



## Organizational Dynamics

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## Diagnosing and Fighting Knowledge-Sharing Hostility ☆

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## THE CONTEXT OF KNOWLEDGE-BASED COMPETITION

A report released by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1996 on *The Knowledge-Based Economy* estimated that more than half of the total gross domestic product (GDP) in the developed economies was knowledge-based. Today, production is increasingly based on the exploitation of ideas rather than material things—intangibles. An illustration of the increasing dematerialization of the economy is the fact that the average weight of a real dollar's worth of American exports is now less than half of its weight in 1970. In addition, knowledge workers account for eight out of every ten new jobs. Knowledge management (KM) is the hottest thing since reengineering.

According to Peter Drucker, the fact that knowledge has become *the* resource, rather than *a* resource, makes the new society different. Ideas become capital, “human resources” and even “human assets” turn into “investors” who put their human capital into an enterprise. Discussions of “core businesses” are largely replaced by discussions about “core competencies.” More than 40,000 Internet pages, more than 300 books and thousands of articles deal with knowledge management. KM is becoming more and more a way of life in successful organizations. It is an integral part of their day-to-day operations and an enabling methodology that integrates individual and corporate objectives. KM can also be a major competitive force-multiplier. Last year, for example, Hallmark Cards Inc. announced its goal to triple its business by 2010 through the effective use of the company's knowledge.

Utilization of state-of-the-art knowledge is now the critical ingredient for commercial viability. Yet a Forrester study showed that six out of seven companies investing in KM are doing so on faith, without even trying to measure the return. A new study conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers shows that three out of four larger companies work actively with KM, but do not really know what the notion covers. This is surprising when KM activities can produce tangible results and manageable outcomes and can improve business performance. As Kent Greenes, chief knowledge officer of Science Applications International Corporations (SAIC), known as the “knowledge management's top moneymaker,” expresses it: “There is no more ardent advocate of KM than I, but show me the money or kill it.” His results prove his beliefs. In 1998, Greenes and his team used KM to save BP Amoco \$700 million. The task, however, of integrating individual and collective knowledge into business operations has to be taken seriously and with a high degree of responsibility.

Robert Grant claims that if knowledge is the preeminent productive resource, and most knowledge is created by and stored within individuals, the principle management challenge is to establish mechanisms by which cooperating individuals can coordinate their activities in order to integrate their knowledge into productive activities. To gain a deeper understanding of this and other major issues facing contemporary KM, it is necessary to analyze some of the problems pervading the goal of knowledge-sharing.

## THE PROBLEM: KNOWLEDGE-SHARING

The enormous value potential of knowledge-sharing among members of an organization has long been recognized in many boardrooms, management textbooks and consulting reports. Many of the firms that have tried to capture this potential have, however, faced major defeats. Why? The most pervasive explanation offered in the literature to date has been that these organizations fail to align their incentive systems with their ambition of creating corporate value through knowledge-sharing. The explanation also alludes to the fact that while KM technology is giving companies more sophisticated and easier ways to break barriers, knowledge-sharing still depends on people.

That is true. However, we go a step further and argue that failures arising from the launch and implementation of knowledge-sharing initiatives in both larger and smaller organizations are due to the less recognized fact that firms and individuals in firms are inherently hostile to knowledge-sharing. Whereas in some organizations it is enough for management to provide the right incentives, goals and technology for knowledge-sharing to flourish, in others this is far from the case. In the first type of organization, fundamentally positive attitudes towards knowledge and knowledge work prevail, whereas in the latter, individual knowledge is not seriously considered to be a vital corporate asset. In the first type of company, management creates conditions and stimulates the behavior needed for efficient knowledge-sharing among employees and across functions and hierarchies. The primary aim of management interventions in knowledge-sharing within strongly hostile environments, however, is different—serving only to break down the hostility itself rather than achieve efficient knowledge-sharing. In this process, managers have to act against the recommendation of management intervention in what could be labeled as “normal” situations.

Since management interventions suitable in some situations are counterproductive in others, it is crucial to be able to diagnose the level of knowledge-sharing hostility in the organization. This article identifies three parameters under which the knowledge-sharing environment influences the individual knowledge-sharing behavior. These are (1) the behavior of knowledge transmitters; (2) the behavior of knowledge receivers; and (3) the transmitter's and receiver's shared understanding of the content of the knowledge. Managers can use these parameters to first assess the level of knowledge-sharing hostility in their organization and second, decide on appropriate actions for reducing the hostility level.

## FROM RANDOM TO SYSTEMATIC KNOWLEDGE-SHARING

By systematically sharing knowledge among its members, an organization avoids redundancy in knowledge production, secures diffusion of best practice and enables problem solving by making relevant personal knowledge available to the problem-solving process regardless of where the knowledge is originally obtained and stored in the organization. Various arguments in the KM literature underscore the view that knowledge-sharing contributes substantially to creating competitive advantages.

What is new in this observation? Employees have always sought to cover their lack of knowledge by asking their colleagues, getting training from more experienced colleagues, receiving supervision from their superiors, etc. Knowledge-sharing is not at all new. However, systematizing knowledge-sharing activities is a rather modern phenomenon. Traditional and self-emerging knowledge-sharing is flawed by its ineffectiveness and depends on pure luck. It is:

- restricted by people's tendency to merely seek missing answers in the local environment,
- random in terms of access to the best knowledge in the organization versus just finding a satisfying solution, and
- fragmented, since individual preferences determine whether knowledge is sought.

The new aspect is not the knowledge-sharing process, but its systematic management, with a strong focus on creating benefits for the organization rather than benefits for individuals in the organization. Connection, not collection—this is what KM must offer if it is to make money. Examples of this type of management can be found in intranets, expert databases, voluntary Yellow Pages, Virtual Teamworks at BP Amoco, White Papers at Johns Hopkins University & Hospital, Online Knowledge Universe and Knowledge Street at Xerox Corp., and Business-to-Employee Portal at LEGO, among others.

Ideally, systematic knowledge-sharing relies on individuals' autonomous and constructive behavior because:

- Knowledge is asymmetrically distributed in any organization. The key actors who possess the insight necessary for deciding on the specific knowledge-sharing potential are the knower and the one(s) in need of knowledge. Management can only identify a small proportion of this potential and cannot, therefore, even have a mediating function.
- Knowledge-sharing depends on the willingness of individuals to signal possession of knowledge and share it when requested.
- Efficient knowledge-sharing is a “contact sport,” involving direct contact and commitment on both sides of the exchange.
- Monitoring whether knowledge-sharing actually takes place in an efficient manner is difficult.

Development within information technology (IT) has been instrumental in paving the way for placing systematic knowledge-sharing on the corporate agenda. The fascination with technology has its dark side. Today, four out of five consultants think of technology when they work with knowledge-sharing. However, experience shows that IT alone cannot solve the challenge of systematic knowledge-sharing. It is only one ingredient among a number of others.

The real challenge in systematizing knowledge-sharing is not to deal only with explicit knowledge, but also to secure the utilization of tacit knowledge in the organization. The ability of IT to store and allow access to huge amount of codified knowledge across continents and time zones needs to be supplemented with the dynamics of exchanging tacit knowledge, e.g., knowledge that is not made explicit. Xerox is one of the top five “Most Admired Knowledge Enterprises” chosen by senior executives at Fortune's Global 500 companies and leading KM practitioners in a survey sponsored by *Business Intelligence* and the *Journal of Knowledge Management*. The key reason for Xerox' success is that—rather than emphasizing the IT infrastructure of knowledge-sharing and forcing the employees to either adapt or fail—Xerox has gone to great lengths to tailor its KM initiatives to people by understanding the social dynamics behind knowledge-sharing. According to internal knowledge management experts, 80% of Xerox's KM systems are people-driven and only 20% involve technology as an enabling mechanism. A concrete

internal example illustrating Xerox’ efforts to fit technology to people is the company’s DocuShare project. During its early design stage, Xerox hired anthropologists to investigate how scientists at the laboratories generally worked, both individually and in groups. It was also important for Xerox to understand how scientists define criteria about what knowledge to hoard and what to share. Based on these investigations, Xerox designed the technological specifications for DocuShare.

BP Amoco’s “Virtual Teamwork” tool was an expensive investment for the company. What made it work was that BP Amoco spent as much money on coaching and training as it did on the technology. Similarly, LEGO’s Web manager Ole Magnus Petersen points out that technical challenges go hand-in-hand with having a corporate culture where providing information is as important as using information. Although LEGO introduced its intranet in 1997, the company realizes today that it is not enough to use the intranet as merely a news medium. In addition, there is a great potential to efficiently employ the intranet as a means for KM and e-learning. LEGO will therefore launch its business-to-employee portal in 2002, aiming at better internal knowledge-sharing, and realizing that this is a prerequisite for surviving global competition.

Outside of the difficulties caused by the characteristics of tacit knowledge, individual behavior and attitudes are other important factors in any knowledge-sharing activity. It is perfectly rational that individuals are reluctant to share knowledge. One’s knowledge and ability to solve problems in the organization comprise one’s trade value. Why should one deteriorate this value by sharing knowledge that would allow other persons in the organization to conduct the same procedures and routines as oneself and probably with the same level of mastery? Intuitively, this does not seem to be a sound business practice for the individual employee. It might be good for the company, but what is in it for the individual? Many employees ask similar questions, putting the challenge of knowledge-sharing high on the management agenda.

A study of more than 700 U.S. companies shows that only a small portion of corporate knowledge is in a sharable form; the majority is retained in employees’ minds. In the experience of David Owens, vice president of KM at Unisys Corp., only 2% of information is actually written down —the rest is in people’s heads. In order to make knowledge-sharing initiatives successful, one therefore needs a good understanding of the links between individual behavior and the level of knowledge-sharing hostility. By diagnosing hostility in individual behavior, it becomes possible to apply the right means for increasing systematic knowledge-sharing and releasing its full value potential.

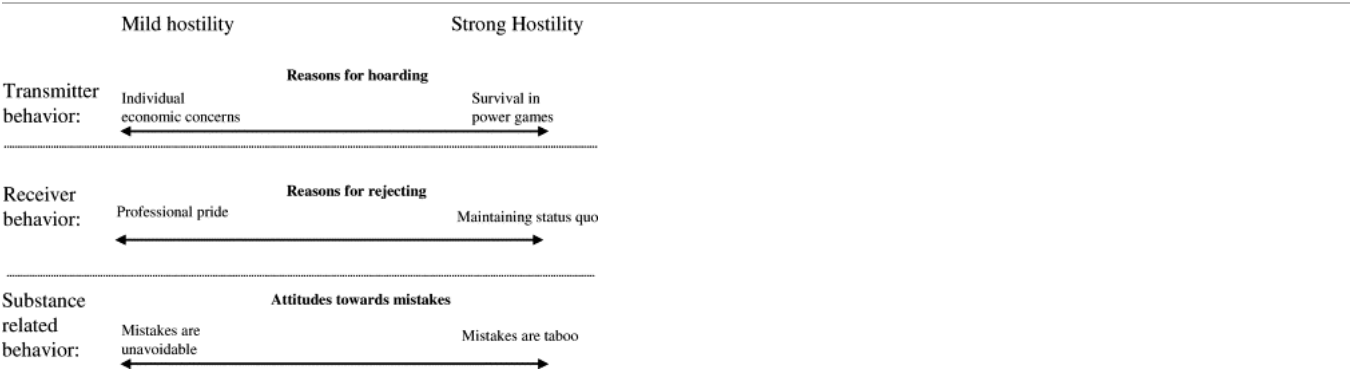
DIAGNOSING KNOWLEDGE-SHARING HOSTILITY

Knowledge-sharing hostility is expressed in individual behavior and attitudes towards knowledge-sharing. The level of knowledge-sharing hostility in the organization can be assessed by evaluating the following parameters:

- the behavior of the knowledge transmitter—the person who possesses knowledge which someone else in the organization is demanding,
- the behavior of the knowledge receiver—the person who needs knowledge input from somebody else in the organization, and
- the behavior of both the receiver and transmitter in relation to the substance of the knowledge which may be shared.

Individual behavior related to knowledge transmission and reception, as well as to the very substance of the specific knowledge-sharing activity can be positioned on a dimensional range from mild hostility to strong hostility. We have identified three indicators that are relevant for assessing the three types of behavior (Fig. 1). We suggest that:

- To diagnose the level of knowledge-sharing hostility on the transmitter side, managers need to carefully diagnose the transmitter’s reasons for hoarding knowledge.
- To diagnose the level of knowledge-sharing hostility on the receiver side, managers need to find out why organizational members comply with the “Not-Invented-Here” (NIH) syndrome.
- To diagnose the level of knowledge-sharing hostility on both the transmitter and the receiver side, it is helpful to detect the dominant attitude towards mistakes in the organization.



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FIGURE. 1. DIAGNOSIS OF KNOWLEDGE-SHARING HOSTILITY

On the basis of the assessment of these components, managers can select appropriate means for breaking down knowledge-sharing hostility in their organization and increase value creation through knowledge-sharing. In the following sections, we elaborate on knowledge hoarding, the Not-Invented-Here syndrome and the attitudes towards mistakes. We outline in more detail some of these means before suggesting management actions for moving the organization towards a lower level of knowledge-sharing hostility.

### Knowledge Hoarding

Transmitter behavior can be expressed by her/his willingness to share knowledge with other organizational members on request. When dealing with tacit knowledge, it is crucial to remember that the decision to share or to hoard knowledge is largely individual. The decision to hoard knowledge is destructive from an organizational point of view but, at the same time, it is often rational and well justified from the perspective of the individual. Potential knowledge transmitters may choose to hoard their knowledge for a number of reasons.

#### Potential loss of value and bargaining power and protection of individual competitive advantages

An individual's market value and bargaining power is related to the quality and value of the knowledge he or she possesses. This concept is deeply rooted in people's minds, particularly in the minds of knowledge workers. For example, one's incentive for spending years on educating oneself is justified through a belief that this will result in a higher market value compared with others without high level of education. Much of this value is usually "hard won," sometimes through failures and frustration. This creates a strong feeling of personal ownership of the accumulated knowledge. In addition, organizational structures and incentives may, in some situations, promote a tendency among units and individuals to optimize their own rewards and accomplishments and, as a consequence, consciously or unconsciously hide knowledge from others.

#### Reluctance to spend time on knowledge-sharing

Knowledge-sharing is a costly process, demanding a lot of resources to either articulate as much of the knowledge as possible or transfer it in a tacit form, or both. The time spent on sharing knowledge with others could be invested in what may appear to be more productive activities for the individual. Additionally, employees are often already overwhelmed by a number of tasks. Therefore, contributing to a knowledge-sharing system—not just within a department, but also across the organization—is often perceived as an additional responsibility or burden.

#### Fear of hosting "knowledge parasites"

The main reason why an individual possesses some knowledge to which others desire access is that the knowledge possessor has put an above-average effort into acquiring this knowledge. Consequently, he/she may not be willing to share the return on this investment with someone who has put less or no effort into her/his own development. In other words, a request for knowledge-sharing can also mask a lack of effort and/or talent on the side of the individual who makes the request.

#### Avoidance of exposure

Not all knowledge is robust or presents a good solution to a problem. By hoarding knowledge, individuals protect themselves against external assessment of the quality of their knowledge. This can relate to situations where (a) the knowledge possessor already knows that she/he can only offer an inferior solution, or (b) the knowledge possessor does not believe strongly in the quality of the possessed knowledge.

#### Strategy against uncertainty

Knowledge is always developed in a specific context and is only seldom perceived by the receiver in the same way as intended by the transmitter. There is a danger that the knowledge receiver could misinterpret the message sent by the transmitter, either unconsciously or consciously, in a way that was not intended by the transmitter. Such misinterpretations could lead to negative consequences for the transmitter and her/his network. Due to this uncertainty regarding how the receiver will perceive the shared knowledge, employees and managers are often highly cautious about revealing detailed information and transmitting relevant knowledge.

#### High respect for hierarchy and formal power

High respect for hierarchy and formal power can lead to two types of knowledge-hoarding behavior. First, subordinates intentionally hoard knowledge, knowing that their superiors would dislike and probably even punish subordinates who appear to be more knowledgeable than they are. Second, managers may deliberately hoard their knowledge to maintain power. For them, knowledge could be a source of more power rather than a basis for taking optimal managerial decisions. Inequality in status among organizational participants can be a strong inhibitor for sharing knowledge, especially from lower levels to higher levels. Sometimes managers have difficulties accepting that they can learn from employees at lower levels. This barrier is reinforced when the participants draw on distinct knowledge bases and ways of analyzing and assessing information.

In organizations that are less hostile to knowledge-sharing, knowledge hoarding is mainly an instrument supporting individual economic concerns. In these organizations, the assessment usually only scores high on the first three dimensions—namely protection of individual competitive advantages, sub-optimization of resource allocation, and fear of hosting "knowledge parasites." In organizations that are highly hostile towards knowledge-sharing, features such as avoidance of exposure, hoarding knowledge as a strategy for coping with uncertainty, and focus on hierarchical structures and involvement in power games are also found. In the framework of old-school thinking, people are being

measured by what they know and do individually. This automatically invites knowledge hoarding and perpetuates a behavior of holding one's cards close to the chest. Organized collaboration and sharing knowledge are key words in today's successful organizations. They work towards breaking the "knowledge is power" paradigm and associating the power with those who become a knowledge source by sharing what they know. In this culture, people who do not share become ignored, fail to be promoted or are "siloed." This type of KM requires both significant, ongoing change and consistent leadership.

### Rejecting Knowledge

Knowledge-rejecting behavior is captured in the notion of the "Not-Invented-Here" syndrome, the resistance towards using knowledge created elsewhere. Some of the main reasons for rejecting knowledge are as follows.

#### Preference for developing own ideas and knowledge

External knowledge is often rejected because it is more prestigious to create new knowledge instead of reusing knowledge invented elsewhere. Renewal of ideas is often underestimated, and inventing is favored. There is, however, significant potential to be exploited in building on existing foundations by adding new ideas, new skills and new ways of doing things to create something new and better.

#### General doubt regarding the validity and reliability of the knowledge

Often knowledge receivers do not trust the quality of the transferred knowledge, possibly because they do not trust the source. In this case, they prefer to develop the specific knowledge themselves instead of going through a process of validation of external knowledge before integrating it into their knowledge pool. Since knowledge receivers do not always possess the knowledge necessary to assess the quality of external knowledge, they need to trust that the offered knowledge is the best they can get, and that they can base their actions on it.

#### Strong group affiliation

A strong group affiliation is not necessarily related to the ability to work in teams, especially not in cross-functional teams. Whereas a team is created to work on a particular project and is associated with collective responsibility, a group could be a rigid structural configuration that is predetermined and maintained over time. Whereas teamwork requires sharing knowledge, there are hundreds of companies where departments are merely oriented towards their own tasks and goals without grasping the idea of the company as a whole. The idea of everyone winning by sharing knowledge is still alien in these companies. In older companies with low employee turnover, there are usually long lasting relationships among organizational members. This makes individuals strongly attached to groups both emotionally and in terms of formal membership. As a consequence, managers and employees tend to resist new ideas coming from outside, because the new information and feedback might fracture not only the stability and familiarity of the particular group, but also the organizational order and continuity which they value and respect highly.

On the other hand, knowledge is shared continuously not merely within teams, but very much across them in successful companies. Microsoft Corp., for example, is based on teams whose members learn not only from each other, but also from other teams, from customers and from past mistakes. This takes place in a context where teams are continually pushed by senior management to imagine the future. In a similar vein, General Electric Co. started systematically sharing best practices with other companies in 1988. If people understand that their goals are directly aligned with those of the company, there is a greater chance that they will share knowledge.

#### Group thinking

Knowledge-rejecting behavior might also take the shape of group thinking—where a stable group, such as a project group or a management team, believes that it possesses a monopoly of knowledge in its field and therefore rejects new ideas from outsiders. Under the motto "Why change a winner?" these groups often perceive the allocation of resources to alter the way of doing things according to new external knowledge as unnecessary or even disturbing.

In organizations that are less hostile to knowledge-sharing, doubt about the validity and reliability of external knowledge, and a preference for developing own knowledge are usually associated with organizational members' professional pride. These organizations tend to score high on these two parameters. At the opposite end of the hostility continuum are those organizations that are much more hostile towards knowledge-sharing. They strongly desire to maintain the status quo, sometimes explicitly, but more often under the mask of cosmetic changes. Strong group affiliation—which is not to be confused with team spirit—as well as group thinking indicate an increasing level of knowledge-sharing hostility.

#### Attitudes towards Mistakes and Failures

Mistakes and failures have long been recognized as a vital source of insight that is much too valuable to be buried and consciously kept secret. Mistakes and failures are often the result of exploring unknown territory, and hence also allow for development of new insights. These insights offer huge learning potential, especially to later expeditions into the unknown. In other words, learning from mistakes is highly valuable not only at the individual, but also at the group and organizational levels. Organizational reality is, however, often different: individuals do not freely and openly share knowledge about the mistakes they have made. Why?

#### Uncertainty about colleague reaction

It is unavoidable that most employees feel vulnerable when exposing their mistakes to colleagues and peers. Will they use the opportunity to attach the mistake to the messenger or exploit the opportunity to learn from it?

### Preventing career damage

Will the managers remember the mistake at the next salary negotiation, or will they ignore the messenger's name when considering promotions? Is the cost of mistakes really seen as a training investment from which the company can obtain a positive harvest? Companies can offer the individual who has made a mistake the opportunity to apply her/his new knowledge, which was perhaps obtained at a high cost, in a similar situation. Alternatively, the learning benefits can be harvested by using the case as only an example of how things should not be done, while the person becomes a pariah in the organization. The uncertainty about future negative consequences for career development is a natural and strong consideration that often prevents individuals from admitting mistakes and failures.

### "Who is to blame?" culture

As we have already argued, mistakes can be powerful sources of learning opportunities. However, they are often not seen in this perspective. Even worse, talking about mistakes is taboo in numerous organizations. Many of these organizations are embedded in a coercive bureaucracy, a structural configuration that is based on positional authority, top-down command and control and autocratic strategy development. Others are preoccupied with a strong focus on tasks and rules at the cost of orientation towards human capital. The strong emphasis on rules and regulations, combined with an enormous focus on tasks, constrains innovative behavior. When non-innovative behavior is the norm, it is only logical to ask the question "Who is to blame?" and to punish failures. This dramatically increases the level of hostility to knowledge-sharing at the individual, group and organizational levels. It also increases the risk of repeating one's own and others' mistakes.

### Lack of action and initiative

Contrary to the belief that "if you act, you also fail," a belief summarized under the motto "if you don't act, there is no danger of making mistakes" often underlies organizational reality.

In less hostile knowledge-sharing environments, mistakes are accepted as unavoidable and, within certain limits, may even be a valuable organizational asset. However, employees may still have some doubts that prevent them from openly and freely sharing insights about their failures, mainly due to the potential for future negative consequences. In organizations that are highly hostile to knowledge-sharing, mistakes and failures are taboo. They are covered up and only shared in unavoidable situations and with an absolutely unavoidable audience. In these organizations, people apply various strategies against making (or realizing) mistakes at all. If one makes a mistake and realizes it, the aim immediately becomes to hide it and discard the responsibility as fast as possible. At this upper end of knowledge-sharing hostility, managers' and employees' ways of thinking are framed in the question "Who to blame?" instead of "What can we learn?" Lack of action represents extreme knowledge-sharing hostility within the organization.

## FIGHTING KNOWLEDGE-SHARING HOSTILITY

When organizational knowledge is systematically managed, knowledge-sharing processes are more efficient. Conscious managerial actions become even more important when considering the level of knowledge-sharing hostility: actions appropriate for one level of knowledge-sharing hostility either cannot achieve a noticeable effect or are directly damaging when applied at other levels of knowledge-sharing hostility.

In organizations with mild knowledge-sharing hostility, knowledge transmitters' behavior is associated with the usual individual economic concerns, knowledge receivers' actions are in the domain of their perceptions of professional pride, and both transmitters and receivers approach mistakes as unavoidable. In organizations with a high level of knowledge-sharing hostility, knowledge transmitters are concerned about surviving in complicated power games, knowledge receivers aim at maintaining *status quo*, and mistakes and failures are taboo for both transmitters and receivers.

### Encouraging and Stimulating Knowledge-sharing

When the level of hostility is relatively low, there is good potential for harvesting the benefits of systematic knowledge-sharing. In these organizations, management can concentrate on *encouraging* knowledge-sharing by providing the right infrastructure for knowledge-sharing, influencing the environment, and aligning incentives for knowledge-sharing with human resources practices and overall company strategies. Through these methods, management can overcome the existing knowledge-sharing hostility in the firm and *stimulate* the desired knowledge-sharing behavior among employees. In this way, the organization moves closer to the ideal situation of systematized knowledge-sharing enabled by autonomous and constructive knowledge-sharing behavior.

It is helpful for managers to take into account the following specificities of a mildly hostile knowledge-sharing environment.

### Managerial actions related to knowledge transmitters' behavior

- Relationships based on trust are truly needed for organizational members to share something they know with others and in a way that the knowledge receivers can actually use it. Most people will not risk sharing what they know without a feeling of trust. There is no point in neglecting or postponing the set of initiatives and activities related to developing a trust-based culture. This must be faced as a vital issue at the very beginning of any KM partnership. Building and maintaining trust across the organization is the key for employees to internalize

KM ideas and tools, because knowledge-sharing depends entirely on people. Another issue to consider here is that often people who are put together under extreme pressure will naturally trust each other. As expressed by David Snowden, Director of IBM Global Services' Institute for Knowledge Management in the United Kingdom, people in such groups trust each other completely for the period of the particular assignment and for quite a long time afterwards.

- Individuals and teams that have invested significant resources in building up specific competencies may not be willing to share their knowledge unless they are provided the right incentives for doing so. They expect a fair, if not a high, return on their investment of time and knowledge. Unless knowledge-sharing is built into individuals' expectations and is reflected in reward mechanisms, sharing is not likely to take place.
- Individuals can and should be rewarded for proposing a new good practice, writing down their experience and putting it onto the company intranet, spending time on contributing to problem solving in other parts of the organization than their own, etc.
- The rewards need not necessarily be monetary; they can also be in terms of organizational recognition. In 1996, Xerox introduced the Eurika system, an intranet communication system that helps 23,000 repair technicians around the world share repair tips. At present, the technicians have access to more than 5,000 tips through their laptops, but they resisted the idea of being financially rewarded for their contributions in favor of reputation-based rewards. Another way to provide recognition is to twin knowledge-sharing with an efficient feedback system. Wendi Bukowitz, Director of Intellectual Asset Management for PricewaterhouseCoopers, Chicago, points out that one of the reasons why people do not contribute is because they feel they are just dropping their knowledge into a big, black hole. Does anybody care that it is there? Does anyone use it? It is meaningful to people to know when their contribution is used, making feedback mechanisms important.

#### Managerial actions related to knowledge receivers' behavior

- Managers need to stimulate trust in order to overcome knowledge-rejecting behavior and create situations where cognitive-based trust relations can be developed in the organization.
- In addition, incentives should be aligned with the various interests of the organization in stimulating members to reuse knowledge—for example, by introducing a prize for “Not invented here but we did it anyway,” “Stolen with pride,” “Copied with passion,” or other knowledge reuse initiatives.

#### Managerial actions associated with content-related behavior

- Employees' positive attitudes towards mistakes as important learning opportunities need to be cultivated.
- Individuals also need to be motivated to share learning points from reflection and self-reflection on ongoing or finalized projects with their colleagues. For example, BP Amoco has successfully adapted the “after-action review” from a U.S. Army practice: employees are asked to take just 15 minutes to ask four stock-taking questions when completing a project: What was supposed to happen? What actually happened? Why is there a difference? What can we learn from this?

#### Managerial actions addressing all three dimensions

- Managers can set a good example by sharing their own knowledge.
- The use of positive examples and success stories that can make employees aware of the relevance of knowledge-sharing is also vital.
- Finally, the communication of clear overall goals that create a high degree of transparency regarding top management expectations is absolutely necessary.

#### Forcing and Imposing Knowledge-sharing

The challenges found in fighting strong knowledge-sharing hostility are even bigger. The impediments in such an environment are hidden and subterranean and call for an entirely different set of managerial actions. Here it would be more meaningful to talk about a cultural *revolution* than using a management tool set for improving the existing situation. Bearing in mind that organizational members strongly resist engaging in knowledge-sharing activities, the process of knowledge-sharing should be directly *forced*. This is not to say that forcing mechanisms generally lead to efficient knowledge-sharing, but rather that these mechanisms are able and needed to initiate a transformation process from a strongly hostile to a mildly hostile knowledge-sharing environment. A set of managerial actions appropriate for fighting knowledge-sharing hostility in its upper end include.

#### Managerial actions related to knowledge transmitters' and receivers' behavior

- Assign employees to work on tasks and projects that cannot be fulfilled without highly intensive knowledge-sharing. Split more complex projects into smaller steps and assign people to handle them.
- Give clear instructions on what to share with whom. Whenever coming across the option of leveraging existing knowledge in the organization, managers should instruct the transmitter and the receiver to allocate the needed resources for knowledge-sharing.

- It is not enough that the sharing includes only ideas and solutions. Underlying assumptions and reasoning must also be made available.
- Exploit the advantages of a strong group affiliation consciously and assign employees from various functions and departments to work on joint projects. Make it very clear from the beginning that one of the evaluation criteria will be the level of knowledge-sharing among individuals from different departments.
- Make sure that external knowledge is used and appreciated. In order to secure the effect, follow up and control the results.
- Follow up on the process and consequences of knowledge-sharing initiatives and activities whenever possible by both monitoring the processes and checking the results.

#### Managerial actions associated with content-related behavior

- Introduce clear measures for punishing lack of initiative and attempts to hide mistakes. Possible measures include exposure and correction in public, larger (unpaid) workloads, demotion and, if necessary, firing.
- Be aware that forcing knowledge-sharing is a high-risk approach that can backfire if not applied in a patient and consequent manner based on the principle of creating trust-based organizational climates through transparency and consistency.
- Managerial actions must be consistent. For example, punishing some for lack of initiative, while not punishing others, would lead to confusion and invalidate the ambition to activate mistakes in the value creation process.

#### Managerial actions addressing all three dimensions

- The messages sent by management should be highly consistent with its actions.
- Remember that in the process of transforming an organization that is strongly hostile to knowledge-sharing to a less hostile one, artifacts, values, and basic assumptions are questioned. This aspect might cause additional fracturing of the organization. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure a sense of continuity in other parts of organizational life while working intentionally on those related directly to knowledge-sharing.

The overall aim should be to consciously initiate the process of knowledge-sharing. As soon as barriers are broken down throughout the organization, some more advanced instruments can be applied and more efficient knowledge-sharing can be achieved.

#### CONCLUSION

This article suggests concrete methods for diagnosing the level of knowledge-sharing hostility in organizations. It identifies a continuum of possibilities between mild and strong knowledge-sharing hostility by taking into consideration (a) knowledge transmitters' behavior; (b) knowledge receivers' behavior; and (c) behavior related to the substance of shared knowledge. We suggest that there is no "standard" wisdom about KM or unified recipe of how to develop knowledge-sharing activities. Concrete managerial actions to fight knowledge-sharing hostility in the two poles of the continuum between mild and strong hostility are outlined, based on an argument that mild hostility towards knowledge-sharing can be overcome or reduced through encouraging and stimulating employees to share knowledge. Aligning incentives and structures and developing a knowledge-sharing culture is a promising strategy in such a context. Organizations with a high level of knowledge-sharing hostility, on the other hand, develop advanced immune defense mechanisms that "protect" them against these stimulating initiatives: they will be immediately detected and "killed" by the strongly hostile organizational immune system. In organizations with strong hostility, managers should aim at forcing employees to start sharing knowledge instead of implementing ideal models for knowledge-sharing. At the same time, managerial actions needed for forcing the organization into the direction of becoming less hostile will be directly damaging if applied in a mildly hostile organization.

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