KNOWLEDGE
TRANSLATION

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Knowledge Translation

WORKING METHODS FOR KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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Knowledge Translation in Practice

Introduction to the Series – Working Methods in Knowledge Management

Knowledge sciences as a discipline has a rich and diverse history dating back to the 1950s. In the past 70 years, the discipline has drawn theory and practice from economics, engineering, communications, learning sciences, technology, information sciences, psychology, social sciences, and business and organization management. To craft this discipline, we have developed our own language and terminologies, established our own peer-reviewed journals and built a rich research foundation, created a gray literature and established a series of networks and conferences. Over the decades there have been many knowledge management education programs, but there is no consistent curriculum and few have been sustained. It has been challenging for new practitioners to gain an understanding of the field. While the practice of knowledge management is growing around the world it has not yet achieved the expected organizational stature. For knowledge management to rise to the stature of other business functions and operations, it must be able to speak the language of business, align with and support the way the organization works.

This series is designed for business and knowledge management practitioners. Working Methods in Knowledge Management is a multi-year and multi-volume series designed to address each and all of the methods required to establish and sustain an organization-wide knowledge management function. The goal of the series is to provide a business perspective on each topic. Each book begins by grounding the method in the business context – then translates established business models and methods to a knowledge management context. It is often the case that this translation expands and extends the business model and method.

The knowledge management literature is rich with introductory handbooks, guidebooks, cookbooks, toolkits and practical introductions. This literature is an important starting point for anyone new to the discipline. We recommend any and all of these books as a way to build a fundamental understanding of the scope and coverage of the field. These texts will provide a good 10- to 20-page introduction to all of the key issues you need to be aware of as you embark on a new career in the field or have been assigned a new knowledge management role or responsibility. Once you have that grounding, though, we recommend that you look to the Working Methods in Knowledge Management texts as an intermediate source for understanding "What comes next? What now?"

Just as this series is not intended as a starting point for the field, neither it is an ending point. Each text is designed to support practical application, and to foster a broader discussion of practice. It is through practical application and extended discussion that we will advance theory and research. The editors anticipate that as practice expands, there will be a need to update the texts – based on what we are learning. Furthermore, the editors hope the texts are written in a way that allows business managers to extend their work to include knowledge management functions and assets. We will learn most from expanding the discussion beyond our core community.

Joint Enterprise, Mutual Engagement and a Shared Repertoire

From the outset, the publisher and the editors have established a new and different approach to designing and writing the books. Each text is supported by a team of authors who represent multiple and diverse views of the topic. Each team includes academics, practitioners and thought leaders. Every author has grappled with the topic in a real-world context. Every author sees the topic differently today than they did when the project began. Over the course of several months, through weekly virtual discussions, the scope and coverage were defined. Through mutual engagement and open sharing, each team developed a joint enterprise and commitment to the topic that is enduring. Every author learned through the discussion and writing process. Each project has resulted in a new shared repertoire. We practiced knowledge management to write about knowledge management. We "ate our own dog food."

Acknowledgments of Early Support

The series is a massive effort. If there is value in the series much of the credit must go to two individuals – Dr Elias Carayannis, George Washington University and Dr Manlio Del Giudice, University of Rome. It was Dr Carayannis who first encouraged us to develop a proposal for Emerald Publishers. Of course, this encouragement was just the most recent form of support from Dr Carayannis. He has been a mentor and coach for close to 20 years. It was Dr Carayannis who first taught me the importance of aligning knowledge management with business administration and organizational management. Dr Del Giudice has been generous with his guidance – particularly in setting a high standard for any and all knowledge management research and practice. We are grateful to him for his careful review and critique of our initial proposal. His patience and thoughtful coaching of colleagues is rare in any field. The field will reach its full potential as long as we have teachers and editors like Dr Del Giudice.

Preface

Overview of the Subject Matter

The focus of this book is knowledge translation. Knowledge translation is a core concept in knowledge sciences. It is the essence of articulating tacit knowledge, exchanging it with others and absorbing it. Knowledge translation is what humans do daily when they communicate or interact with others – it is a natural process. When communications are effective, knowledge translation has been successful, at least to a degree. The daily challenge is that we think communications have succeeded, but we never know. They may be successful on the surface – there is no apparent confusion, there is no obvious disagreement – but we do not know whether both the source and the targets in communication have fully understood one another.

This book makes the case for a broad understanding and practice of knowledge translation in everyday work. In the 21st century knowledge economy, knowledge is the primary factor of production. In the industrial economy, financial and physical capital were the critical production factors. Today, the core transaction in a knowledge economy is the exchange – or communication – of knowledge. Where communication fails or is suboptimal – so is the economic transaction. Just as we strive for optimization and equilibrium in an industrial economy market, so is the optimal exchange of knowledge in a knowledge economy.

For this reason, the authors argue that knowledge translation is a core concept that should be widely understood and practiced by everyone. Academics need to have a deep understanding of the concept and its behavior. But, it is more critical that everyday people understand and practice it in the knowledge economy.

The authors conducted extensive literature reviews and had in-depth discussions over a year to determine the state-of-the-art research and identify gaps. What became immediately apparent was the broader need to apply knowledge translation research to every field. A second review of the peer-reviewed and gray literature found little, if any, formally labeled knowledge translation research beyond health and medicine. However, the authors found related research that addressed communications, linguistic, social and other challenges. We noted that core semantic challenges exist with the definition and coverage of knowledge translation research across subject domains.

The authors highlight the need for a holistic understanding of the concept. Knowledge translation has a history of peer-reviewed research in the medical

research to practice field, evidence-based research and information dissemination. Much of the published literature is found in the medical sciences because of the importance of moving new research into practice and feeding practical results back to researchers. While this research is essential, it has two limitations: it focuses on (1) a macro-level translation process; and (2) the translation process without deep consideration of the communicated knowledge. This book aims to raise awareness of knowledge translation, develop a model and framework that can be applied to any subject area, and offer guidance on competencies and capabilities critical to effective knowledge translation.

Where the Topic Fits in the World Today

Like the other books in the series, this text draws from and integrates research and practice from several disciplines. The primary goal of the series is to create stronger ties between the business management and knowledge management disciplines. The topic of knowledge translation will be critical to any organization operating in a dynamic and complex knowledge economy. Every organization must build and maintain a capacity for knowledge translation – and the organization, division, department, team and individual levels. It is challenging because many competencies central to knowledge translation are treated simply as "soft skills" today. Every organization must realize the need to develop a knowledge translation capacity intentionally and deliberately.

The topic of knowledge translation is mature in a select few subject fields and at the macro level (i.e., across communities – research groups to clinical practitioners to public health teams to patients). But this level of focus does not allow us to see the actual translation activities at each step in the more extensive process. Instead, we only know whether the translation was successful, who it was successful for, and what the impact was. As a result, we have few opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of the "what," "how," and "why" of interactions and communications.

Knowledge is a highly complex concept. It is challenging to dive deeper into the "what," "how," and "why" without having a conceptual model and a framework for diagnosing the situation and assessing the results. The book presents a conceptual model of factors across several subject domains and converts the model to a working framework.

Where the Book Fits in the Literature Today

This is the 13th book in the Working Methods in Knowledge Management series. The text addresses the theoretical grounding of knowledge translation and its everyday practice. The authors draw inspiration and grounding from epistemology, psychology, philosophy, linguistics, economics, communications science and cultural studies. They also synthesized relevant research factors and findings into what we hope is a comprehensive and holistic conceptual model. As such, we hope the books provide a cross-disciplinary focus for discussion.

The knowledge management literature has a significant gap in knowledge translation. Rather than the deep treatment it deserves, given its centrality to the

21st century knowledge economy, it is often referred to as similar or equivalent to other similar-sounding concepts, such as knowledge exchange, knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer. While it is relevant, it is distinct from those concepts.

Many esteemed peer-reviewed journal articles, research reports and case studies on knowledge translation exist. To date, though, the authors have not found a book that treats the subject at the depth and breadth it deserves. We hope this book is a first step toward filling that gap.

The Intended Audience for the Book

This text is written for executives and business managers interested in raising awareness of and growing their organization's capacity for effective knowledge translation. It is also written for executives and managers who understand the importance of building those organizations' knowledge capabilities and developing their workforce's knowledge translation competencies. First, it means diagnosing current knowledge translation capabilities and competencies. Knowledge translation growth is grounded in everyday awareness and self-assessment. It means developing a desire to improve our individual, team, department and organizational knowledge translation capacities. Finally, the book is intended to guide managers who realize the critical role that knowledge translation plays in a dynamic and chaotic economic environment.

The book is also written for knowledge management practitioners and other professionals charged with improving knowledge communication, sharing, exchange and transfer within an organization and with an organization's business partners and stakeholders. The book is designed to bridge the gap in perspectives between knowledge managers and business managers, who must work together to adapt the knowledge translation practice to business practice.

The book is also written for academics searching for a conceptual model to integrate the fragmented research on this topic, and to those teaching academics searching for a textbook that bridges that theory and practice. A cursory review of the knowledge management curricula suggests a need for courses and guidance on designing those courses. Finally, it is also written for academics searching for research topics with significant real-world practical value.

Finally, the book is written for teachers, trainers and students searching for well-developed business cases for teaching, learning and illustrative purposes.

Structure of the Book

The book is organized into four sections and 16 chapters. Section 1 speaks to knowledge translation's critical role in the knowledge economy, the essential definition and characterization of knowledge translation, and presents a holistic and synthesized conceptual model. Section 2 explores knowledge translation capabilities and competencies. Section 3 describes a new approach to developing knowledge translation strategies suited to the knowledge economy. Section 4 also describes the new approach to assessing knowledge translation capacity. The challenges and opportunities presented by communication channels in the

21st century are also addressed in Section 3. Finally, Section 4 includes nine real-world knowledge translation case studies from several subject fields.

Each chapter is written like a project description. While the authors can explain how to establish the foundation for and how to conduct assessments, we cannot tell you what to do and what the result should be. Only each organization can make these choices and decisions. Each chapter provides background information on the topic and references to additional resources – both theory and practice. In addition, each chapter highlights the thought leaders and practitioners in that topic. Finally, the Appendix provides a high-level project plan that the reader can use to design their approach. Each Task and Subtask in the project plan traces back to a chapter in the book.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1 introduces the concept of knowledge capital and distinguishes it from financial and physical capital. In the industrial economy, financial and physical capital were the significant factors of production. In the knowledge economy, knowledge capital is the primary factor of production. To fuel a knowledge economy, knowledge must flow and flow effectively. Knowledge capital is inherently human. Its structures, properties and behaviors are different from financial or physical capital. The fundamental transactions in the knowledge economy are the human exchange of knowledge. Whether these transactions are successful or not depends on how knowledge is translated.

Chapter 2 focuses on knowledge translation, its history and its evolution. While it is fundamental to all forms of human communication, it has received the greatest scholarly attention from medical research and health sciences. This chapter traces the evolution of the study of knowledge translation from the 1950s to the present time. The authors note several limitations of current models, most notably lacking focus on knowledge as an asset. Finally, the chapter examines the relationship between knowledge translation and knowledge management, communication sciences, and linguistics.

Chapter 3 presents a conceptual model with four components, the elements that comprise each component, and critical questions for each element. The model highlights components and factors determining whether the translation activity will succeed or fail. The model calls out (1) the knowledge being shared; (2) the translation process; (3) the knowledge ecosystem; and (4) the scale and scope of the communication. The model fills a gap in the current literature. From the model, the authors derive a framework. The framework is grounded in the conceptual model, aligns vital questions, and calls out competencies and capabilities.

Chapter 4 distinguishes between competences and competencies. Knowledge translation is a communication – grounded in language – between two or more individuals. The more knowledge translation competence those individuals have developed, the more successful the exchange will be. This chapter identifies and explains the 12 competencies of the language model. The interdisciplinary knowledge translation model is presented, and its three competencies are discussed.

Chapter 5 distinguishes between competences and competencies. Knowledge translation is a communication – grounded in language – between two or more individuals. The more knowledge translation competence those individuals have developed, the more successful the exchange will be. This chapter identifies and explains the 12 competencies of the language model. The interdisciplinary knowledge translation model is presented, and its three competencies are discussed.

Chapter 6 considers current and future approaches to strategy design and development. First, the current approach to strategy and strategic planning is discussed. Then, a new approach to strategy design and strategic thinking is presented. Finally, the implications of strategic thinking for knowledge translation are discussed. Strategic thinking also means anticipating positive, negative and neutral futures. In this chapter, knowledge translation strategies are derived from the language translation model, the expert knowledge translation model and the interdisciplinary knowledge translation model.

Chapter 7 defines channels and explains the effects they have on knowledge translation. The authors define channels and provide common examples. Each technology either enables or constrains communication and interaction. The chapter reviews how different channels support multiple forms of expression and engagement. The chapter also considers the constraints channels impose. Channels may be affected by each of the four components of the framework – the scale the channel can support, the scope it can cover, the forms of knowledge it can handle and the extent of interactions and communications are vital factors.

Chapter 8 notes that just as knowledge translation requires new strategic thinking, so does it require a new approach to monitoring and assessment. Knowledge translation is continuous, immediate and progressive. This chapter considers how assessment changes from the industrial economy to the knowledge economy. The chapter explains how to leverage initial state diagnostics, middle-state learning and end-state review for improving knowledge translation. The authors also explain how to assess the four components in the knowledge translation context.

How the Book Impacts the Field

The authors hope the book will contribute to the communications literature by expanding the discourse about knowledge translation in business and everyday communications. We also hope it will create a new discourse around the knowledge translation capacity of both human and non-human (e.g., AI) actors. Finally, we hope the book expands the discourse beyond medical research to all other subject fields. The book anchors the discussion of knowledge translation in the context of knowledge economies, knowledge work and knowledge capital. We also hope the book provides a practical and real-world discussion of what we mean by tacit knowledge and the processes involved in making it explicit and visible. Ideally, the book adds rigor to the discussion of knowledge translation and creates an extended body of knowledge grounded in practice.