# Knowledge Retention & Transfer

## Advice to Global Green

Prepared by the Green Fog Group

Anna Nicholes, Janet Masters & Geoff Barbaro

# … but we'll often talk about

- Values

- Leadership

- Social Networks

- Strategic Intelligence

- Motivation

# Global Green

- Not For Profit
- Environmental & Climate issues
- Roles
  - Research;
  - Education;
  - Small scale projects;
  - Global debate

- Core Capability:
  - Collect, connect & share the knowledge of staff & stakeholders
- Multi national, lingual and cultural
- Work in disciplines and departments
- Central & Regional offices + field work
- 140 + 60 + 200 + ?

- Knowledge organisation with knowledge Issues

# Challenging Perceptions

# Organisations

- **Based on Outputs**
  - Mission
  - Strategy
  - Goals
  - Structures and departments
- **Entity so knowledge held within**

- **Based on People**
  - Shared values
  - Leadership (vision)
  - Flexibility
  - Resilience & Agility
  - Networks & flexible (iterative) teams
- **Knowledge resides in all stakeholders**
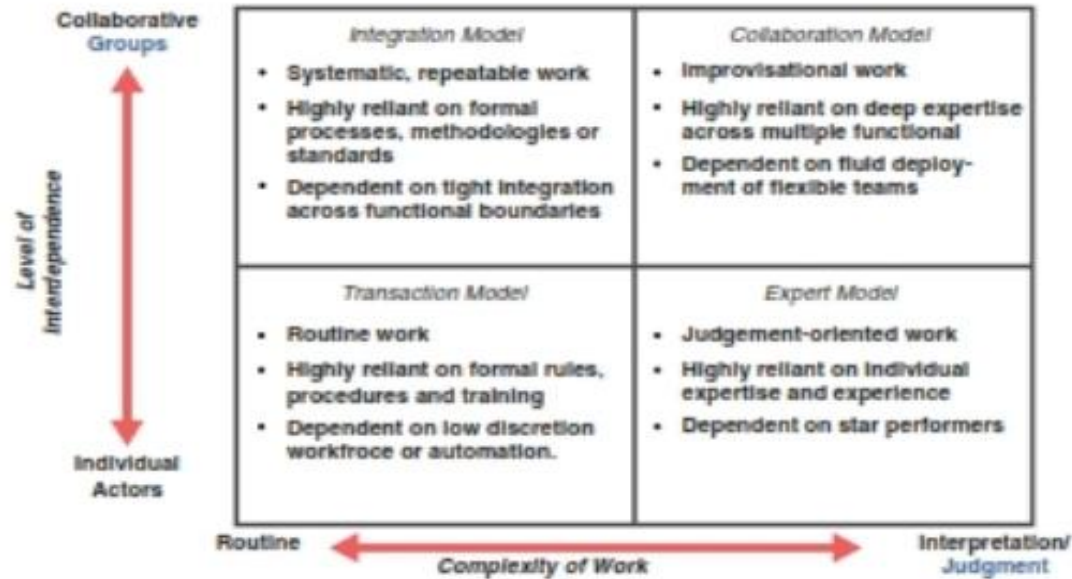
# Workers in Knowledge Organisations



Fig. 1 Four approaches to knowledge work

Source: Davenport (2010)

# Trust & Culture

# Trust

- Lack of trust can affect knowledge transfer.
- Key difficulty comes down to accurate communication.
- Amount of trust an employee has towards the HQ is the most important factor influencing the effectiveness of knowledge transfer

    (Fong Boh et al, 2013)

- Institution based trust is built on :
    - Trustworthy behaviour of individuals
    - Protect members from negative consequences of administrative and procedural mistakes. (Ardichvili et al, 2003, p 72).
- Policies and regulations are required to encourage individuals to engage in knowledge transfer.
- With safety nets in place to protect individual self interests, employees feel safer to share/transfer knowledge.

# Cultural Alignment

- Alignment between the cultural values and beliefs held by the HQ and overseas subsidiaries to facilitate knowledge transfer.

- Cultural diversity can be seen as an organizational asset to collaborate with people from different cultural backgrounds can enhance greater creativity and innovations.

- Both individuals and leadership need to be open to diversity and see it as an advantage, not an impeding factor. (Cabrera et al 2006).

# People + Leadership = Trust + Culture

# Recommendations

- Global Green should examine how individual employees' perceptions of trust, openness and their national culture, influence the effectiveness of knowledge transfer from HQ to subsidiaries.

- When trust exists between different entities, effective knowledge transfer can occur, despite differences in culture, history and characteristics between entities.

- Inter-office mentoring/coaching to integrate with other cultures and offices to create a better understanding and teach each other about organisational requirements and culture.

- Understanding the culture of their counterparts is an advantage to enable more effective communication and knowledge transfer

# Implementing Knowledge Retention & Transfer Systems

# Retention & Transfer

- What are KR and KT?
    - Elements of effective organisational KM
    - Organisational memory
- Why do we do it?
    - Prevent duplication of efforts
    - Prevent loss of knowledge
    - Organisational agility & resilience
    - Creating a knowledge sharing culture
    - Fostering collaboration and communication
    - Enhance innovation.

# Issues

- **Knowledge Retention**
  - What knowledge needs to be retained?
  - How long is this knowledge retained for?

- **Knowledge Retention & Transfer**
  - What do we transfer and share?
  - Who do we share this knowledge with?
  - How do we transfer the knowledge.

# Questions to ask up front?

- Who needs the knowledge (receiver)?

- What units are involved in the knowledge transfer process?

- What is the most appropriate 'source' to acquire required knowledge (awareness)?

- What are the types of knowledge to be transferred?

- How should it be transferred (modes of knowledge transfer)?

- What factors will influence the process and impact?

- What can we do to enhance the factors that positively influence on the process of knowledge transfer and what can we do to avoid/lessen impact of factors that negatively influence the process?

- What mechanisms should be used by the receiver to ultimately use the knowledge?

# People & Knowledge
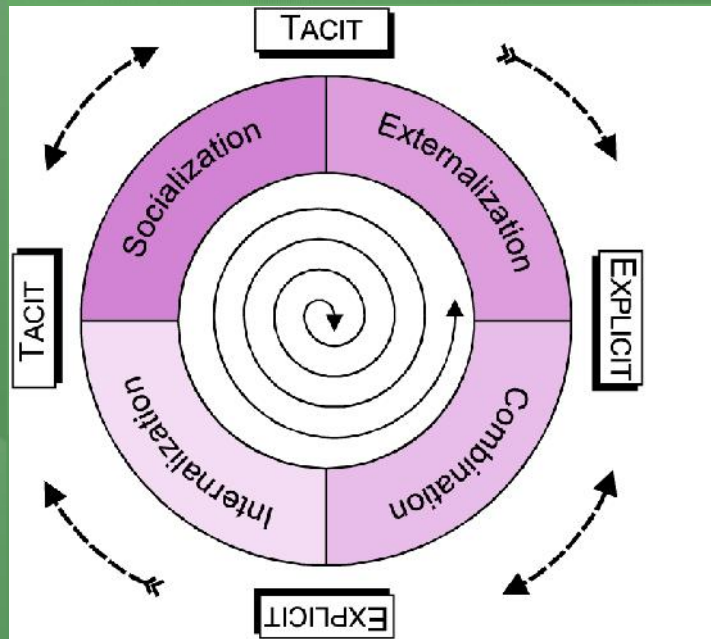


**Source:** Theorized by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995)

- Document management tools and knowledge portals are widely used in explicit-to-explicit knowledge transfer
- Collaboration and communication technologies support a tacit-to-explicit knowledge conversion
- Knowledge discovery and e-learning tools help the explicit-to-tacit conversion of knowledge
- Support of peer-to-peer networks can be tacit-to-tacit or tacit-to-explicit

# Prerequisites for KT

- Identifying where the knowledge is – the most suitable source
- Willingness to share knowledge sources with others
- Willingness to acquire knowledge
- Capacity for the receiver to absorb the knowledge

Liyanage (2009)

# Key Influential factors - KT

- **Enablers**
  - Culture,
  - capability, skills,
  - Leadership and management style,
  - Politics
  - Individuals trust of HQ
  - Openness to diversity
  - Technology

- **Barriers**
  - lack of trust
  - issues of confidentiality
  - fear of losing competitive advantage
  - cultural difficulties
  - Experts maintaining power and prestige

# Practical Solutions

- Communities of Practice
  - Online discussions / questions
- Online Knowledge portal
  - Interactive / two way / easily searchable / wiki
- Story telling
  - Video discussing problems so all can learn the problem solving and solutions

  - Reflection on what should have happened / what actually happened/ what made a difference / what you would do in the future

# Practical Solutions 2

- **Mentoring / Buddy / Job Rotations**
  - Online & in person
- **Moderated meetings**
  - Facilitate network building
  - Discuss specific situations & solutions
- **After action reports**
  - Lessons learnt

# Practical Solutions 3

- Knowledge Fairs
  - Interdepartmental
  - Inter-governmental
  - Representatives from business or other not for profit organisations who interact with Global Green

- Solution Days
  - Propose an issue and allow people to interact to come up with possible solutions

# Practical Solutions 4

- Knowledge Mapping
  - ISO standard
  - Effective at recording tacit information
  - Able to use images to illustrate concepts
- Topic Map
  - Store relationships between topics, associations and occurrences

# Practical Solutions 5

- Knowledge Transfer workshops
- Rewards
  - learning and professional development opportunities
    - Presenting at conferences /forums / seminars
    - Supporting publication of research findings
  - Award program

# Performance Measures

- Did the knowledge transfer process successfully achieve its goals ?
    - Qualitative and Quantitative feedback from stakeholders, especially clients
    - Complaints from clients about multiple contacts
    - Award nominations

# Incentives and Rewards

- Employees may be intrinsically motivated to share/transfer knowledge that is related to their own individual learning process & personal growth.

- Recent study by Martin Perez et al (2012) found that intrinsic rewards have a positive influence on knowledge transfer.

- Group or team rewards are one way to encourage knowledge transfer.

- Reward effective transfers, don't focus on particular knowledge

# Summary

# Factors (Duan, Nie & Coakes 2010)

- Relationships
- Trust
- Culture Awareness
- Motivation
- Objectives & Focus
- Openness
- Respect
- Topic timeliness

- Language
- Transfer Channel
- Knowledge distance
- Selection of Appropriate Partners
- Expert trainers
- Project flexibility
- Policies, bureaucracy

Know IT Know

# Create & Implement

- **Creating the Knowledge Environment**
    - Shared Values
    - Leadership
    - Trust & relationships
    - Social networks
    - Balance

- Implementing the Knowledge Environment
    - Communities of Practice
    - Personal contact – internal and external
    - Incentives
    - Storytelling
    - Conferences (internal & external)
    - Inter-office mentor program
    - After Action Reviews
    - Annual Awards
    - Knowledge Banks/Wikis

# Future Considerations

- Innovation
  - Homogeneity v heterogeneity
  - Cognitive proximity (content) + cognitive distance (structure) = cognitive friction for innovation
- Edge organisations
  - Network-centric, adaptive, robust & demonstrate situational leadership
  - Firm as the manager of meta-communities of practice in a knowledge eco-system
- Semiotics
  - Simplification of KR and KT through signs instead of words

"Knowledge transfer will only be successful if the organisation has the ability to **acquire** knowledge plus the **ability to absorb** it and then **assimilate and apply ideas**, knowledge devices and artefacts effectively,"

**(Liyanage, 2009, p 125)**