

A Work Project, presented as part of the requirements for the Award of a Master Degree in Management from the NOVA – School of Business and Economics.

CONTENT MANAGEMENT MANUAL FOR KNOWLEDGE SHARING PLATFORM

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Spring Semester

June 2016

ABSTRACT

This study is structured as a Directed Research Internship Work Project. The purpose is to develop an overview of a content management manual for a retailer's ("The Company") knowledge sharing platform. This platform is to be implemented in the retailer's intranet and its main objectives are: inform, empower, accelerate, inspire and retain employees. We started by considering the themes that should be included in the platform, followed by user segmentation and a list of formats. Benchmarking with other companies allowed us to find the best approach for the platform structure and select governance and KPIs. Limitations and recommendations are also discussed.

Keywords: Knowledge sharing platform, intranet, retail, platforms

1. INTRODUCTION

This study aimed to provide a multinational retailer, hereafter referred to as "The Company", a content management manual for its knowledge sharing platform.

Sharing knowledge online increases its flow and distribution, which is one of the reasons why many organizations choose to do it (Pee & Lee, 2015). Organizations that choose a knowledge platform as a vehicle to share knowledge, promote the global exchange of business-knowledge, experiences and best practices, encouraging community building and group brainstorming (Stenmark, 2003).

Besides the clear benefit for the company as a whole, by ensuring that the knowledge acquired through several years of experience is passed on, a knowledge platform also empowers employees, motivates their self-development and accelerates an informed decision-making. For this reason, the impact of the knowledge included in the platform will only have significant business value if the knowledge platform is fully assimilated within the working

actions of the different employees (Purvis, Sambamurthy & Zmud, 2001). Thus, managing the platform's content successfully will only be possible after recognizing the needs of the end-users and adapting the knowledge content to them by targeting different segments with different themes and formats according to their working profile. It is also important to consider metrics that can monitor the platform's performance and establish governance to keep a steady inflow of knowledge content.

By the study of other companies in the retail industry that use internal platforms for knowledge sharing, we aimed to find the best approach for "The Company" according to its characteristics. For this reason, references to other models or approaches can be found throughout this study. We will start by discussing the functional themes and cross-themes; then the user's segments and their characteristics will be presented. Next, the formats and platform structure will be discussed and the work project concludes with limitations and recommendations.

2. FUNCTIONAL THEMES

Due to the large size of this multinational retailer, its operations need to be organized in clusters, facilitating the categorization of information. Following this, the themes that will be included in the platform can be divided in two: functional themes and cross themes.

Retailers that efficiently manage manufacturers, suppliers, stock, stores and transportation are able to minimize costs and comply with the service levels required by consumers, so it is clear that the functional themes for retail are directly related to its operations, including the following clusters: Plan and Buy, Move, Sell and Management.

2.1. Plan and Buy - Some of the most sophisticated merchandising optimization techniques were developed with the objective of better planning and buying assortments. This includes monitoring customer data, category trends and competitors' actions (Nielsen, 2013). Retailers are exposed to a number of internal and external factors affecting their business, especially for

their position at the downstream of the supply chain. Merchandising planning and management, marketing and analytics and enterprise analytics can be included in this category. Also, global sourcing and supply is central in retail operations to increase gross and net margins. As referred in Wal-Mart's 2002 Annual Report "Global procurement program allows us to share our buying power and merchandise network with all our operations throughout the world." (Braithwaite, 2003: p. 4). Global sourcing generates value for customers and shareholders and it is key for corporate survival in the retail industry, "few can envisage a sustainable future without an increasing level of global supply." (Braithwaite, 2003: p. 4).

2.2. Move - The complexity of consumer behavior is a driver for logistics management in retail. In order to fulfill demand and have products available, retailers have to manage product movement in a cost-effective manner. Anticipating and adapting efficiently to changes in demand will have a direct impact in storage facilities, inventory, transportation and utilization and packaging (Fernie & Sparks, 2009). Combining operational excellence with high flexibility to changes in the market is key for a higher performance, even though some retailers use third-party logistic partners to consolidate their operations. In this case, a fully integration of this collaboration in the retailer supply chain is important to maximize benefits (Capgemini, 2013).

2.3. Sell - A fundamental key for retailers' success is the ability of recognizing selling opportunities in a market. Since 2009 companies in the retail sector experience a decline in revenue growth. Many companies suffered declines in working capital performance with direct consequences in cash management practices, which forced them to reposition in the market and consider alternative sources of growth. The shift towards digital sales was one of the major drivers, since digital technologies are transforming e-commerce into a crucial element of omnichannel success in the retail industry (Strategy& - PWC, 2012). Online

selling is now the fastest-growing channel worldwide with shoppers increasingly buying virtually anything, anywhere, anytime, using any connected device. Retailers should consider reviewing their omnichannel strategies, so consumers can find a consistent shopping experience among the different channels. McKinsey and Company noted in 2009 that “consumers who shop across a number of channels annually spend about four times more than those who shop just in one channel”. (Cisco, 2012: p. 5)

Since a single channel is no longer enough, omnichannel is all about delivering a personalized shopping experience through multiple channels. It is recognized that retailers that bet on a great customer service experience are also betting in a stronger competitive position, distinguishing themselves from their competition (Kraft & Mantrala, 2006). Also, retailers that efficiently understand consumers and provide highly attractive store experiences are contributing for increasing their competitive advantage. Since the shopping experience is rather mundane, customers tend to choose their point of sale considering not only its functional benefits, but also the overall store experience. Assortment planning and display are crucial when deciding how much shelf space and purchase budget should be allocated to each product category, especially for fast moving consumer products. In 43 out of 56 markets around the world, shoppers rated “everything they need in one shop” as one of the five most important drivers when deciding where to shop (Nielsen, 2013).

2.4. Management - Due to the rapid changes in consumer behavior and to the many players in the market, retailers face an extremely competitive environment. For this reason, apart from operations, support areas are also important to keep the business moving. Enterprise services include for example human resources, finance, marketing, health and safety.

3. CROSS THEMES

Nowadays, the retail business plays more than the role of a seller, being recognized not only as an important economy booster, but also as part of community social involvement.

Hence, besides the core clusters mentioned above, identified as part of “The Company’s” value chain, other theme clusters were considered essential to address. We named these cross themes, since they can impact any of the previous clusters, and include: Sustainability, Innovation, Analytics, Strategy and People Development.

3.1. Sustainability - Sustainability is becoming a trend with consumers being increasingly concerned about social and environmental impacts. Social responsibility gives retailers competitive advantage and a positive reputation, since consumers are becoming attracted to more ethical products whose production adheres to high safety and health standards, while avoiding products produced by sweatshop labor (Kraft & Mantrala, 2006). On the other hand, reducing the environmental impact has become one of the top corporate values for retail companies. Thus, retailers need to learn about environmental issues and share best practices, as this generates a positive response from consumers, increasing their trust and loyalty.

Key environmental issues facing the industry are waste, carbon emissions and sustainable agriculture:

- *Reducing waste*: Retailers aim to reduce the waste they produce and seek value in conjunction with their suppliers.
- *Reducing carbon emissions*: Retailers are very interested in reducing carbon emissions not only for their significant negative environmental impact, but also as a way of coping with the volatile energy prices.
- *Sustainable agriculture*: Although, food accounts on average for 50% of retailer’s sales, margins are low (KPMG, 2013). For that reason, some retailers are starting to sustain the agribusiness by vertically integrating farmers in their supply chain. This investment in farming increases agricultural production and consequently improves the supply of agriculture products. Also, some retailers are collaborating with producers that use

agriculture techniques to protect soil fertility and preserve clean water supplies, encouraging a sustainable way of farming.

3.2. Innovation - For a retailer to be successful it needs to be constantly innovating and looking for new ways to improve product portfolio, prices and retailing experiences, adapting quickly to changes in the marketplace and in consumers' demand (Kraft & Mantrala., 2006). Generally, grocery and mass retailers offer the same range of products as their competitors and switching costs within the industry are very low. For this reason, innovation is crucial for a retailer to grow and stay ahead of its competitors. As Tesco's CEO noted: "For retailers, it's no longer going to be sufficient to innovate simply to meet an existing customer trend... Successful retailers will not be those who meekly follow the customer like some obedient puppy. They will be one step ahead, offering people new ways to make their lives a bit better." (Nielsen, 2013: p. 3).

3.3. Analytics - Retailers have been using data analytics for years, which is one of the reasons why analytics is crucial to generate business intelligence. Getting insights from the data collected is important to answer critical questions of the retail business, increasing the ability to make better decisions and define a more structured strategy (Ernst&Young, 2014).

Apart from the data generated from retail operations, for the past few years, social media analysis became crucial for retailers to be more responsive to shifts in consumer demand. Analytics has thus been recognized as a need in different areas. In the particular case of this "Company", according to an internal report for learning planning, managers recognize their need for analytical skills, in order for better predict and support the defined strategy.

3.4. Strategy - Strategic thinking is fundamental for the business sustainability in the long run. The ability to translate the strategic vision into actions, being able to deal with the

constant shifts in the business and being aware of the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats is important to respond to the rapid changes of the retail industry.

3.5. People Development - In order to guarantee knowledge sharing between employees and the preparation of future leaders, organizational culture and values should be spread across companies. Successfully managing others by mentoring, coaching, delegating and giving feedback will also contribute for employees to have a deeper knowledge of the company's core business, even when working on corporate areas. The "Company's" managers recognize that developing others is a key competence fundamental to be competitive in the market.

Having defined the main themes to be included in the content of the knowledge sharing platform, it is now important to segment the end-users.

4. USERS' SEGMENTATION

Users are the employees who have access and are directly involved in the knowledge sharing platform. There are different factors impacting the knowledge sharing behavior, but the "Company" highlighted the following: Education, time within the company, age and working profile. According to Masrek, gender is not a factor that influences knowledge sharing behavior and for this reason, it was not considered (Masrek *et al.*, 2011).

4.1. Education - A study from Lund Vinding about the absorptive capacity of the human capital reveals that education level and academic degrees affect the assimilation of knowledge by the employees. Highly educated employees, specialized in a particular area absorb better the knowledge related to it (Lund Vinding, 2006).

4.2. Tenure in the company - Tenure within the organization is another important factor since employees with longer length of service tend to perceive digital sharing tools like the intranet as being very useful, which consequently increases its usage.

On the other hand, for new employees or for employees with less time within the organization, having a digital sharing tool will facilitate their search through the complexity of the business, allowing them to receive proper training and to access vital information. Having a corporate culture that supports innovation and a less hierarchical organization structure will also facilitate the implementation and use of digital sharing tools (Darwin, 2015).

4.3. Age - Different age groups have significant differences in terms of knowledge sharing. Although younger people are usually more receptive to receive new knowledge than older employees, they are usually constrained by their limited work experience and knowledge level. However, younger employees are more technologically savvy in comparison with their older peers, and may engage in reverse mentoring, in which, knowledge is transferred from junior employees to senior staff (DeAngelis, 2013).

Although age may be a relevant variable, in his study about the factors influencing knowledge sharing using virtual platforms, Kasim found that age differences do not significantly affect the knowledge sharing behavior (Kasim, 2015).

4.4. Working profile - It is possible to distinguish two working profiles within the company – employees directly involved in store operations (General Manager, Chief Operations Officer, Regional Managers, Assistant Directors of Operations, District Managers and Store Managers) and corporate positions from support areas (Heads, Senior Project Managers, Coordinators, Managers, Specialists and Assistants) like IT, Finance, Marketing, Strategy, Logistics and HR.

These four characteristics were used in the definition of the end-users segments.

5. SEGMENTS AND CHARACTERISTICS

In IKEA Japan, the intranet for knowledge sharing is mostly used at a corporate level and extended to the management team in stores (Jonsson, 2007). Similarly, in this case, store personnel were not considered in this segmentation, due to their limited access to IT devices during their working hours. Currently, putting an effort in a knowledge sharing platform targeting these employees would not bring the same benefits as for the other segments.

We chose to segment focusing mainly on the working profile. Consequently, the working profile, where we looked for commonalities in terms of the work performed, is the leading characteristic of our segmentation.

In order to avoid an over segmentation, instead of considering each job function as a segment, four segments were created, grouping job functions with the same knowledge development needs. Based on the Ram Charan Leadership Pipeline Model (Charan, Drotter & Noel, 2001), the following segments were created: Leading oneself, leading others, leading teams and leading business.

5.1. Leading oneself - This segment includes the Assistant, Specialist and Manager (without direct reporting) positions for corporate division. Employees who belong to this segment deliver results through their own contribution and effort. They are responsible for the development of their own skills, efficiently using equipment and resources. Also, they work within specified timelines and are involved in effective teamwork and collaboration. Skill development focus is on: Planning and organization, operational effectiveness, initiative and proactivity and building collaborative teams.

5.2. Leading others - This segment includes the Store Manager and the District Manager positions for the operations division and the Senior Project Manager, Coordinator and Manager (with direct reporting) positions for corporate division. The employees who belong to this segment must manage, coach and motivate others, plan and assign their work. They are

also involved in performance monitoring regarding resources, time, budget, quality and safety. Skill development focus is on: Problem solving, sales focus, people development and building collaborative teams.

5.3. Leading teams - Inside this segment we have as job positions the Chief Operations Officer, Regional Managers and Assistant Director of Operations for the operations division and the Head position for the corporate division. The employees who belong to this segment have as job requirements developing and implementing divisional strategy within areas of accountability, developing future leaders and managing talent as well as managing teams within the different business units. Skill development focus is on: Strategic thinking, decision-making, people development and influence.

5.4. Leading business - This segment includes just the General Manager job position. Their main responsibilities are championing corporate vision and championing client values and culture, coaching and developing business managers, planning business strategic direction and managing multi-functional expertise for division results. Skill development focus is on: Strategic thinking, leading by example, people development and innovation.

Different formats need to be prepared according to the themes and segments.

6. FORMATS

Knowledge sharing platforms typically include different formats: E-learning, forums, video, webinars and text form.

6.1. E-learning - This format can be easily integrated in a busy working schedule. Although e-learning is very useful for workplace related learning, the formal nature of the vast majority of the e-learning courses makes them a good option only for new apprentices or new employees. Since experienced workers will benefit from a more informal learning format, e-

learning courses may not be suitable. “For people with expert knowledge and experiences, formal and structured learning can even become counter-productive, because it does not fit the very personal learning needs.” (Lukosch & Vries, 2007: p. 254). To overcome this and make e-learning a useful tool for more experienced workers, the “Company” may opt for what Carrefour Italia is using, where managers can choose their own training modules and interact with their trainer or other learners, much like what happens in traditional classroom training (CrossKnowledge).

Wal-Mart, the American multinational retail corporation uses e-learning as a way to develop its employees’ personal skills. By providing its employees access to e-learning courses from Thomson NETg, Charles Baldwin, vice president of people development for Wal-Mart recognizes this as “an excellent opportunity for our associates to begin or continue their personal enrichment by utilizing technology of online education.” (Internet Retailer, 2004: p. 1). Besides offering courses to its employees through the Wal-Mart’s My Education Connection program for topics like management, software application training, goal setting and personal finance, it also allows their family members to access the courses at a tuition discount (Internet Retailer, 2004). However, this retailer is not the only one using e-learning to share knowledge. Tesco pharmacy uses e-learning as a means of training for store personnel, replacing paper-based fact files (SkillSet, 2011), while Carrefour Italia offers its portal only at management level, in order to develop an e-learning culture before giving access to all staff (CrossKnowledge).

6.2. Forums - Forums are a type of informal format where knowledge seekers post questions and knowledge providers offer solutions to the questions posted (Haas, Criscuolo & George, 2014). Discussion forums are a format that allows users to exchange information between them in an asynchronous way, which is ideal for organizations that operate in different geographies.

Tesco, the British multinational retailer, for example, uses Cisco Collaborative Platform as a Knowledge Center and discussion forums and blogs are the formats that employees prefer the most (Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group (IBSG), 2009).

However, forums are sometimes not recognized as a useful tool. In the case where user communities' are not a result of face-to-face interactions, staff can be reluctant to post messages in a discussion forum, not knowing who might be reading it. To mitigate this situation and since it is very difficult to create a community based only on online collaboration, forum discussions should support an already existing community. Additionally, it is important to consider the role of a facilitator, who, can assist in running forum discussions by encouraging people to connect both online and offline, making the online discussions an extension of the face-to-face interactions (Step Two). In Carrefour Italia, for example, its 20-plus external trainers stimulate discussion once a week, as part of their role, increasing discussion dynamics (CrossKnowledge).

6.3. Video – With video companies show information efficiently across all organizational members, increasing employee engagement. It is especially useful in the case of standardizing procedures across multi-office and multi-country enterprises, avoiding the cost associated with physical movements (Kaltura, 2015).

6.4. Webinars - Allowing users to interact with video, what is often called a webinar, also improves employee learning. “Interactive video, hypervideo, or i-video is video content that is augmented with additional interactive features, ensuring a non-linear method of transmitting information, as opposed to a linear storytelling structure of traditional video.” (Petan, Petan & Vasiiu, 2014: p. 481). This format combines screen-sharing imagery with real-time voice explanations, where a presenter transfers knowledge to an audience. Webinars have become a successful way of transmitting training to employees. This type of training is especially useful

to address a specific theme to a large number of employees. In Africa, for example, it is used to train healthcare workers about HIV education (Petan, Petan & Vasiu, 2014).

6.5. Text form - Text form is a simple way of transmitting information, since its creation is less time consuming than making a video, for example. Its use is especially important in the case of transferring knowledge in the form of a manual, like instructions or when the information is likely to change frequently and creating another format is a time-consuming process or a more expensive one (Young, 2010). Learning by reading helps viewers to re-experience the knowledge learned by others, giving them the opportunity to create new knowledge when combining their tacit knowledge with the knowledge of others (Wang, Xiong & Sun, 2007). It is possible to distinguish four different text form formats for learning purposes: Knowledge logs, wikis, knowledge references and case studies.

- *Knowledge logs*: When blogs are used within an organization as a way of knowledge transfer, they are often called knowledge logs or k-logs. According to the intranet experts of Step Two, k-logs break barriers within the organization and facilitate the flow of information, since they “harness the recognized benefits of “storytelling” techniques.”(Step Two, 2004: p. 1). Since blogs provide users an opportunity to freely publish their ideas, experiences and reflections, promoting the interaction with viewers through comments and evaluations, they can easily make tacit knowledge explicit (Wang, Xiong & Sun, 2007). On a survey taken among Tesco employees, out of 856 respondents, 95% said they would like to read blogs from their business leaders (Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group (IBSG), 2009).
- *Wikis*: Wikis are a very simple way to create and update content, encouraging multiple individuals to add content and share knowledge. It is an interesting format to support the ongoing growth of knowledge, especially in communities of practice or for sharing knowledge inside a team. “The use of wikis seems to encourage the free flow of

information between participants and the voluntary contribution of additional knowledge.”

(Step Two, 2004: p. 1)

- *Knowledge references*: These files with structured information containing text, number and metadata fields are useful to describe internal processes, services, products and solutions. Each user can then post feedback about a knowledge reference using a rating scale or leaving a textual comment. Like it happens in Siemens, users are rewarded by their interaction with material prizes or non-financial measures (Stocker & Muller, 2013).
- *Case studies*: Case studies can be used in knowledge learning as an examination of real life situations and knowledge in context. According to Benbasat and colleagues, case studies are very useful to capture the practitioners’ knowledge and developing theories or strategies from it (Benbasat *et al.*, 1987, cited in Grant, 2012), promoting an active form of learning.

7. PLATFORM STRUCTURE

The knowledge share platform deployment will occur in three phases. First phase will target an audience of around 1.600 employees (only managers) and contents will be included in the “Company’s” current People Management Platform. Second phase will target an audience of around 6.500 employees (managers and headquarters) and contents will be included, from this moment onwards, in the intranet portal for knowledge sharing under construction. Third phase, will target more than 80.000 employees (all).

Masrek suggests that users familiar with the internet, will find the usage of the intranet as familiar not only to find the information they request, but also for knowledge sharing purposes (Masrek *et al.*, 2011). For this reason, the more similar the knowledge platform is to the web-based applications, the more efficient the knowledge sharing is.

After gathering information about the themes, segments and formats to be included, it is possible to develop the operational structure of the platform, where contents, KPI's and governance are discussed.

7.1. Contents - The knowledge sharing platform will have contents organized according to four distinct areas: Must know, must participate, must experience and must innovate.

However, since the “Must know” area will be the first to be developed, we chose to focus our approach only in this area. This area aims at maximizing value for money and generating platform traffic and intends to create awareness regarding the trends and tendencies in the retail industry, to provide knowledge on how technology can impact the retail business and to develop management and leadership skills. Hence, the formats mentioned before will be included in this area.

It is paramount for an efficient knowledge repository that categorization, taxonomy and metadata are put in place, in order to facilitate the search for information. For that, contents should be properly identified to facilitate automatic index and have a good search engine tool for finding the right information at the right time. Also, contents should contain metadata and keywords for effective search and should be listed by several categories. A life cycle period of relevance can be established through KPI's analysis (Young, 2010).

Access is another important question to take into consideration. First, contents should be accessed not only in a corporate intranet, but also from mobile devices to meet different mobility needs. Mobile is a trend not only in terms of access, but also in terms of content production, which should be succinct and concise. For this reason, entire content should be available on cloud. Second, different segments should have different accesses and content display should be prioritized - first the information that matters the most and less important content in a secondary position. Besides this, content should be cross-referenced, hyperlinked

and stored in relational databases. Organizing the content by themes facilitates the users' access, allowing them to easily find information according to their areas of interest.

Design is another important matter for a knowledge management platform. Since the company has operations in three very distinct geographies, design should appeal and engage users in every location. Following the example of HCL Technologies, where a digital knowledge platform was created and designed based on two different sports metaphors to appeal to different business areas (Darwin, 2015), the “Company” should include on the platform design elements that appeal to users from different working areas and from different locations, creating a customized view.

7.2. KPI's - Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) acknowledgement is required to monitor changes and progress over time, measuring the success of the company's objectives (Li & Scullion, 2006).

In practice, knowledge platforms often take a form of a website or other digital tools to connect different types of users (Smet, Lund & Schaninger, 2016). For this reason, web analytics metrics should be used to develop the platform's KPI's. According to McFadden, there are four types of websites: commerce, lead generation, content/media and support/self (McFadden, 2005, cited in Jansen, Spink & Taksai, 2009). For the purpose of our KPI analysis, this knowledge sharing platform is a support/self service website, whose goal is to help users find answers for specific problems. The selected KPI's are the following:

- *Page depth*: The ratio of page views to unique users. High page depth reveals multiple viewings of a page by the same user, which can show that users are having trouble finding the information they are looking for.
- *Bounce rate*: It reflects the ease of use and user interest. High bounce rate reveals poor content quality and lack of interest.

- *User satisfaction*: This metric is especially important to understand what users want and to make improvements according to their needs, since it collects data directly through feedback surveys and satisfaction ratings.
- *Top pages*: There are three types of top pages: top entry pages, top exit pages and most popular pages. Top entry pages analysis is important to make sure relevant information is included in the main entry points of the platform. Top exit pages identification highlight areas of confusing and missing content and most popular pages are the pages with more attractive content, which consequently receive more visits.
- *User path*: Each user creates a path of actions and page views while navigating through the platform. According to The Web Analytics Association this path analysis is fundamental to study user's behavior and find navigation difficulties. (Jansen, Spink & Taksai, 2009).

Although KPI's are often used to help an organization evaluate its performance, knowledge-based goals are difficult to quantify (Chai-Arayalert & Nakata, 2011). However, as knowledge management is recognized to be part of the strategy to improve the business' performance, KPI's analysis is vital to monitor the success of the knowledge platform and its impact in the business. For this reason, besides the KPI's selected to monitor the platform's performance, which should be directly reported to the employees involved in the platform management, KPI's related with the impact of knowledge sharing in the organization should also be considered and reported to top management, c-level and board. This KPIs' selection depends on the perspective – financial, customer-oriented, market-oriented, product related or employee related. In the case of employee related KPI's we can suggest: Percentage of staff contributing with contents, percentage of staff accessing contents and number of searches, for example. Conceptual models like the Balanced Scorecard or the European Foundation for

Quality Management (EFQM) model can help when selecting relevant KPI's for knowledge management (Spek, Hofer-Alfeis & Kingma, 2003).

7.3. Governance - Sharing content in a platform is most likely to be done by senior staff, specialists or decision makers from different areas (Petan, Petan & Vasiu, 2014). For this reason, it is very important to nominate knowledge partners for different areas of expertise, in order to give employees the confidence of receiving officially approved knowledge.

A knowledge partner can be an individual or a collective group of people who possesses relevant information, experience and understanding of the business and its market. They can work within the organization or outside of it or even across organizations or industries (Li & Scullion, 2006).

Knowledge partners not only have the right skills to share knowledge within the organization as they have social and reputation enhancement motives behind their ambition to share knowledge. Understanding these motives is particularly crucial when nominating a knowledge partner, especially in the case where the organization does not offer explicit incentives or rewards for knowledge sharing among employees (Haas, Criscuolo & George, 2014).

Selecting a knowledge partner requires the identification of a particular set of skills. For example, according to Yang and his colleagues, academic publications provide strong evidence of the knowledge partner in certain areas (Yang *et al.*, 2008, cited in Wei *et al.*, 2015). In contrast, Campbell and colleagues used email communications as a way of finding experts inside an organization, since knowledge partners are a common destination for questions inside the organization (Campbell *et al.*, 2003, cited in Wei *et al.*, 2015).

In a study developed by Morawski about the role of knowledge partners, the following qualities were referred as key: “trustworthy, present many years of professional experience and achieve above average work results.”(Morawski, 2013: p. 21) These unique

characteristics combined with extensive professional contacts and a deep work experience in specific areas, are fundamental for knowledge sharing.

Knowledge Partners are identified by each Geography as the pivot element to bridge every knowledge theme with the corporate team, reporting to the person responsible for the Knowledge Sharing Area. The mission of the person responsible for the Knowledge Sharing Area is to promote programs and activities in the Knowledge Sharing Platform, reporting to the Head of Knowledge. Consequently, Knowledge Partners are responsible for creating/managing content for a specific area of interest, established according to their area of expertise, serving as entry points for supporting organizational learning processes (Stewart, May & Ledgerwood, 2015). They also count with the expertise of Knowledge Local Peers for each company, to bridge every Knowledge operational theme.

The knowledge sharing process is supported by two other functions – Knowledge Designers and Knowledge Organizers. Knowledge Designers will be responsible for creating different formats with the knowledge provided by Knowledge Partners. On the other hand, organizing knowledge in different categories and for different segments is a responsibility of Knowledge Organizers. Knowledge Seekers from different segments will be able to learn knowledge and apply it to their daily routine. At the same time, they will be able to provide feedback about the knowledge learnt. Figure 1 summarizes the process of creating and organizing knowledge, from Knowledge Partner to Knowledge Seeker.

8. LIMITATIONS

Although we chose to segment the knowledge sharing platform users according to their working profile, considering their leading role in the “Company”, more information should be gathered about these segments in order to have a deeper understanding of their needs.

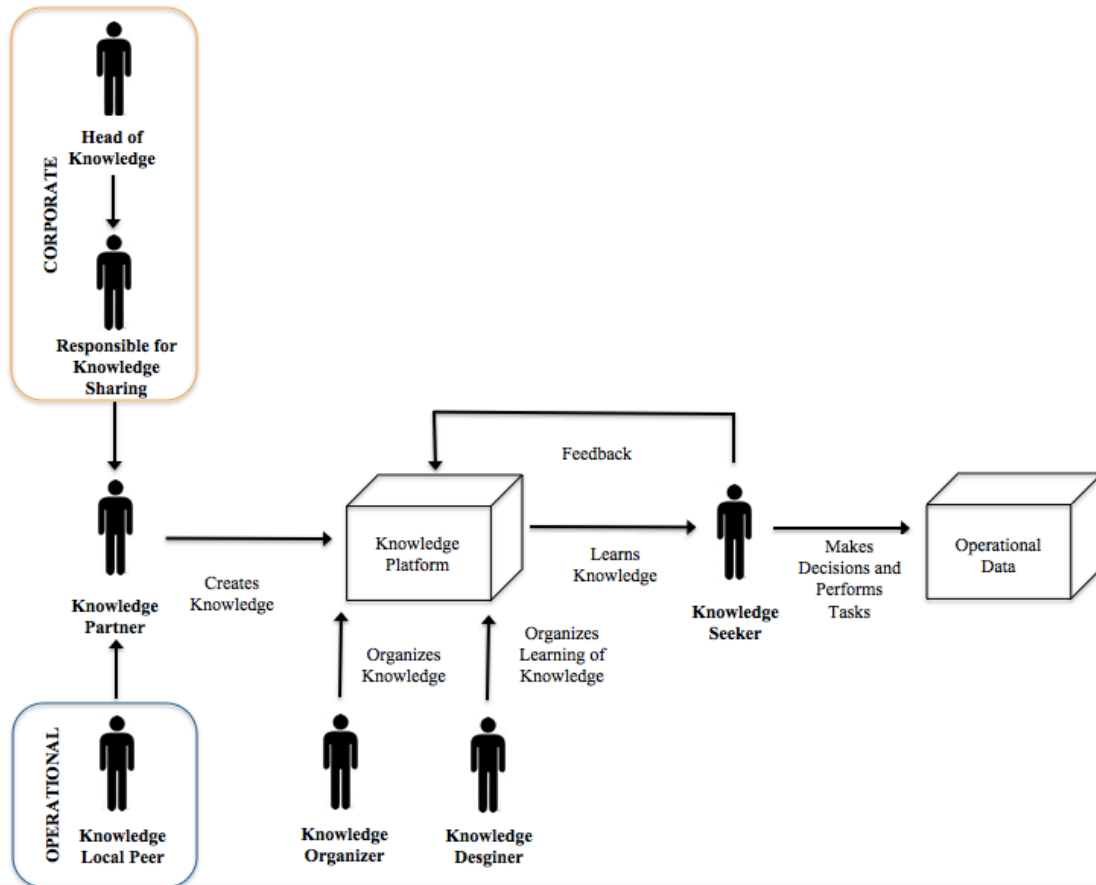


Figure 1: Knowledge sharing process

We were not able to gather information about the users’ preferred sharing devices (e.g. mobile, desktop, laptop, tablet, etc.), and since some formats are limited to some support devices due to their features (for example load time for videos accessed through mobile devices), this also limited our ability to understand which formats are most suited for each segment. The same applies to the themes suitability. Even though we considered as platform theme clusters a number of functional and cross themes directly related with the retail industry, we understand that this full selection of themes may not apply to all segments. The level of interest regarding the themes selected varies according to segment, which reveals that a deeper study of the segments created should be made in order make the platform customized to each segment, consequently improving users’ engagement.

Besides this, currently, the “Company’s” stores are not equipped with technology to facilitate the access by store personnel to the knowledge sharing platform, which limits their ability to participate in knowledge sharing activities through this channel.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Organizations often place too much emphasis on the technology employed regarding the construction of their knowledge management platforms, paying less attention to user participation, which is key to support knowledge sharing (Wang, Xiong & Sun, 2007).

It is important to take into consideration that diffusing and maintaining knowledge should be a participatory activity done by all parts involved, so centralizing the knowledge sharing activities on few employees (Knowledge Local Peers and Knowledge Partners) can reduce interaction and collaboration. Turning employees into informants, curators and stakeholders ensures that information is up-to-date, enhancing teamwork and company’s culture. Cross-department/function collaboration allows employees to connect with experts outside their working area. For example, marketing can collaborate with customer support teams for new ideas or for solving customer issues.

Since intranets normally function as storehouses of resources and do not promote interaction or facilitate sharing and collaboration, content without context is currently one of their main problems. Moreover, according to a survey made by Forrester research: “Just 43% of enterprise employees access an intranet every day. Worse, 35% don’t even use their intranet on a monthly basis.” (Jive, 2015: p. 2). In order to avoid this, it is crucial to understand which formats or themes are the most important to each segment and implement a social collaboration technology to create a dynamic and interactive environment. Apart from wikis, that are per se a collaborative tool and forums, where discussions are promoted, the “Company” must consider the creation of private and public groups for co-working, global search aided by social graph analytics, social connection tools such as user profiles,

following, social bookmarks, tags and social updates and integration with other enterprise systems, such as CRM, CMS, email, cloud and desktop application.

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