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Deepened, holistic viewpoints on current issues.
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Dear Readers

A warm welcome to the first issue of JPR-Focus of the year 2025.

The shortage of skilled labour is an important issue in business and politics. Despite all the support measures and efforts, there is no improvement on the horizon. The lack of success of these measures has left the persons in charge perplexed, even helpless.

Like many things, this situation has not just arisen now. Rather, it is the result of decades of omissions, misunderstandings and even ignorance. Now the situation has become acute and the problems need to be tackled at their roots. The main question for many, 'What are the roots?', has never been properly addressed.

However, looking for culprits and tracing the history of how this situation came about will not get us very far. It should suffice to bring clarity about the different types of knowledge and to understand their significance for our actions. In this way, we can bring knowledge to life and keep it alive in an organisation with the appropriate methodological options. This is how we get out of this impasse.

These are the goals that this report aims to achieve.

I hope you enjoy reading it.

Kind regards

Yours Jean-Pierre Rickli

Knowledge management
or
How does knowledge come alive in my organisation?

1. Introduction

The shortage of skilled labour is an important issue in business and politics. However, looking for culprits and tracing the origins of this situation will not get us very far. It is indeed the scientific way to investigate the matter to the bottom, to understand the why and the mistakes made. From this, we can learn what to avoid and introduce corrective measures.

This path is certainly adequate and satisfies our profound desire to understand things and continue learning. But the problem with this path is that it is a long one. Though, the right specialists are needed today, or even better, yesterday rather than the day after tomorrow. We therefore need to find other ways that will bring us to quicker and, above all, sustainable solutions.

Many company bosses understand that things have to move quickly. They are looking for tangible solutions. They are acting aggressively on the job market. They are trying to outbid the competition with generous offers. They are thinking about solutions to retain specialists. They are calling on the public and schools to train more specialists. They try to attract people from abroad and demand flexible entry and labour regulations.

Although many of these measures are fundamentally correct, people are looking in the wrong place. The importance of specialists is slowly being recognised, which is a good thing. As the shortage has now affected practically all areas of work, specialists are being sought in all sectors. It is being overlooked that the number of junior staff is given. This makes it almost impossible to shift the supply on the market. Who should you follow? The loudest? That will hardly be successful in the long term.

Some have also recognised this and are relying on new technologies such as artificial intelligence. This approach seems promising, but is only a short-term stop-gap solution. In the long term, it will only exacerbate the situation, as it does not address the roots of the problem at all.

It looks like a real dead end. How can we get out of it?
As is so often the case in life, the answer is a simple one that is often not that easy to realise. Why? Because we have to question many things, often change our thinking and behavioural habits and leave our comfort zone.
Before we can even take steps to solve the problem, we need to realise several things. Here are the most important ones

- The shortage of skilled labour is actually a shortage of knowledge.
- Information is not knowledge.
- Having skills does not necessarily mean that one has knowledge.
- There are different types and levels of knowledge. Knowledge is specific and not all of it is used in every activity.
- Knowledge is a living thing. Each type of knowledge has its own lifespan or life cycle.

This understanding is not actually new. It has just been pushed into the background. Recalling it, can help us to initiate the right actions and get us out of the impasse. This breathes life back into the knowledge in the respective organisation.

This report is intended to make a contribution to this.

2. Clarification of terms

As we have seen, it is necessary to clear up a few misunderstandings, confusions and linguistic ambiguities before getting lost in action.

2.1 What exactly is the skills shortage?

Let's call a spade a spade: the shortage of skilled labour is a lack of knowledge. Full stop!

How is this possible in our highly praised society, with our high-quality education system including recognised schools and our highly efficient economy?

My provocative statement is not simply plucked out of the air, but is based on everyday experiences and observations that anyone can or does make. Here are a few examples.

You are in a specialist shop and have a wish that is part of the range but not standard. You are served and now it's time to pay for your wish. Unfortunately, the system doesn't seem to work. After several attempts, the colleague is asked. After long consultations and attempts, the request has to be cancelled. Your train is about to leave. The staff have learnt how to be controlled by the system, but not how to control the system. This last knowledge is missing.

You have requested a visit from a professional insurance adviser. Very often the conversation follows a familiar pattern. The advisor presents the standard offer. You are then asked which variant you would be interested in. You are out of luck if no alternative fully fulfils your wishes. You will hardly get an alternative proposal on the same day, if you get one at all. Knowledge is also lacking here.

What is the first thing the installation staff do when they stand in front of your faulty device and you have explained what your problem is? Pull out the tablet, call a colleague or surf the internet to find out what the problem might be. The knowledge is completely lacking because even the routine task is very challenging.

In the 1970s, the personnel structure of an organisation was defined as follows: 2% managers, around 50% non-helpful staff, around 40% billiard ball people, so called because they always need a push to do something and their duration of action depends on the strength of the push. The rest, usually between 4 and 8%, are the 'useful idiots' because they work altruistically. These people have the knowledge and push the billiard ball people. They make the difference between a good company with about 6% or more and a bad one with only 4% of them. A company with only 2% of useful idiots is about to disappear from the market.

Today, the proportion of 'useful idiots' at most companies is well below 4%. The term 'good' has also taken on a new meaning. A company is good if it is merely less bad than the others. None is absolutely good; they are all bad. A harsh reality, despite all the certificates and marketing slogans.

The solution to the shortage of skilled workers therefore means re-integrating knowledge into the organisations. However, the understanding of what knowledge is must first be clarified.

2.2 Information is not knowledge

We often hear or read that we live in an information society. That is true.
Many people talk about a knowledge society and compare the amount of knowledge available today with that of Leonardo da Vinci. They try to prove that such all-rounders are no longer possible today. However, much of what is new is merely information.

Previous generations and cultures are often ridiculed. We praise our technical superiority and our understanding of details that we consider to be knowledge. What we cannot understand or explain is declared a coincidence. Yet we continue to puzzle over how the Egyptians built the pyramids or how the stones of Stonehenge were transported. Only now can we prove that the statements made by the Mayans, Egyptians and others about the solar and star system are correct. But we have no clue how they came to this conclusion.

For many, the saying 'We are drowning in a sea of information and thirsting for knowledge' is a sad reality.

Basically, the following distinctions can be made:

- Information comes from outside and is used to build up knowledge. Information can be exchanged and passed on. It is dependent on the sender in terms of its accuracy, objectivity and content.
- Knowledge is information processed by the recipient. This processing takes place on the basis of the recipient's existing knowledge, experience and values. Knowledge as such is not transferable. It can only be passed on as information to others that is processed by them as their own knowledge. Knowledge is therefore a personal matter or that of a group of initiates and comes from within. Knowledge cannot therefore be learnt. What everyone has to learn for themselves is their own personal path to knowledge.

2.3 Skills are not the same as knowledge

There is also here a certain mixing of terms and their meanings. That is why there is a lot of mischief going on in the education system, including in human resources.

Skills, unlike knowledge, can be learnt and practised. If they are not needed, they fade into the background where they can be brought out again. However, it takes a certain amount of practice to master them again. Skills can also increasingly be performed by machines using relatively simple means. They rely on routine, something that machines are good at. Learning them does not necessarily require knowledge. The existence of knowledge can support the development of skills.

In our global society, the call for language skills is very loud. It is undisputed that mastering foreign languages is enormously important. That is where the confusion begins. Instead of thinking about the deep meaning and social functions of language, the actual knowledge, we immediately start

debating and arguing about speaking a specific language that is actually just a skill and could easily be learnt today.

If we were to build up knowledge of the language system, we would be able to properly convey everything that mastery of a language means. With this understanding, everyone could build their own learning path for a language. This would enable them to learn any other language as a skill on demand. Pupils would then be spared the pointless learning of several languages in stockpile for later demand, which are forgotten over time as not being used.

This would not only take the pressure off the school programmes. I would also no longer see the beads of sweat on the foreheads of my contacts when I talk about French in German-speaking Switzerland or, vice-versa, German in French-speaking Switzerland.

The ability to code is somewhat similar. All too often, we only talk about the ability to use a specific programming language. In view of the many languages available and their short lifespan, this is a pointless endeavour. It is more important to know how programmes are structured, how computers work and how they can be controlled. But you hardly hear anything about that. Today, people prefer to talk about the details rather than the basics. The reason is simple. In order to be able to discuss the latter, one needs sound knowledge.

2.4 Documentation is not knowledge

Documentation is very often used as proof of the existence of knowledge in an organisation. In today's digitalised world, even programs are referred to as evidence of knowledge and the programming code serves for its documentation.

This does not correspond at all to the nature of knowledge and is rather misleading. Documentation is certainly important and provides essential information. However, it is not evidence. For it to be used for this purpose, the following conditions would have to be met, an impossible thing as a matter of facts because the documentation lies always behind the progress.

On the one hand, the documentation must reflect the current state of knowledge. Very often it is outdated. What has happened in between remains unclear. Is the staff who created this information still in the company? What has happened to the experience and knowledge gained in the meantime? Have they been incorporated into practice? Has the knowledge been updated?

Secondly, the staff, or at least a large proportion of it, must have processed this information into knowledge. The experience of certification auditors shows that there is very often a huge gap.

It is even worse with the documentation in the programme codes. Although the information is still available, it is not directly accessible as it is encoded in the programming language. What's more, the core of many programmes is very old. It was often created at a time when primarily specialists with an interest in programming were active. They also programmed their acquired knowledge in a programming language that is no longer used today and is often no longer known.

The further developments, the presentation of results and the processing of large amounts of data have been integrated into the new languages, but the cores have remained largely unchanged and are

often still used. This means that access to this information is reserved for a few 'living fossils' from times gone by.

Thus, people today boast of using modern knowledge, although the core is ancient and only roughly known. The development of new processing was often left to artificial intelligence. As a result, the content and origin are unknown. This is the new belief in algorithms. This is modern knowledge; modern obscurantism.

3. The most important points about knowledge

I have reported on knowledge on various occasions and explained how I view it. See JPR Focus 02/19 on the shortage of skilled labour and 02/21 on the value of knowledge and experience. These are available under News Archive on the website www.JPR.ch and can also be downloaded as 'pdf'.

This is about how knowledge can be brought to life and kept alive in an organisation. As there are different types of knowledge and not all of them are used in every activity, understanding them is very important.

However, so that you don't have to keep scrolling back and forth, here are the aspects necessary for building a knowledge culture.

3.1 The various types of knowledge

In my opinion, there are five different types of knowledge. These are:

The general knowledge

It is what we need to contribute as social beings in the society.
This essentially means being able to read and write; being able to understand and interpret texts commonly encountered in life; being able to solve everyday maths problems; being able to live, interact and act with other people, recognising and respecting different personalities and cultures. This also includes knowledge of another language. Its aim is to recognise the importance of language as a vehicle of cultural heritage and to be used to promote openness to other cultures.

The history, geography, culture, flora and fauna of their own country as well as the basic laws of nature, physics, chemistry and biology are all part of this. Not to forget: the Art - music, theatre, painting, etc. - must be brought out of today's deep sleep.

In-depth general knowledge and in-depth specific knowledge

It is what you need to enter the various professions or the academic path.
Only when it comes to specific knowledge is it necessary to introduce a differentiation, because not all professions or specialisations require the same depth in all subject areas. This type of knowledge is the common basis of different professions or fields of study, such as the natural sciences.

The professional knowledge

It is the knowledge that is common to a vocational or academic training programme.
The scope of it is officially recorded for many professions, namely in the official professional register, which, for example, defines the content of the final apprenticeship examinations. It is also

the knowledge that changes the most, particularly rapidly in recent decades as a result of the technological progress.

Many professions no longer exist; in the case of skilled trades, often because the products are no longer in demand or because technology has made them redundant.
Many other professions are experiencing a change in content. The rapid development of new technologies is producing either new products, new processing methods, new materials or a combination of all of these.

This challenges not only vocational training, but also continuing professional development. Liberal and academic professions are also undergoing major changes: new knowledge, new requirements and new expectations are driving the wheels of change.

The experience
This knowledge is the most personal and comprehensive knowledge, as it combines life and human experience with professional experience. They are all very different from person to person.
The content of this knowledge can only be described qualitatively: small, large, broad, comprehensive.

This knowledge is not only the result of many experiences, but above all of what one has learnt from these experiences. The place where this knowledge is acquired is called the school of life!

The institutional knowledge
This knowledge is something very particular. It is what characterises a company and enables outsiders to distinguish it from other suppliers. Even though the distinguishing criteria are often not consciously perceived and cannot be quantified. It is the DNA of the company, so to speak. It is the knowledge of all the specialists working in the organisation.

What does this knowledge consist of? It consists of a visible and an invisible part. The invisible part can again be divided in a tangible and an intangible part.

The visible part consists in the documented records such as calculation notes, work and process instructions, manufacturing instructions and documents, invoice programmes, error and research reports, reports from assembly and commissioning.

The invisible part is the knowledge and experience of the members with the products of the organisation. The tangible portion of that knowledge is with the members actually present in the organisation, if they are still active in the relevant positions. This knowledge is often not documented. The active involvement of the members makes this part possibly tangible.

The intangible portion is the experience of previous members. Their experience was possibly integrated as decision steps in the notices and computer programmes and is therefore supposedly tangible, as no one has the knowledge, how these decisions were taken, is not to be accessed anymore.

This division makes the problem of knowledge clear. For whatever reason, this kind or level or of knowledge was neglected and very often not recognised at all. Whenever possible, urgent needs were

delegated to the previous educational levels. For the rest, people tried to cope with the existing knowledge.

That worked for a while. The consequences of this are fully visible today.

- Today, companies have practically no knowledge of their own. Each one can practically only do what the others can do. The products only differ in the smallest details such as colour. Otherwise, they are the same. The companies and their products are therefore totally interchangeable. The only distinguishing feature is the price. In addition, the old knowledge is no longer sufficient. The new knowledge is missing everywhere.
- The preceding educational levels have to teach learning content that either overburdens the teachers and pupils or is only relevant for a small proportion of pupils. For the others, this content is either ballast or stockpiled for the unlikely eventuality. Much is delegated to the back to relieve the learning programme.
- The first level of education is the one that particularly suffers because it has no proceeding level to delegate anything. It has to teach learning content that is totally irrelevant for most children or that overwhelms them and often also the teachers. What children need for their normal development as people and as members of society is completely neglected.

3.2 Knowledge must live

For many, knowledge is still a static thing. You learn it once and then it is done. This was true in earlier times, when knowledge for most people was limited to basic skills such as writing, reading and solving everyday maths problems. Today, it is about the personal path to building personal knowledge from the available information. A fact that has not yet been incorporated into our school system. Its basic principles are still the same as they were 100 to 200 years ago.

This idea is probably the main reason why continuing education still plays a secondary role for so many people. It may also explain why it takes so long for new insights to find their way into everyday life.

Many still live by old slogans such as 'knowledge is power'. They have not realised that keeping knowledge for themselves only means power for a very limited time. This explains the fate of many monopolists.

Knowledge that is not alive, that is not shared with others, will sooner or later be overtaken left and right and has lost its legitimacy. Knowledge that is shared leaves room for new ideas and enables their further development.

Although building up knowledge is very important, it is only part of the story. All the efforts to build up knowledge are only worthwhile if the day-to-day maintenance, further development, questioning of existing knowledge and documentation are realised. This is a big hurdle at the beginning, because it means effort that has to be put in already during the start-up phase.

This is in stark contrast to the usual procedure of setting up, using as needed, maintaining if necessary and updating in an emergency.

3.3 Knowledge is specific

We regard knowledge as a general thing that can be acquired or exchanged. This understanding comes from the linguistic mix-ups mentioned in chapter 2.

In reality, knowledge is a specific matter and in fact twofold. On the one hand, it is related to the activity carried out, on the other hand, it is intimately connected to the person who has carried out the processing of the information.

Let us illustrate this statement with examples.
A soccer player needs foremost skills to control the ball and all kinds of feints to deceive the other side. This is not knowledge and is learnt and mastered to a certain extent by practising, practising and practising again. The knowledge of a footballer lies in the ability to read the game and, whenever possible, to stand where the ball will be coming.

The sports commentator, on the other hand, does not necessarily have to be able to play and control the ball. What is often referred to as great knowledge about soccer is actually just information. On the one hand, his knowledge consists of the ability, like the soccer player, to read the game and to direct his gaze, if possible, also the camera, to where something decisive can happen. On the other hand, he must be able to spit out interesting information quickly. Its speciality is therefore sorting the relevant information and formulating it consistently. This is actually what a search engine does. However, he could apply this knowledge to completely different areas.

An astrophysicist, on the other hand, needs completely different skills and knowledge. The desired skills lie in controlling the telescope and collecting the raw data. His knowledge consists of being able to correctly specify the telescope's settings and make an informative analysis and assessment.

If this astrophysicist plays football, he cannot really use these skills or this knowledge. He has to learn or develop those of a soccer player. Interestingly, however, the knowledge of being able to read the game could help him to better predict the movements of the stars or vice versa. This could be described as cross-fertilisation.

Therefore, when talking about knowledge, one must also mention the activity where it is used or needed and clearly separate knowledge from skills.

The other important specificity of knowledge is its human aspect. We have seen that knowledge is created by processing information on the basis of existing knowledge, experiences and insights. It is therefore also linked to emotions. The basis of knowledge is therefore purely individual, as it is different for each person. The carriers of knowledge in an organisation are therefore the people who are active there.

However, if these people join forces, share their knowledge and process it together, it is possible for some of this knowledge to become part of the organisation's knowledge. However, this knowledge will never cover the entire knowledge of the people. Why? We will explain this later.

These two aspects are central elements of efficient knowledge management. Unfortunately, they are usually hardly taken into account. Very often, these relationships are not recognised.

4. What is Knowledge-Management?

This relatively long introduction to the nature of knowledge was necessary in order to clarify the misconceptions, misunderstandings and confusions. As a result, we also understand what efficient knowledge management should be and achieve, as well as the current situation.

To summarise briefly:
The current understanding of knowledge management is to make part of the organisation's knowledge visible as information and to facilitate access to it.
Effective knowledge management should also, as far as possible, make the previously invisible part of knowledge visible and bring it to life. This means that it is not just a one-off action, but an ongoing dynamic process, in each case across its entire extent.

The different tasks are:

- Assessment of new information, evaluation of its significance - information only, skills, personal knowledge, knowledge for the organisation, etc. - and corresponding processing and documentation.
- Exchange of this processing within the organisation and development of it to knowledge. Documentation.
- Communication within the organisation or training.
- Active review of existing knowledge at appropriate intervals. Is there new knowledge, new insights, new experiences, new technologies? Inside or outside the organisation?
- Appropriate processing, documentation and internal information and training.
- Active review, timely adjusted, whether the knowledge is alive and up-to-date in the organisation.

As we can easily see, there is a certain amount of effort involved, which you have to put up with. A lot of things are new, especially at the beginning, and a certain routine has to develop first. Like everything in life, knowledge is constantly changing, so this task can never really be completed. There are only periods that are less intensive and others that are more. Accordingly, the effort required will vary.

A certain allocation of tasks must also take place, because what is necessary for the organisation must also be initiated and does not happen by itself. As you can see, knowledge management is a matter for the boss and must be recognised accordingly. It cannot simply be ordered and delegated; it must be exemplified.

As knowledge management does not usually exist according to this understanding, it must first be set up as a system and introduced as a process. The necessary steps for this are explained in the next chapter.

5. Setting up knowledge management - the steps

We have seen that knowledge is something very personal. It also depends on the type of activities that are carried out. The knowledge of the organisation builds on the personal knowledge of its

members. The steps suggested here are therefore also suitable for building up knowledge on the personal life path, both privately and professionally.

5.1 Which knowledge is required and for what?

Organisations everywhere are calling for skilled workers and specialists. Individuals are also calling for further training. But if questioned about the kind of knowledge expected or demanded, the answers remain extremely vague.

Typical answers from the personnel office of a large company are: what is expected of a specialist. The answer from a small company that has to replace a leaver is actually a description of the skills of the person leaving. The knowledge description of ta specialist from an educational institution is a description of the existing offer with a couple of well sounding words, if possible, in a foreign language. Individuals usually provide what others consider necessary; rarely a truly personal opinion.

Everything indicates that the matter is hardly delt with in depth and the use of general phrasing is preferred.

However, as we have seen in the previous chapters, knowledge is specific to the individual and to each activity, be it professional, hobby or purely private. A clear distinction must be made between the various forms of knowledge as well as between experience, skills and personal abilities.

If one does not know what he is looking for, he would be unlikely to find it. Unfortunately, that is what usually happens today and the current situation proves it.

It is therefore clear that the first action to be taken in setting up a knowledge management system is to draw up a list with a clear breakdown of the forms and types of knowledge, skills and personal abilities required to carry out each activity in the organisation. This also applies to the personal area. Proper documentation of this is the basis for visualising changing requirements as activities develop.

Such documentation is also a good basis for personnel matters such as job descriptions, job advertisements, selection of candidates, personnel interviews and co-operation with labour offices. You can use it privately for job applications, good co-operation in part-time activities and enjoyment of hobbies.

This also gives you clarity about what has to be brought in or bought from outside and what should be supplemented, developed or improved in-house. Even marketing can advertise with the specialised knowledge, as it has now been made visible.

5.2 Which knowledge is available and where?

We are now aware of what we should have. Now we need to find what we already have, determine its status and record it. When you start with knowledge management, this search is like real detective work. It is like the familiar image of an iceberg: what you see is only a small part of the whole.

The following questions must be answered in this search:

- According to which structure is the knowledge recorded and secured?
- Which knowledge is documented? What is its current status?
- What responsibilities have been defined?

- Who are the knowledge carriers?
- How does experience flow back?
- Who is being asked and in which cases?
- How is the knowledge kept up-to-date?
- How do the members of the organisation build up their knowledge?

These questions are particularly relevant for organisations. For individuals in the private sphere, they can provide impulses for what needs to be done.

5.3 Defining the desired knowledge management

Now we know the needs and have an idea of what is available and what is not, what works and what does not. It is therefore possible to define the structure of the future knowledge management system, its documentation, its maintenance and its further development.

Due to the breadth and scope of the topic of knowledge, several people are usually involved in an organisation. This is why we cannot avoid defining a certain formal structure and responsibilities. This structure will also help us to organise the content.

When it comes to the documentation, it can be advantageous for certain organisations with a complex knowledge to divide the documentation into two types of knowledge.

On the one hand, the knowledge that enables daily work to be carried out efficiently and correctly. This knowledge covers the work procedures to be followed, the standard values to be used or what needs to be observed in special cases. It is what is usually referred to as 'know-how' or how the work should be carried out. It is, so to speak, the collection of recipes.

On the other hand, there is the knowledge that explains and justifies why the procedures are the way they are or why certain values were determined in this way. This knowledge is sometimes very complex and its consideration in everyday life would perhaps be possible but is not always useful and would clearly make work more difficult. However, the documentation of this knowledge is very important for further developments, adjustments and the consideration of new findings. This is what I call the "know-why" documentation.

Contrary to popular belief, knowledge is not something you stockpile and then possess for life. Knowledge lives from regular use, experience and exchange with others and develops as a result of this. This is a reality that is not taken into account in our school system. Unfortunately, by the time new knowledge has found its way into the programme, it is already obsolete.

Thus, the maintenance and further development of knowledge are central aspects of any knowledge management system.

It is therefore essential to pay full attention to that and to record how they exchange and maintenance are considered. Rules must be defined from the very beginning as to how experience can be fed back and integrated, how new knowledge can be tapped and how market experience can be integrated. Last but not least, internal communication and training of the new knowledge or changes for the members of the organisation must be defined.

5.6 Definition of the catch-up actions

Experience has shown that there is always a greater or lesser need to catch up in the set-up. The definition of catch-up actions and special efforts should be planned in such cases. This ensures that knowledge management can become effective without unnecessary delays.

No area of knowledge management is particularly susceptible or immune to such a need to catch up. Often, the urgency for the continued existence of the company determines the prioritisation, because such problems are unfortunately only tackled at the last moment.

6. The special case - the implicit knowledge

Tacit knowledge is the big special case in knowledge management. It is the key to true excellence, to the highest level of expertise. It deserves special attention in the form of this particular chapter.

What exactly is this knowledge?
It is a rather complex matter that takes place on different levels of a person's consciousness and can therefore have many facets. They are not mutually exclusive and several can occur simultaneously. A clear and unambiguous definition is quite difficult. The best way to describe this type of knowledge is with examples. Each and every one of you has certainly experienced one or more of them. It is the knowledge part from the experience of the members of the organisation that is usually intangible or difficult to grasp.

- While watching a real professional at work, a detail is noticed, that seemed to have great significance. The matter was not further investigated and automatically this detail is repeated in the work. If ever being asked about it, one remains at a loss. With some luck, the reference person can be asked about it. Sometimes the reason for this detail is of great importance. Very often this detail was then necessary only because of specific circumstances. Today, a lot happens unfortunately at this level.
- Many experienced people, who often socialise with professionals of equal standing, take a certain level of knowledge for granted and have no need to talk about it. This knowledge is often unknown to a newcomer and therefore cannot be taken for granted. It must therefore be made visible.
- People who can genuinely be called experts have had a lot of experience and have built up a broad knowledge base. They are aware of this. They can draw on it as required. However, this knowledge is not structured and there is often a lack of will, skills and interest in making this knowledge visible and available for others.
- It is not uncommon for the knowledge gained from experience not to be consciously realised. It simply resonates in the background when making decisions. It is only really activated when something totally contradicts it. Only then does it become visible.

As we can see, access to this knowledge is very difficult for outsiders. For the knowledge holder, it is either not considered particularly valuable and worth mentioning or not recognised at all. It is therefore linked to the person and unique. If the person leaves the organisation, they simply take this knowledge with them and it is completely lost to the organisation.
If this knowledge is to be utilised, access to it must be developed. In practice, this can only happen through dialogue. To do this, many resistances, prejudices and old maxims such as 'knowledge is

power' must be overcome. Easing out of the subconscious also requires the mastering of certain communication techniques.

7. Conclusions

We have seen that there is a lot of confusion, misunderstanding and incorrect assumptions surrounding the term 'knowledge'. For sustainable knowledge management, it is necessary to be aware of the following aspects of knowledge:

- Information is not knowledge. It is just an ingredient to build-up knowledge.
- Knowledge is processed information based on previously acquired knowledge, personal experience and culture. Knowledge cannot therefore be learnt or transferred.
- Skills are not knowledge. They can be learnt and practised. The associated knowledge is that which is needed to understand the personal learning process.
- Stockpiled knowledge will soon become obsolete. Knowledge must live, be used regularly and develop further through experience and exchange with others.
- Knowledge is not transferable. Somebody can only make their knowledge available to others as information. In addition, they should help others to build up their own knowledge.
- Knowledge is specific to the activities and to the person carrying them out.

This list alone clarifies what has been lacking in this area to date. An efficient and sustainable knowledge management system takes these factors into account. This makes it possible to organise the relevant steps in the development of a knowledge management system: Identifying the knowledge required with a clear distinction between knowledge, skills and abilities, identifying what already exists, setting up the structure, documentation, maintenance and updating, communication and training.

The big challenge is that all steps in the set-up process have to be tackled practically simultaneously, because knowledge is alive and does not wait for everything to be finished. Since not everything can be done at once, priorities must be set. These result from the urgency of having to fill the gaps. For each of these steps, the entire process from set-up to training must be carried out.

One characteristic of a good knowledge management system is that it captures the implicit knowledge of the organisation's members as well as possible. This knowledge as a result of personal experience, existing knowledge and the culture of the members is actually what distinguishes the organisation from others. Without this, the organisation and its products and services are interchangeable with the others. Then only the price is decisive. It has been shown that specialised knowledge is required for this assessment which is not widespread. Appropriate external support is then of great benefit.

With complex knowledge, it is worth introducing two levels of knowledge: the 'know how' that is needed for daily use and the 'know why' that explains why certain rules, values and procedures must be adhered to.

I hope I have been able to bring some clarity with this report, point out a few stumbling blocks and highlight the most important aspects of effective and sustainable knowledge management.

Yours

Jean-Pierre Rickli

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