APQC. During the years 1995-1997, KM became explicit as many books were published and many conferences were organized. At the end of the 20th century, KM was promoted as strategic and large companies created formal KM positions (such as Chief Knowledge Officers) and brought several existing programmes (originally designated under other labels, such as 'business transformation' or 'the learning organization'). From the end of the 20th century until 2005 saw a growth of KM with a variety of KM (KM and risk, KM and marketing, KM and innovation, KM and quality etc.) and was recognized as an academic discipline.

Since 2004, KM has evolved thanks to the use of new technologies (blogs, wikis, Facebook, FAQ).

An important step in the history of KM is the publication of the ISO standard 30401 in 2018. But, why did this standard come on the market? The historic line shows an ongoing process beginning in 2015 with the ISO standard 9001-2015 that defines the requirements for knowledge management in the company. Following in 2017 when KM was integrated into nuclear safety standards. Now, the ISO 30401 standard sets out the requirements for knowledge management systems.

The goal of the ISO 30401 standard is the standardization of knowledge management and to answer the question: *how to put a management system in the company?*

The purpose of this standard is to help organizations design a management system that values and facilitates their credibility through knowledge. A knowledge management system aims to contribute to the achievement of a company's strategic objectives by preserving, disseminating, sharing and developing its knowledge assets. This ISO standard is intended for management and knowledge managers.

So, the objective of the standard is to set principles and requirements for knowledge management. These objectives are to define the discipline and its scope, specify the key standards on which to base a KM approach avoiding the pitfalls often encountered and optimize the organization around newly developed concepts and processes put forward by KM.

Knowledge life-cycle

Knowledge creation involves three steps integrated into the KM process: collect data, clean it up and organize it to turn it into information, and analyze, synthesize, formalize and contextualize this information to transform it into knowledge. In other words, knowledge is information that makes sense in a context. The challenge of KM is therefore to clarify this knowledge - through a collective and collaborative process - to create new knowledge to share and to appropriate. The activities of the knowledge management process are characterized by identifying, preserving, valuing and updating knowledge.

KM, a convergence approach

The dynamics of KM is created and maintained by the convergence of four levers: the roles (KM sponsor, KM project manager, knowledge managers, leader of communities of practice, contributors...); the governance (KM program or charter, key indicators,...); the process (collection, capture, capitalisation and sharing) and technologies (knowledge portals, collaboration tools, search engines...).

Moreover, KM therefore requires the collaboration of several trades related to these four levers: human resources (in particular skills management), professions related to the strategic vision of the organization's development, governance and risk management, Information and data management, records management, Information security and IT management. Knowledge consists of information that makes sense in a context. However, within an organization, information, meaning and context are more often worn by different people. Therefore, the purpose of KM is to make them collaborate.

As demonstrated in this part, Knowledge Management is essential to capitalize knowledge, gives competitive advantage and adds value to companies. But, how KM can help achieving the goals of the business strategy?

Knowledge Management and business strategy

As we already said, the company seeks intrinsically to sustain its activities, to make it last. It seeks to develop and to be profitable. To achieve this goal, it must be competitive by containing costs while offering products or services that meet customers' expectations. It sets several goals and all the employees are working to achieve them. In this way, a strategy is established. We will discuss here the multiple issues behind this strategy. As Jean-Claude Tarondeau says, “the business strategy consists either in entering and maintaining in industries that show a combination of favourable structural factors, or to leave activities where these factors should be unfavourable, or modifying some of these factors for the company in the industry to benefit from the best conditions of viability”.

By referring to strategy, this also implies the financial, intellectual and human means that are already in effect or to be implemented to achieve these goals. However, there are as many business strategies as companies. Some of them put knowledge at the very heart of their strategy and organize their activities around it. Moreover, in a work published by Miles *et al.* (1978), four business profiles arise: the prospector, the defender, the analyser and the reactor. Prospectors are the most sensible to innovation as they are always seeking new opportunities. On the contrary, defenders are reluctant to innovate as they focus on productivity. Analysers are capable of adapting to the market and may choose to have a defender profile, on stable markets, as well as a prospector profile on dynamic markets. Their strategy is well defined according to each market. Then, the reactors do not have a clearly defined strategy and are forced to react to their environment. For some authors (Chaput, 2006), it is essential to implement a dynamic strategic monitoring in order to be and stay ahead in terms of technology, competition, business, marketing and environment. Thus, companies are able to anticipate any development and to adapt its activities and organization.

For Gonzague Chastenot de Géry (2018), business strategy presents numerous issues. On the one hand, the offensive issues. In order to develop and to grow, a company must be driven by innovation while implementing a strategy in which knowledge is valued. It is also very important to increase and facilitate the acquisition of knowledge in order for the company to be as flexible and adaptive as possible. Innovation cannot be reached without researching information and collaboration. A previous work (Loiseau, 2017) shows that mixing and sharing knowledge within a company can give it strength, in particular by encouraging individual and collective decision-making. Then, both internal and external growth must foster new ideas that may lead to a change of structuration. For instance, KM allows the purchasing of a company to take advantage of the employees' knowledge without imposing a different vision or working processes that would be counterproductive. Here, KM is used as an assessment tool. Moreover, using innovative tools such as artificial intelligence (AI) enables a company to adjust its products or services to each of its customers. Thus, KM is a way to achieve flexibility

and reactivity by assessing user experience and identifying the customer's expectations. In addition, both the internal and external reputation of a company can give it strength. Employees can feel they belong to the company, which is a way to achieve effective collaborative work. Furthermore, the external attractiveness of the company is enhanced.

On the other hand, the defensive issues consist in making the company last. A company's knowledge lies on its employees' knowledge. However, in case of an employee being sick or leaving, the company is stranded. KM is used to protect such knowledge but also to see it from a more collective point of view. The company is stronger if knowledge circulates easily within its structure, and does not stay attached to one person. Some works underline the idea of knowledge patrimony. The company must also be consistent, using the same basis of knowledge, in order to offer a stable quality of service. This can be done, for instance, by learning from past projects with feedback in order to be more effective on future projects. We have already mentioned the importance of containing costs and the possibility of achieving this with KM. KM activities lead to cost savings and economy of time, for instance by relying on internal resources such as experts rather than external consultants, facilitating research and accurate targeting of information, or, more generally, trying to solve issues within the company.

KM is now part of companies' processes, in particular quality management, human resources and skills management. Thus, KM meets the expectations in terms of traceability and inspectability. It is a strong asset that serves to value experts and their knowledge. It is even stronger when implemented with a wider perspective such as HR management. Literature gives us examples of companies who implemented a KM approach at all levels with success. In these examples, one criteria is particularly prominent. Capitalisation is not sufficient on its own to be effective. Thus, collaboration appears as an essential notion. It aims at gathering the needs and capitalize knowledge by building the tools and contents with the people who possess such knowledge but also with the users of these tools. It also enables knowledge to develop and evolve. Data within a knowledge base is true at the very moment of its publication but not necessarily in the future. Some tools allow to comment the information in order to underline any evolution, error or misunderstanding. The goal of having a team of knowledge managers is to make knowledge and content evolve simultaneously. This requires a certain culture of knowledge within the company.

Such a procedure requires time. When information is needed, the employees should instinctively use a tool to seek it, or ask the right person. This also means that the experts, or more generally, the people who own the knowledge, must not perceive this transfer as a loss or theft, but as a common enrichment.

Everyone must be aware of these issues when implementing a KM process. Of course, this requires some time to adapt and to change behaviours. This also demands a clear and proactive explanation from knowledge managers and every one who is part of the process, for the employees to understand precisely how and why they will use and develop the tools.

Implementing such processes has a great cost, even if, eventually, the goal is to contain those costs. This cost is attributable to the purchase and maintenance of the tools, but also to the teams who will be in charge of knowledge. We can easily picture the great cost of a platform that requires regular maintenance, or even an upgrade at some point, and several people dedicated to updating and correcting the content. The company has the choice either to entrust these activities to its employees, or to an external service provider.

Furthermore, KM can be seen from several points of view. As we already discussed, the first one is person-oriented, or more precisely expert-oriented. The second one is project-oriented, that is to say that the focus is on past projects in order to draw conclusions and to carry out a critical reading to build new projects without making the same mistakes.

For companies, the struggle is that it takes time before any return on investment. As we said, implementing such processes take time, in particular in order to adapt to the new tools, and it requires a change in behaviour. On a short-term period, it is difficult to assess customers' satisfaction. But KM can leverage the employees' well-being because they feel valued by their company. Measuring KM impacts means assessing the risks, even if there is no implemented KM process. This assessment can also include the involvement of the employees (using the tools or taking part in the process) or time spent to find a piece of information. Of course, the accuracy depends on the maturity level of the process that is implemented.

Keeping these issues in mind, a company can assess the feasibility of implementing a KM process, and more precisely how to do it: finding the right tool, identify the ones who can implement and support this process. In short, a company needs to know how strategic issues meet KM issues. For example, a company that aims to improve the satisfaction of its customers and wants to be innovative would be well advised to set up KM tools that allow customers and collaborators to access knowledge easily to make them more autonomous and raise their satisfaction. So the KM approach must meet the company's expectations, adapt to its needs and serve its strategy to be considered useful and therefore necessary to implement.

Implementing the KM system

Before launching a KM system, this is essential to measure the maturity level of the company in relation to knowledge management, so to take into account the size of the organization, but also the initial context, especially in terms of corporate culture, process and work practices that favor KM.

So first, the company must conduct an internal diagnosis to identify its main needs and objectives, through the study of its various business issues, strengths, weaknesses and missing elements. This allows the company to know what needs to be done and to be fixed, and what is the business strategy to follow. Then, it is necessary to focus on the knowledge part, so to analyse the quality and quantity of knowledge that the company already possess, the way it is or should be stored (on databases, on the web) and identify those who have concrete knowledge to capitalize. This allows the company to determine whether it is useful to conduct a KM strategy and, if so, the path it should take (framework, scope, goals to achieve...).

Second, it is essential to anticipate all deep changes that the deployment of a knowledge management approach brings about, in terms of work organization. So the entire company must prepare for transition through a change management project. Such a plan allows the companies to gradually and harmoniously integrate KM processes into existing hierarchical structures and business processes, therefore it avoids any brutal technological change or cultural change. Actually, this encourages an effective transversal collaboration and sharing between different types of collaborators, as it gives KM roles to employees. To be effective, this change management plan must be supported by the hierarchy, and conducted with business operations.

Third, as a logical consequence, a team dedicated to all knowledge management activities must be created, and led by someone with strong project management and leadership skills, who truly is convinced of the usefulness of such a project. The KM team must be composed of people with specific but compatible skills, so that they expand their field of action and create a KM system that deals with several aspects, such as communication, quality, writing... and so on. Moreover, it is interesting to highlight the importance for the KM team to have the financial and moral support of management to fulfill all of its missions. Thus, having a sponsor who represents, promotes and defends the KM activity with the general management is a key to success.

Fourth, the company must evaluate and assess technology needs according to its business strategy and budget. Multiple tools, more or less sophisticated, are required to spread knowledge within a company. Until the late 2000s, knowledge was stored in documents or databases, or shared through training, but it did not prove to be easy to access. Nowadays, new technologies allow companies to create wikis, forums and internal social networks, where

employees can manage data themselves, easily find information and exchange views with experts. Once again, it does depend on the needs of the company. Artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality open up the scope of many other possibilities.

So to capitalize knowledge in one place, manage it and make it easily accessible, the use of a knowledge base, Intranet, Sharepoint, chatbot or other seems fundamental. It is nonetheless necessary to entrust the moderation of this database to the KM team, in charge of regularly enriching the database, creating new contents and updating the existing knowledge. It is even more useful if users of the database can participate in its evolution process, through the sharing of their feedback, ideas and so on.

As it is not innate for users to become more autonomous, and for experts to share knowledge, the KM must drive a change in habits, by showing the usefulness of using new tools to access information, and the importance of sharing knowledge, data and information to become autonomous, save time and money, for the common good. In terms of knowledge sharing, tools and methods are once again specific to each company. It is possible to collect knowledge through interviews between experts and editors or newcomers, to set up a common and collaborative Wiki for all, or to use any other way that encourages experts to transfer tacit knowledge. Whatever the technology, this system must be open and distributed (to enable all employees to access any information from their current location), measurable (to analyse the effectiveness of the whole KM system in the organisation), customizable and secure (to avoid losing information etc.).

Finally, whatever the direction the company has taken in terms of knowledge management, the system must be launched. As the company moves forward and faces new issues, it is meant to change and improve depending on the results. It is necessary to analyze these results to find out which areas do not meet the expectations, how to make improvements and raise the performance and satisfaction levels. This is a long and hard process than can only be successful with time, patience and perspective.

Feedback from authors

To understand how KM can serve the business strategy, we first tried to contact companies which had implemented a KM system, and also knowledge management consultants. Unfortunately, we did not get any response from them, so we decided to get feedback from our respective companies.

Company I

In the first company, we performed interviews with our tutors, then with the person who initiated the KM approach back in time. We asked them 5 to 10 questions to understand how and why the KM was created, how it is now and it intends to evolve. Here is the summary of the answers.

It all started in 2008 when the process owner at that time sent a satisfaction survey to assess all employees' satisfaction and find out about their needs.

The users unanimously expressed their desire to become more autonomous, so to have access to more documentation and in an easier way. At that time, all of the company's entities in the worldwide had access to their own Intranet and managed it separately. So accessing knowledge was unequal and irregular. This need to gain autonomy is the reason why a KM initiative was launched within the company. Although the management initially refused to implement such a system, a moral and financial support helped to establish it eventually.

To do so, the company instated the ITIL guidelines, a collection of good practices to ensure effective management of the Information System, which led to establish KM in 2011. Before that, knowledge was organized in a really different way, so one Intranet per entity, and the contents available were mainly designed for the help desk or hotline, and not addressed to the users. These documentations were accessible through shared files, so it was not always easy to access information, especially for newcomers.

Hence the desire to standardize this set of knowledge and merge all Intranets into one. So one of the members of the first KM team, initially composed of 3 people, set up the Drupal content management system, at the same time as the ITIL guidelines. All knowledge contents were migrated into Drupal, but separated into two different portals: the IS Users Portal, designed for users, and the Selene Knowledge Base, addressed to the help desk. Then, with the arrival of Windows 7, the number of knowledge contents drastically increased.

The question was, and still is, to identify what is the added value of KM, and how much to invest in it before obtaining a return on investment. Thus, to strengthen the team and give more value to knowledge management activities, the team leader at that time introduced new components such as communication, change management and technical writing. Although the

current KM team focuses more on writing and updating documentation, its current goal is to animate a community of writers.

Regarding human resources, the company opted for an internal KM service rather than outsourcing the activity because it was easier and more legitimate to find someone who already knew the company, its processes and specific tools, so to convince project managers and experts to share their knowledge for the common good of the company. The other reason it that it was hard to find people with this knowledge management skill, especially in a KM team which already was versatile (performing writing, animation, change management and so on). Even if it was just about fulfilling one component, for example change management, it would have been necessary to find a very skillful provider. Nowadays, the KM team is composed of both internal and external resources.

Regarding financial resources, the people we spoke to said that it is possible to launch a KM system without budget if everyone agrees with collaborating and managing knowledge all together. There are very simple tools to use to capitalize knowledge and that everyone can share, such as Trello, shared files, a wiki and so on). But since there are other parameters to take into account (such as workflows, performance indicators and so on), it is recommended to acquire more sophisticated tools. So the budget really is linked with the KM system you expect to develop. Since there are many other services and processes to pay for, the head of KM must really be able to defend the KM's interests and argue for it.

Regarding tools and practices that aim to make people more autonomous, the company opted for two knowledge bases, as we said one dedicated to users and the other to the help desk, and knowledge sheets which are created, updated and capitalized on these bases. These knowledge sheets are presented as user guides, best practices, FAQ and so on (for instance, to help people understand a new internal tool). To encourage people and entities to use these bases, dynamic links to these bases appear in daily or weekly emails and newsletters.

Regarding tools and practices that aim to make people share tacit knowledge, several services (including KM) are here to assist experts and demonstrate the interests and usefulness of such an initiative: fewer requests for experts, a greater user's autonomy thanks to knowledge capitalization, therefore fewer calls to the help desk and so fewer loss of money... In short, to show that KM helps to lower costs and obtain a greater performance in terms of autonomy and global satisfaction.

Since the beginning of KM, one of the main challenges is that the company cannot determine the usefulness of knowledge for users. Although users can get in touch with the KM team through comments and emails, it is hard to know whether they consult knowledge sheets before calling the hotline when dealing with a problem. Hence the interests to acquire tools that allow to create the users' journeys, gather indicators, thus draw conclusions, and to include this "supervision" component inside the KM team.

To conclude, the creation of a KM service served the company's strategy at that time, which was to allow people to become more autonomous, as they asked for. The people we spoke to said that it would have been possible to operate without a KM system, but this would have been a loss for all, as knowledge would have disappeared with early retirements and its management and capitalization would have never been that efficient.

Company 2

In the second company, an interview was performed with the tutor, who said that the idea of implementing a KM system has already been asked, but not applied. The company is currently facing the imminent departure of an expert, which is a major concern, as this employee is one of those who have the practical and theoretical knowledge to carry out specific tests for a very important customer. Therefore, they are currently looking for someone to replace this person, so there are risks of losing not only knowledge, but also the customer's satisfaction. The problem in the company is that knowledge is not sufficiently seen as part of capital. Even though they have a lot of very skilled experts, most of knowledge is conveyed orally. There is a true lack of transversality in the way departments and divisions operate: information flows poorly between departments and knowledge is specific to each department (there is not really a global vision). Their work is at the heart of innovation (research and expertise), but there is very little anticipation.

So, how is knowledge managed? In 2012 started a management with HR vision, which was linked with the implementation of an estimated employment and skills management system (GPEC) to anticipate needs and hire profiles with more precision. There is also an annual and multi-year training plan to try to improve knowledge. Every year, an inventory of knowledge is carried out, which makes it possible to manage risks and promote development.

Before that, an expert had the possibility to become a manager. Now, the company tries to identify people who are the best to manage, and people who will remain in the expertise (valuing experts who then become the company's ambassadors to institutions, customers, etc.) The capitalization concerned essentially scientific publication. There was a department dedicated to documentation but it was split up. In each technical department there are now people in charge of writing about tests, research, etc. The centralization of articles takes place on the intranet. They are classified by theme but it is still difficult to find the information you look for. They capitalize more on deliverables and not enough on knowledge.

There is also the training publishing service, which ensures that clients' knowledge needs are linked to the company's experts. This service concerns various products (guides on many topics, intra- and inter-company training, e-learning). But there is a lack of visibility about these products, even within the company. The communication section is working more and more with this service to train employees.

As this company was created in 1947, so old, it is struggling to modernize. The tools are obsolete and not homogeneous, thus the whole company does not necessarily use the same

tools. IT Management is in charge of managing these tools and implementing collaborative work tools inside teams, such as Sharepoint, to homogenize the organisation.

The company is aware that there is a need and huge necessity to adopt a KM system, but lacks anticipation and still has a vision in the short or medium term. In this perspective, it is complicated to implement a strategy as the critical size is not reached to implement a KM (now, the organization counts 960 employees).

For the moment, they focus on encouraging cross-functionality, in particular with a business vision. But now, as the vision focuses on productivity, they do not have time and the means to mobilize people and to identify, capitalize knowledge and make it accessible.

For now, the vision is currently too business-oriented, but there is a will to set up a customer relationship management (CRM) tool that will make it possible to target the right people (who have the knowledge, for example).

Conclusion

Implementing a KM system seems to be wise and appropriate when it comes to better manage knowledge and make it durable. As feedback has shown, there is no single way to do it; all this is closely linked to the strategy that the company sticks to.

It must be stated that this KM process serves multiple interests. It does not allow to manage knowledge in an optimal and sustainable way, but also gives importance to all those who participate in the full knowledge cycle: the KM team members that handle it, experts who share their knowledge and the users who read them on a daily basis.

Knowledge can therefore be considered as a fully-fledged factor of production today, allowing companies to stand out from the competition. Finally, it strengthens the company's credibility, brand image and bond with its employees.

Feedback from authors show that launching a KM approach is a choice that is truly linked to the business strategy, especially when the latter deals with user autonomy and collaboration. On the one hand, the case of company 2 shows that knowledge can be managed by a service other than KM, for example HR: as they assess the company's needs in terms of skills, they hire people who possess such skills, and thus keep knowledge up. Furthermore, the company's intranet gives all employees access to a set of articles and theses which are organised in thematic areas. However, information flow is low and there is no strategy in relation to knowledge, but this could happen in the future.

On the other hand, as the business strategy of company 2 dealt with the need for autonomy, launching a full KM process with multiple KM tools seemed vital to meet users expectations. Unlike the previous company, such a management system allowed to maintain control of published content and knowledge, and to lower the risks of loss associated with retirements.

Therefore, it is essential to think well about the business strategy and goals to achieve to measure the relevance of such a KM system in the company. If so, it will be vital for the company to implement a system that really sticks to its strategy, according to its needs and resources, and to improve it over time.

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