

Types of Knowledge and Modes of Knowledge Conversion

Subject: Management Information Systems (MIS)

Knowledge within an organization is broadly classified into two main types: **explicit knowledge** and **tacit knowledge**. Understanding these types and the ways they interact is crucial for effective knowledge management.

Types of Knowledge

1. Explicit Knowledge:

- Explicit knowledge is formal, structured, and easily documented. It can be expressed in words, numbers, and symbols and is readily shared through documents, manuals, databases, or reports. Examples include technical manuals, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and organizational policies. Explicit knowledge is often stored in knowledge management systems and is accessible to anyone within the organization.

3. Tacit Knowledge:

Tacit knowledge is personal, experiential, and difficult to articulate or codify. It resides within individuals and is often gained through experience and intuition. Examples include an employee's problem-solving skills, personal insights, or expertise in handling specific situations. Tacit knowledge is harder to capture but is crucial for decision-making and innovation.

Four Modes of Knowledge Conversion (Nonaka and Takeuchi Model)

The **SECI model** (Socialization, Externalization, Combination, and Internalization) describes how knowledge is created and shared within an organization by converting tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge and vice versa.

1. Socialization (*Tacit to Tacit*):

Explanation: Socialization involves the transfer of tacit knowledge through shared experiences and direct interaction. This mode does not rely on documentation but on building relationships and engaging in joint activities.

Example: An apprentice learning skills from a master craftsman by observing their work and participating in the tasks. Similarly, brainstorming sessions and informal discussions help transfer tacit insights between team members.

Key Tools: Mentoring, on-the-job training, shadowing, and team-building activities.

2. Externalization (Tacit to Explicit):

Explanation: Externalization is the process of converting tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge. It involves articulating personal insights, experiences, or know-how into clear, documented forms such as reports, manuals, or diagrams.

Example: A project manager documenting their project management strategies and lessons learned from experience. Another example is conducting interviews with experts to extract and record their insights.

Key Tools: Knowledge mapping, storytelling, interviews, and concept models.

3. Combination (Explicit to Explicit):

Explanation: Combination involves the synthesis of different explicit knowledge sources to create new explicit knowledge. It typically includes organizing, integrating, and processing existing information to generate more comprehensive or systematic knowledge.

Example: Combining various departmental reports to create an annual organizational performance review. Another example is integrating research findings from multiple studies into a single report or guide.

Key Tools: Databases, content management systems, and data analytics tools.

4. Internalization (Explicit to Tacit):

Explanation: Internalization is the process of absorbing explicit knowledge and transforming it into tacit knowledge through experience and practice. This step involves learning by doing, where individuals internalize documented information into their personal knowledge base.

Example: Employees studying company training manuals and applying the concepts in their daily tasks until they become second nature. Another example is software developers applying coding guidelines and best practices from a documented standard.

Key Tools: Training programs, e-learning, hands-on workshops, and simulation exercises.

Conclusion:

Effective knowledge management relies on understanding and leveraging both explicit and tacit knowledge. The SECI model provides a framework for organizations to facilitate knowledge conversion, ensuring that valuable insights are shared, documented, and internalized. By promoting socialization,

externalization, combination, and internalization processes, businesses can enhance collaboration, foster innovation, and improve overall performance.